

Mapping Mobility: Women and Textual Networks in the Fifteenth-Century Prose Epic *Herzog Herpin*

Abstract

Considering the example of the fifteenth-century prose epic *Herzog Herpin*, attributed to Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken, through the lens of Caroline Levine's approach to networks, this essay examines the constitutive role of women in intra- and extra-textual constellations. *Herzog Herpin* is structured by networks colliding and interacting with each other. The family whose story it follows, the Mediterranean space that condition the movement of family members, and the network of intertextual references to Arthurian and Carolingian materials offer particularly productive examples of forms in which women act as connective agents. In turn, *Herzog Herpin's* composition is conditioned by the context in which Elisabeth evolves – a dynastic network in which women foster links between courts. Using a network approach to connect the intra- and extra-textual without implying causality, sheds light on a pattern of gender-specific involvement in literature relying on movement and connectivity.¹

1. I am grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for supporting the research carried out for this article in the form of an Early Career Fellowship at the University of Cambridge.

2. See for example Haubrichs and Hermann; Haubrichs and Oster; Herz, "Frau. Macht. Text."; Bastert, *Helden als Heilige* 384–99.

The four epics attached to Elisabeth of Lorraine-Vaudémont, Countess of Nassau-Saarbrücken have often been defined as texts 'in-between': between France and Germany, between rulership and art, between epic and novel, between verse and prose, between the Middle Ages and Early Modernity.² As such, Elisabeth and the four epics present themselves as particularly productive examples to analyse through the lens of networks and network theory: it is precisely this state of 'in-between-ness' which, rather than implying a sort of existence in limbo between two poles, designates the texts and the countess as connective agents. Forming pathways between traditions and cultures, Elisabeth and her texts highlight the constitutive role that exchange, interconnection and transcultural mobility play in literature in the premodern era. Furthermore, the implication of Elisabeth brings into question the involvement of women in literary net-

works and the making of texts. The role of Elisabeth as a transcultural agent comes to the fore when considering the statement based on which scholars have connected her to the texts, as it appears in *Loher und Maller*, one of the four epics:

Vnd dis büch tet schriben in welscher sprach ein edele wolgeborne frowe, die was genant frowe Margarete, greffynne zu Wiedemont und frowe zu Genville, hertzog Friderichs von Lotringen, graffen zu Wiedemont, husfrowe, in den iaren vnsers herren tusent vier hundert vnd fünff iare. Vnd ist diß büch ouch vorbaß von welsch zu dütsch gemacht durch die wolgeborne frowe Elisabeth von Lotringen, greffynne wytwe zu Nassauwe vnd Sarbrucken, der vorgenanten hertzog Friderichs vnd frouw Margreten tochter, die es durch sich selbs also bedütschet hat, als es hie vor an beschriben stet, vnd ist vollenbracht in den iaren tusent vierhundert siben vnd dryssig nach der geburt Cristi [...]. (*Loher und Maller* 416)

(And the very noble lady, named lady Margaret, countess of Vaudémont and lady of Joinville, wife of duke Frederick of Lorraine, Count of Vaudémont, had this book written in the French language in the year of our lord one thousand four hundred and five. And this book was then made from French into German by the noble lady Elisabeth of Lorraine, countess and widow of Nassau and Saarbrücken, daughter of the aforementioned duke Frederick and his wife Margaret, who put it in German herself, as it is described above, and was completed in the year one thousand four hundred thirty-seven after the birth of Christ [...]).³

3. All translations are my own.

For Bernd Bastert, this statement is a “Mittel der Authentisierung” (*Helden als Heilige* 111, “means of authentication”); for Ute von Bloh, who questions what specific role Elisabeth might have played in the many different processes that lead to the creation of a manuscript, from translation to compilation to being written down, it is part of an “inszernierte[n] Legende, die das Ansehen der Texte zu erhöhen vermochte” (32, “staged legend, which enhanced the prestige of the text”).

Of course, the veracity of this statement cannot be proven. But it remains noteworthy in marking a clear desire to tie Elisabeth not only to the text but to the very process of its translation into German. The text insists on this last part by repeating twice that she translated it herself, and then by calling attention to the repetition (“als es

hie vor an beschriben stet”, in the above citation). This statement is valuable for modern scholarship not because of its potential to confirm or deny whether Elisabeth truly did translate the texts, but rather in the decided assertion itself, insofar as it purposefully marks Elisabeth as an active agent in the process of textual transmission. Elisabeth is, independently of her degree of implication in the ‘actual’ historical translation, textually designated as the figure that made possible the emergence of the prose novel – of this prose novel in particular, but also, because of the foundational role of the four epics, of a tradition of prose novels in the German language.⁴

4. For more on Elisabeth’s texts as the first prose novels in German, see Herweg 225 and Herz, “Frau. Macht. Text.” 78.

This statement, Tomas Tomasek remarks, also situates Elisabeth within a genealogy of literary women, providing a matrilineal dynastic legitimacy based on involvement in literary production (349). It proves more fruitful, then, to consider this statement as a form of epistemological paradigm or programmatic stance than to question its veracity or its function for the four epics. What is thrown into sharp relief in these few lines is an emphasis on the role of two women in the transmission of texts from one generation to the next, and from one language to another. Extrapolating on these two principles, I use this statement as a starting point to consider the role of Elisabeth in the context of late medieval aristocracy and her involvement in transcultural transmission and intertextual networks. Yet, because this statement offers itself as a possible literary exaggeration and as mentioned, its veracity cannot be proven, I also consider it a starting point to transpose my analysis onto the realm of the intra-textual, considering the role of women in a range of textual networks coexisting in *Herzog Herpin*, the first of the four epics attached to Elisabeth. Bypassing historical uncertainties regarding the degree of Elisabeth’s influence on the material, a formalist analysis – conceiving of the text through the lens of Caroline Levine’s approach to networks – reveals a pattern linked to the role of women as agents of genealogical and transcultural transmission.

Elisabeth was born in the last years of the fourteenth century, between 1394 and 1398, the daughter of Frederick V of Lorraine and Margaret of Joinville. In 1412, she married Phillip I of Nassau-Saarbrücken, moving to the German-speaking court of her husband from her primarily French-speaking home. Elisabeth held political sovereignty, especially after Phillip’s death in 1429 and until her first-born son assumed his role as Count of Nassau-Saarbrücken in 1438. Her regency was marked by peace and prosperity, in contrast to the complex historical context of the end of the Hundred Years War, coincid-

5. See Thomas for more details on the historical and political contexts.

ing with intrigues at the border between Francophone and German-speaking domains.⁵ Elisabeth's family relations created links between Nassau-Saarbrücken and Nancy, where her uncle Charles I, Duke of Lorraine "sich [...] humanistischen Studien widmete" ("dedicated himself to humanist topics"), and with Heidelberg through Charles' wife Margaret of the Palatinate; her brother, Anton, was part of the poetry circle at the court of Charles of Orléans (Steinhoff 482). Elisabeth lived, therefore, in a zone of contact, cultural and political, between French and German-speaking areas, which influenced her literary endeavours and forms part of a larger internationally-minded context: she corresponded frequently with her cousin René of Anjou and her husband Philipp took part in the Council of Constance in 1415, which David Wallace considers an exemplary moment, portraying the heterogeneous, multicultural encounter called to deal with the fragmentation of the Church as a metaphor for the heterogeneity and multicultural nature of European literary culture (655–82). Elisabeth died on 17 January 1456 and is buried in the church of the abbey of St. Annual in Saarbrücken.

Elisabeth's interest in literature finds its roots in her childhood and the influence of Margaret of Joinville on her children. When Elisabeth was about ten years old, her mother possibly worked on a translation from Latin into French of the *Loher und Maller* material, which then became the basis of one of the epics attached to Elisabeth, alongside *Herzog Herpin*. It also appears that Margaret bequeathed her book collection to Elisabeth (Herrmann 112–13). After Philipp's death and during her time as regent, probably in the 1430s, Elisabeth translated – or had translated – four texts into German, known as *Herzog Herpin*, *Königin Sibille*, *Loher und Maller* and *Huge Scheppel*, prose adaptations of verse French cycles about Charlemagne and his descendants, ending with Hugues Capet.⁶ *Herzog Herpin* is an adaptation of the French-language *Lion de Bourges* and follows the complex story of the eponymous Duke Herpin of Bourges' family over the course of three generations. The text is shaped by the peregrinations of family members around the Mediterranean basin, creating a cyclical pattern of family separations and reunions, complicated with each generation as the characters and their journeys multiply and their trajectories expand further and further out East.⁷ The genealogical focus of the characters shapes the text and mirrors the structure of late medieval aristocratic families; characters connect with each other and are connected by the repetition of specific episodes; places appear and reappear, forming geographical

6. I use the order of the four epics as established by Wolfgang Liepe in his foundational study *Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken. Entstehung und Anfänge des Prosaromans in Deutschland* (1920), based on the genealogy developed by the four texts as well as textual clues. See also Ute von Bloh 92–99 for an overview of Liepe's argument and considerations on other possible – but unlikely – ways of ordering the texts.

7. For details on the cyclical nature of the work as a narrative strategy, see von Bloh; Kohnen.

nodes as they are repeatedly visited by family members of different generations – all forming pathways that are visible to the audience even if they are not available to the characters themselves. At first, the text is concerned with the nuclear family of Herpin, his wife Alheytt and their son Lewe. Then, Lewe's own family comes into play, as he marries the daughter of the King of Sicily, Florentyne, who gives him two sons Wilhelm and Oleybaum, who are the subject of the final adventures. Finally, the text describes Oleybaum's adventure with his first wife Gallien and second wife Frolich in more details, while according less discourse time to Wilhelm and his wife Grassien.⁸

8. A detailed summary in German of the plot of *Herzog Herpin* and the three other texts tied to Elisabeth is available on the [Elisabeth-Prosa-Portal website](#), which compiles outputs and information from two research projects carried out in Potsdam and Bochum that led to new editions of the four texts.

Extra-textually, *Herzog Herpin* emerges as the product of a multiplicity of complex, layered, and ongoing process contributing to the formation of what we might define as medieval European literary production – or a form of European cultural network. 'European' does not correspond to a form of strictly defined, fixed identity or even to a clearly outlined cultural production, but simply highlights, following the definition of "medieval European literature" established by Paolo Borsa, Christian Høgel, Lars Boje Mortensen and Elizabeth Tyler, "the productiveness of Europe" (15) and the fact that the subject matter "cannot be contained within the parameters of the national philologies" (16). The literary production of medieval Europe too requires a broad framework, departing first of all from "the modern tendency to assign 'literature' or a 'work of literature' to belles-lettres" (Green 218) and using the discrepancy between modern and medieval notions of authorship to focus on processes of transmission relying on wide phenomena that might fall under the umbrella of cultural memory: "with the growing importance of the linguistic turn and, more recently, of cultural memory studies (in which subjective and partial experience is allowed to be more constitutive of real history) literature in the very broad sense acquires new relevance" (Borsa et al. 9). *Herzog Herpin*, then, is a text shaping and shaped by a literary production that functions as an ongoing networking – connecting linguistic traditions through translations and generating new pathways triggering a sense of cultural memory by re-encapsulating motifs and topoi.

Turning to a network approach highlights the necessity to simply observe links between cultural objects, without seeking out cause and effect relations or attempting to determine the influence of some phenomena on others. Rather than emphasising causality or homogeneity, networks simply emphasise connection: "all networks afford connectivity; all create links between disconnected nodes" (Levine

9. Some studies have drawn parallels between the portrayal of women the texts associated with Elisabeth and the Countess herself, though not through a network approach. For a study of instances of female speech in *Königin Sibille* compared with Elisabeth's letters, see Miedema and for considerations on depictions of female rulership taking into account Elisabeth's own role as regent, see Tomasek.

114). I follow the approach of Caroline Levine in considering the structuring power of forms in society, politics and history as well as in arts and literature. Using Levine's network as an analytical model to consider *Herzog Herpin*, especially in relation to the key role played by women as connective agents, offers a way to read *Herpin* and its female protagonists to throw light on Elisabeth and her role as a transcultural agent, following what Levine terms "literary criticism turned upside-down" (122). Faced with the impossibility of ascertaining the level of implication of Elisabeth in the translation, or of determining that the key roles played by women in the text are a direct result of the involvement of a woman in the making of the text, using Levine's network delineates routes and patterns linked to women acting as connective agents.⁹ Though her chapter on networks focuses on Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* rather than on medieval literature, I follow her approach in "deliberately taking a fictional text as a model for understanding the social, an experiment in apprehending society through – and as – multiple contending forms. The point here is less to use formalist methods to read [*Herpin*] than to use [*Herpin*] to throw light on the operations of social form" (122). Levine invites her readers not only to consider forms in themselves, but to question their interaction with other forms, as she approaches literary texts "not [...] as reflections or expressions of prior social forms, but rather as sites, like social situations, where multiple forms cross and collide, inviting us to think in new ways about power" (122).

Herzog Herpin is a narrative criss-crossed by a multiplicity of networks, aesthetic and socio-political, intra-textual and extra-textual, spatial and temporal. Three of these come to the fore as forms in which women act as key nodal points, enabling the formation of new pathways between characters, places and motifs and as key structuring shapes in the narrative: first, the text's reliance on genealogy in the ever-expanding family it portrays; second, the backdrop of the Mediterranean basin; and finally the presence of intertextual references to pan-European motifs and traditions, both the result and evidence of the networked nature of medieval literary production. Considering these literary networks in relation to the social world of Elisabeth and the European cultural network mentioned above, in turn, highlights the recurring role of women as connective agents contributing to the transcultural literary production of medieval Europe, without the constraints of attempting to determine their 'real' or historical influence.

While *Herzog Herpin* and *Elisabeth* exist within a Franco-German linguistic realm, scholars working in other linguistic spheres have highlighted the importance of centring the role of women in medieval European literary production to challenge national paradigms. Elizabeth Tyler's book *England in Europe* highlights the role played by English royal women in fostering a cultural production that became constitutive not just of English literature, but more widely of European literary production. The dynamics of medieval aristocracy, Tyler argues, are key to understanding the role of female literary patronage in fostering transcultural literary production: "The movement of women, in dynastic marriage, and of the clergy was of greater direct consequence for literary culture than was the movement of lay men across political boundaries" (17).

Ursula Peters, in a study considering the role and representation of noble families in vernacular literature of the Middle Ages, provides an overview of organising principles of noble families, specifically by applying Claude Lévi-Strauss's anthropological concepts surrounding marriage. For example, she showcases scholarly uses of Lévi-Strauss' concept of the *échange généralisé asymétrique* following which women are 'exchanged' between different social groups, 'given' or 'received' (Lévi-Strauss' terminology), in order for noble families "in einem differenzierten System von Frauengeber- und Frauennnehmerfamilien ein hohes Maß komplexer Bindungen und Mobilität zwischen den verschiedenen Adelsgruppen [zu] erreichen" (Peters 42, "to achieve a high degree of complex ties and mobility between the various noble groups in a differentiated system of families providing wives or receiving wives"). The nature of medieval aristocratic families lends itself to a formalist reading (in Levine's terms): these families are networks, stretching across time and space relying upon relationships to sustain and transmit power, but centred on their male line of descent as a way of maintaining land and wealth. It follows that female family members bear the responsibility of expanding the network and maintaining existing pathways. The education of women, too, focused on arts and literature rather than on the military teachings reserved for men, condition a gender-specific involvement in literary pursuits (Herweg 225–26).¹⁰ While both Tyler and Peters highlight the mobility of women due to familial networks here, Peters' study as a whole deals with noble families and their representation within texts. Indeed, the nature of aristocratic families does not only shape the mobility of women and the texts they help circulate, but also the families, real or fictional, whose stories are told in these very texts.

10. See Herweg 223–29 for more details on the conditions that shaped women's transcultural involvement in literature.

As well as existing in relation to three other texts with which it interacts to form another genealogy, *Herzog Herpin* is a text itself centred on genealogy, which can be roughly divided into two parts. The first focuses on the adventures of Herpin, Alheytt and Lewe, their separation and concludes with their reunion in Toledo, while the second narrates the fate of Lewe, his attempts to reunite with his wife Florentyne and their sons Wilhelm and Oleybaum, whose own story forms another narrative cycle. This bipartite division, focused on the initial family reunion and its subsequent separations and reunions brings to the fore the centrality of the family as a structuring narrative device in the epic. Lina Herz, in a study on the family nucleus as narrative pattern in the epic, explains:

Familie leitet sowohl die Handlung als auch deren Erzählung und zwar nicht nur in einer einzelnen Variablen [...], sondern in ständig variiertes Wiederkehr. [...] Was die Erzählung auslöst, speist sich aus den Konstellationen und Handlungsabfolgen, die einer Geburt inhärent sind und die sowohl die Statik als auch die Dynamik des Narrativs konstitutiv bedingen. (*Schwieriges Glück* 15)

(The family guides both the plot and its narration, and not just in a single variable [...], but in constantly varied recurrence. [...] That which triggers the narrative is generated by the constellations and sequences of events that are inherent to a birth and that condition, in a constitutive way, both the statics and the dynamics of the narrative.)

Herz' remarks open up two ways to conceive of the text: first, her use of a birth as an image throwing into relief the familial narrative pattern highlights the central role of women in the narrative pattern she describes and second, her mention of 'constellations' brings to the fore the networked structure of the family (and therefore of the epic more generally).¹¹ With each generation, each marriage and each birth, the family network expands and women, as wives and mothers, play a central (if obvious) role in furthering this expansion.¹² The centrality of motherhood in a text focused on and determined by genealogy and the adherence to patriarchal expectations are not surprising, yet within this structure, the text opens up avenues for its female characters to subvert and explore beyond the boundaries of strictly defined gender roles.

Female protagonists in *Herzog Herpin* fulfil gender expectations, abiding by the role dictated by their status as noble women, mirror-

11. Her focus on what she terms "die Statik und die Dynamik des Narrativs", too, recall the network's structuring power as a form that can be contained or uncontained, fixed or in movement (see Levine 117–18).

12. Admittedly, my use of the metaphor of birth to highlight the central role played by women is a gender essentialist endeavour, which must be strictly contextualised and understood here through the lens of gender as it is represented in the epic and insofar as it mirrors gender expectations within the patriarchal system of late medieval aristocracy.

ing the historical conditions of the world in which Elisabeth herself was born. Tomas Tomasek, for example, considering the representation of ruling women in the texts associated with Elisabeth, points out that all exemplary ruling women in the four texts bring first-born sons to the world, following the example of the countess herself and fulfilling what was a central expectation of women rulers in medieval society (362). They also tend to show a stronger bond with their sons than their husbands do, as a result both of motherly love and of a sense of responsibility for safeguarding the dynastic line, thus contributing to the preservation of the social order desired by God (Tomasek 362–63). Within this concern for the futures of their son and family, however, women can subvert expectations of gender and more. Alheytt offers a particularly convincing example of this dynamic, as she disguises herself as a kitchen boy to survive in Toledo, playing with socially defined boundaries of gender, class and religion.

Following her separation from Herpin and Lewé in the forest, Alheytt steals the clothes of one of the kidnappers who had taken her and, dressed as a man, seeks merchants or pilgrims that might take her to Jerusalem, where she suspects her husband is headed. En route to Jerusalem, a terrible wind causes most of the boats of her companions to sink, except hers. They lose their route and she ends up on the shores of *Hyspanien*, whence she travels to Toledo alone. Alheytt finds refuge in the city and spends eighteen years hiding as a kitchen boy named Besem, gaining the affection of the courtiers: “die fromme frouwe war noch in leben zu Tollet in der stadt, [...] in des konniges hofte sy wol achzehen iar was. [...] Die edel frouwe hieß sich nennen Balier, das ist Besem, von Daragone. Sy ging als eyn iunger knecht, yr antlitz was schone.” (*Herzog Herpin* 80, “The valiant woman was still alive in the city of Toledo [...] she was at the king’s court for a good eighteen years. [...] The noble woman made them call her Belier, that is Besem, of Tarragona. She went as a young servant boy; her face was beautiful”). Although Alheytt is accepted as a heathen man in Toledo, her disguise always remains clearly marked out to the audience, since the narrator continues to employ female pronouns to refer to her. If the audience is privy to her true identity, everyone in Toledo accepts her as a male body and she fully commits to her disguise. Alheytt modifies her true story, and attributes the actions of her husband to herself (Herpin was banned from France for stabbing a man who had insulted him), taking on a masculine and Muslim role to keep her cover. When Florij, the king’s daughter, asks her about her homeland, she replies: “So mir unnsere got Appollo, ich erstach

einen mann, der namhaftig was, der schalt mich eins hornsuns lecker” (*Herzog Herpin* 80, “On our god Apollo, I stabbed a man, who was famous, he berated me as a whoreson scoundrel”). She swears on Apollo – a god often attributed in medieval Christian representations of Islam as a polytheistic belief system – and assumes all outward signs of belonging to that religion. The character of Alheytt can be inscribed in a larger tradition of describing women as agents of transgression and highlights the malleability and mobility necessary to women’s survival in *Herpin*. As Ingrid Bennewitz has argued, women in late medieval prose novels still function within established gender roles, but they also offer an alternative, suggesting other roles for women are imaginable, or at least “literarisierbar” (“Melusines Schwestern” 299, “literarise-able”). Alheytt is a particularly clear example of this alternative in *Herzog Herpin*.

During Alheytt’s stay in the city, the king Marciles comes to attack Toledo with the help of the giant Luciant. In the night, a voice sent by God comes to the duchess in a dream, to ask her to take up arms at daybreak and go to the gates of the city to fight the giant, as Alheytt is the one meant to kill him. Before asking her to do this for the love of God, however, the voice gives her news of her family:

Ich sage dir vor ane, das din hußwirt lebet vnd ist gesunt vnd das du den schonesten son hast, der do lebet, er ist gesunt, küne vnd starck vnd hat viel ere vnd güde synne. Du mast yne wöl sehen, ee du von der werlede scheidest vnd solt ouch dinen hußwirt wieder gewynnen. (*Herzog Herpin* 86)

(First, let me tell you that your husband lives and he is in good health and that you have the most beautiful son, who is alive, he is in good health, bold and strong and honourable and sensible. You will see him before you leave this world and you will also win your husband again.)

Without ignoring Alheytt’s religious motivation too, the envoy’s prefacing of his request with the reassurance that her family nucleus is safe and whole showcases both Alheytt’s matrimonial and motherly love as well as her sense of responsibility for the preservation of the family line. Armed with the hope of a future family reunion, Alheytt complies and defeats the giant.

Throughout the episode, the text emphasises Alheytt’s lack of proper equipment as the duchess arms herself with tools she finds in the kitchen. The giant himself, when Alheytt first approaches him de-

manding a fight, retorts that he cannot bring himself to fight with such a poorly fitted opponent, going as far as telling her that he would rather lose a cart of gold than kill her, concluding condescendingly: “Ich mein, du hast ein kessel auf deynem haupt gesturtzet” (*Herzog Herpin* 93, “I think you put a pot upside down on your head”). The giant’s mockery emphasises that the duchess, while overturning gender roles to the external audience of the text, is simultaneously playing with boundaries of social class to the internal audience of Toledo. Her fight with the giant, therefore, reverses two types of expectations: on the external level, to the people of Toledo, the reversal occurs on the level of class, as a kitchen boy takes on a responsibility that would be expected of a knight or a member of the male nobility, while on the internal level for the audience of the text, the reversal occurs on the level of gender.

Tomasek considers these two instances in which Alheyt/Besem overturns expectations as an instance in which the text makes the ruling power of one of its female protagonists clear:

Ohne die Tätigkeitsfelder des männlichen Adels anzutasten, wird an dieser Stelle die Aussage gemacht, dass auch einer Herzogin die Aufgabe und die Legitimation einer Kämpferin gegen die Heiden und das Unrecht – zweifellos herrscherliche Aufgaben – zuteil werden können. (Tomasek 364)

(Without infringing on the field of activity of the male nobility, a statement is made at this point, that a duchess can also be given the duty and the legitimacy to fight against heathendom and injustice – undoubtedly tasks belonging to a ruler.)

In this instance, Alheyt displays mobility as she crosses the boundaries of gender roles and secures political legitimacy, following Tomasek. Yet, Alheyt crosses the boundaries of social class, too, as she leaves the court of the king to save her marriage to Herpin. Following the fight with the giant, the King of Toledo’s daughter, Florij, falls in love with Besem, demands that he marries her and, despite Alheyt/Besem’s several attempts to find excuses to escape the union, Florij insists to such an extent that the duchess reveals herself to be a woman.¹³ In turn, the King of Toledo himself falls in love with Alheyt, who, as a last attempt to save her union with Herpin, leaves court and lives as a beggar on the streets of Toledo until Herpin finally arrives in the city and the original family nucleus can begin to

13. The unsuccessful attempts of Florij to marry Alheyt, then Herpin, then Lewe are another example of the particular agency given to women in the text, as von Bloh remarks with the example of marriages: “Voraussetzung für eine Ehe ist die Zustimmung – die sich zugleich unabdingbar auch mit dem herrschaftspolitischen Erfordernissen harmonisieren lassen muß” (195) (“A marriage requires consent – which must also imperatively be able to align with the demands of ruling politics”).

be reunited: “Dye edele hertzogyn zereyß ir cleyder vnd sye smyrte sich von myste vnd herger, vff das man sij nit enkente vnd lag alda in dem myste” (*Herzog Herpin* 137, “The noble duchess tore her clothes and smudged dung and dirt on herself, so that no one would recognise her and she lay there in the dirt”). While a reversal of gender expectations led to securing political legitimacy, a departure from social class leads to preserving genealogical integrity.

In fact, Alheytt is also key to the very survival of her husband. Twice, she saves his life: once before Charlemagne, begging him not to kill Herpin at the very beginning of the epic, when the king is tricked into believing Herpin is a traitor and Alheytt pleads with him to spare her husband, and a second time in Toledo, through the intercession of Florij, who convinces her father not to kill the Christian prisoners sent by the King of Cyprus in memory of Alheytt:

Lassen den crysten wol wartten, von yne wirt in strijden wol gedient. Gedenckent ir nit der crysten frouwen, die in vnser küchen viertzehen iar was, die den riesen erslög vnd den ritter kempt? Das was ye eyn frouw!” (*Herzog Herpin* 157)

(Leave the Christians alone, they will serve you well in battle. Do you not remember the Christian woman who was in our kitchen for fourteen years, who slayed the giant and fought the knight? That was quite a woman!)

Throughout the first part of the text, Alheytt plays a key role as a character who determines the direction of the pathways taken by other members of the initial trio before they can finally reunite, one who acts to secure both her own political legitimacy and the integrity of her genealogical line. In network terminology, Alheytt becomes a nodal point in the narrative.

In order to reach the city where they finally reunite, Alheytt, Herpin and Lewe follow similar directions, but each of them establishes further connections and the itinerary expands each time a character undertakes the journey. Alheytt is the first to arrive in Toledo, after the boat that was carrying her to Jerusalem loses its route during a storm. Herpin then follows, believing he is on pilgrimage, though he is then sold into slavery to a Cypriot merchant by Gadifer of Savoy, leading him first to Rome, Brindisi and then Cyprus before reaching Toledo. Lewe, finally, reaches *Hyspanien* after having travelled through Constantinople and the Holy Land and Cyprus, where he learns from a beggar who has just travelled through the Peninsula

that his father might be in Toledo. Different places and characters appear throughout the text as direct or indirect paths between family members. The reunion between Lewe and his parents can only happen through Lewe connecting with characters who had previously connected with Herpin. And yet, it is not Herpin that is first mentioned by the beggar when telling the story of Lewe's parents, but Alheyt:

In der stait was ein sengerynne, die was arme, vnd sprach, sye were von Franckrich. [...] Nü lagen ouch cristen lude in des konnigs gefenkckniß, die ließ der konnig hervß, das sij wyeder die heiden strieden. Vnder den cristen was ein herre, man saget, er were verbannet vsser Franckrich. [...] Die sengerynne [...], die sange ein soliche liet, das der crysten man [...] sprach, sij were sin elich wib. (*Herzog Herpin* 516–17)

(In the city, there was a singer, she was poor, and said she was from France. [...] Now there were also Christian people in the king's prison, the king let them out, so that they could fight against the heathens. Amongst the Christians was a lord, people say he had been exiled from France. [...] The singer [...] sang such a song that the Christian man said that she was his lawful wife).

The intermediary characters function as links that enable the (re) construction of the initial aristocratic family network, but this network evolves around and towards Alheyt. No matter how far the characters' travels take them, they are reconnected to Alheyt and it is only once Herpin and Lewe have reached Alheyt in Toledo that the three initial nodal characters are reconnected and the family network fixed for a few moments – before Lewe departs and a new cycle begins. After Lewe's departure from Toledo, Herpin is ambushed and killed. Alheyt, inconsolable, dies of grief four days later. The first family cycle closes with the death of its centre point Alheyt, and the following adventures see Lewe now attempting to rejoin his wife Florentyne, who had to flee their home of Montluisan after giving birth by herself, like her mother-in-law, to the twins Wilhelm and Oleybaum (initially named Herpin). Oleybaum is kidnapped, however, and left under an olive tree to be found by the shepherd Elij, mirroring the story of his father's birth in the woods and triggering a new cycle of family separation which will end with their reunion in Palermo.

While I have focused here primarily on a small part of the network – Alheytt, Herpin, Lewe – this does not imply that other family members are disconnected from these three, or that the family network is composed only of nuclei of blood relatives. Herz defines the existence of other familial models in the text (e.g. the recurrent motif of the foster parents) as a “Kontrastfolie” (“counter-foil”) to the nuclear family pattern which, although always remembered and present in the imaginary of the characters can only be grasped in a few short moments (Herz, *Schwieriges Glück* 7). The family network expands as it incorporates elements who are not necessarily genealogically related to Alheytt and Herpin, but who help ensure the safety of their descendants and propel the narrative forward.

In *Herzog Herpin*, the family acquires a structuring function precisely because it takes the shape of an ever-expanding network: the narrative pattern at play here is the family conceived of as a network, in which family members are connected by other characters and by places but which spreads further and further as a result of these connections. In a very similar way to *Bleak House* which occupies Levine’s analysis, *Herzog Herpin* “exposes not so much the splitting apart of families by networks but families as networks, in which the nodes are not always already fused together, but rather connected by paths that can be interrupted and stretched by other forms” (Levine 128). The patterns of connection between characters are shaped and conditioned by their travels around the Mediterranean space, itself a narrative network superimposed on a historically complex web of trading and cultural routes.¹⁴ With each generational cycle, the family network expands as a result of marriages and births as mentioned above. Yet, as the family expands genealogically (and therefore temporally), it also spreads out spatially, because the movement of its members is conditioned by the Mediterranean basin as another of the many networks interacting in the narrative. The Mediterranean space provokes separations and enables reunions and, as such, conditions the patterns of connections that exist between the members of the family: *Herzog Herpin* repeatedly separates and reunites its characters as the paths connecting them are interrupted and stretched and the narrative allows its audience to glimpse the connective pathways, even when these are not visible to the characters themselves. The family network is interrupted and stretched because it collides with a Mediterranean network defined by movement and exchange, by temporary encounters with merchants and pilgrims and by the sea itself, functioning at once as a barrier and a bridge between family members, forcing separations and enabling reunions.

14. Recent trends in Mediterranean studies highlight the complexity and connectedness of the Mediterranean space, defined not only by the sea but also extending inland. See for example Horden and Purcell 10–15; Akbari and Mallette 3–22 or Catlos and Kinoshita.

15. The medieval Mediterranean has often been defined as a network by scholars in Mediterranean studies. Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell for example consider the basin as a space of connectivity, defined by “the various ways in which microregions cohere, both internally and also one with another – in aggregates that may range in size from small clusters to something approaching the entire Mediterranean” (123). See also Coulon and Valérian.

The Mediterranean space forms another narrative network, which includes and shapes other patterns of connection between characters, and this textual network is superimposed on a historically complex web of trading and cultural routes.¹⁵ The narrative makes use of the Mediterranean space’s potential for intercultural exchange and the text acknowledges the religious and mercantile networks operating in the Mediterranean, as the characters seek to take advantage of the mobility these offer. Alheytt is the first to actively seek a boat to go to Jerusalem and heads towards the sea: “Do vand sie kauf lewt auß fremden landen vnnd manchen pilgram, die wolten uber das gesaltzen mere, in die erlichen stat, Iherusalem ist sie gnant.” (*Herzog Herpin* 40, “There she found merchants from foreign lands and a few pilgrims, who wanted to [to sail] across the salted sea, to the noble city called Jerusalem”). The scene later finds echoes in Herpin’s arrival in the port of Brindisi, where the narrator emphasises the potential for exchange of Mediterranean ports:

Da fant er vil kaufflüde von fremden landen. Der eyner was von Danmarcke, der ander von Collen, der drytte von dem lande Salomon, der vierde von Cipern. Iuden, cristen, heyden drieben yren kauffman schatz vnder eynander.
(*Herzog Herpin* 152)

(There he found many merchants from foreign lands. The one was from Denmark, the other from Cologne, the third from the land of Solomon, the fourth from Cyprus. Jews, Christian, heathens were engaged in trade with one another.)

Herpin, who believed he was en route to the church of Saint Nicolas in Bari, will be involuntarily imbricated in the Mediterranean mercantile network as Gadifer of Savoy sells him as a slave to a Cypriot merchant (*Herzog Herpin* 152–53). This episode shapes the unfolding of the narrative as the Mediterranean node of Cyprus becomes an important pathway for the family network: by going through Cyprus, Herpin will then be sent to Toledo and Lewé only hears of his parents’ reunion and travels to the city when he transits through Cyprus. The Mediterranean, in provoking separations and enabling reunions, conditions the patterns of connection that exist between the members of the family.

The North-South axis that might be expected of the attempts of Herpin’s male descendents to reclaim their legacy in Bourges is played out in large parts on an East-West plane because of the move-

ment of women around the Mediterranean basin. Lewe, Wilhelm and Oleybaum do travel to Bourges and fight for the city, but the majority of the narrative takes place in and around the Mediterranean basin, ranging from the Holy Land to Iberia via Cyprus and Sicily, as they separate and reunite with their wives – all daughters, nieces or related to Mediterranean nobility. The Mediterranean network of the text is organised around specific nodal points, islands and cities through or to which members of each generation travel.

Three locales come to fore as having a particular impact on the family network and its narrative development: Toledo (the place of initial reunion), Sicily, especially insofar as it contains the cities of Montluisan and Palermo (the places of the second nuclear family's encounter and reunion) and Cyprus (as the place through which characters transit before being reunited). The narrative structure here appears to mirror the network structure of the Mediterranean space as defined by Damien Coulon and Dominique Valérian, who insist on cities and islands as two privileged observation points. Islands, they argue, organise maritime flows and constitute turning plates through which different networks can be put into touch (15). Islands fulfil a transitory role, where characters pass on their way to another destination, often defeating an enemy or converting a local king, but without intention of establishing themselves there. Travels through islands help characters gain recognition or connect to other characters, but islands are never a goal themselves. Cyprus, the island *par excellence* in *Herpin*, reconnects several of the family members but other islands play symbolic transitory roles. For example, Lewe, on the search for his parents, travels through Rhodes, where he helps Margelly, the king's daughter, defeat the giant who had previously killed her father and was hoping to marry her. The giant is killed and the woman asks to be baptised and a connection to the family nucleus is established as she takes on the name Alheytt. Finally, Lewe's companion Gerna and Margelly/Alheytt marry, and they leave Rhodes, never to return.

Cities, however, “jouent [...] un rôle polarisant en tant que centres de décisions, mais sont aussi des noeuds de réseaux et des points de concentration des hommes, des marchandises, des informations, etc.” (Coulon and Valérian 15, “play a polarising role as decision centres, but are also network nodes and points of concentration of men, merchandise, information, etc”). In *Herpin* too, cities function as points of concentration, where important decisions for the narrative are made (e.g. Lewe's decision to leave Montluisan after his marriage

to Florentyne, which will force her to leave for Palermo); cities are places in which long-lost characters reunite and where information gathered by different family members can be shared, often triggering a new storyline. Key cities mirror the genealogical focus of the text and its reliance on motherhood, as places of family reunions are dictated by the movement of women: Toledo, associated with Alheytt, becomes the (conscious or unconscious) end goal of both Herpin and Lewe precisely because the duchess is there. In Lewe's nuclear family, Florentyne connects Lewe to Sicily, specifically Montluisan which becomes Lewe's seat and then Palermo.

Palermo appears as an echo to Toledo in the second part of the narrative, since Lewe, Florentyne and their sons Wilhelm and Oleybaum reunite there. Cities can also be contested nodes because of the presence of a woman: the Duke of Calabria storms Montluisan, then Bonifant, and then Palermo in the hope of abducting Florentyne. She decides to leave Montluisan with Badewin of Monclin for her safety and the safety of her son Wilhelm. While discussing the attack on Montluisan, Florentyne picks Palermo as her new refuge:

Also clafften sye also lange vff dem mere, byt das Florentyne eyn statt ersach. Da fragete Florentyne den schyeff man vnd sprach: 'Lieber frunt, was stadt ist das?' 'Ich sehen, llliebe ffrouwe, es ist eyn ryche statt, aber es wonen heyden dar inne, doch sint ouch viel heymlicher crysten dar inne.' 'Wie heysset die stadt?' sprach Florentyne. Er sprach: 'Sye heysset Affelern.' 'Vff myn trüwe', sprach Florentyne, 'ich wil dar faren, dann ich wyl ye so verre wandeln, das der hertzog noch mir nit künne erfahren. Ich weiß wol, wyste er mich hye zu finden, er wurde mich balde süchen.' (*Herzog Herpin* 445–46)

(So they chatted a long time at sea, until Florentyne discerned a city. Then Florentyne asked the boatman and said: "Dear friend, which city is that?" "Dear lady, I see a rich city, but heathens live there, and yet many clandestine Christians are also there." "What is the city called?" said Florentyne. He said: "It is called Palermo." "On my honour", said Florentyne, "I want to go there, because I want to travel so far that the duke will not hear of me. I know well, that if he knew where to find me, he would quickly look for me").

The connection sought by the wrong character (the Duke of Calabria) cannot be realised as it would jeopardise the genealogical

network that structure the narrative. In a domino effect, the presence of the Duke in Montluisan forces the absence of Florentyne, while the presence of Florentyne in Palermo turns the city into a node, creating a new pathway and redirecting family members who wish to reunite with her. The node of Palermo, and the pathways that lead to it, is once again determined by the movement of a woman attempting to preserve her family's network. Coulon and Valérian's historical analysis finds echoes on a narrative level in Rabea Kohnen's discussion of the construction of geographical cycles as a technique of accumulation and superimposition in the text and what she terms "Handlungsknotenpunkte" (179, "plot nodes"). Following Kohnen, recurrent places in the text, each containing a specific set of interactions, become narrative pockets, in which sub-storylines develop, often conflicts which are related to a specific place and can only be resolved through the presence of specific characters in this place (179). The network structure which shapes both the depiction of the Mediterranean space and the family forms a constellation not only of geographical places but of specific narrative moments associated with these places.

A product of linguistic exchange, *Herzog Herpin* integrates into its narrative a range of intertextual references stemming from motifs and traditions that can be traced back in a range of European vernaculars. Notably, the text ties itself to the Arthurian and Carolingian traditions. The superimposition of Christian heroic motifs and otherworldly Arthurian themes corresponds to the context of composition of the text. *Herpin*, and the other three epics, are the product of a translation that forms part of a wider movement of *Chanson de geste* reception in the German-language spanning the twelfth to late fifteenth centuries.¹⁶ The French examples which form the basis of the Saarbrücken cycle correspond to what Bernd Bastert terms 'modern' *Chansons* and defines as texts characterised by the crossing of genres and the encounter of Carolingian heroes with the Arthurian otherworld ("Zwischen Artus und Jesus" 456). In his analysis, Bastert focuses on Lewé as a character 'between Arthur and Jesus' – that is, as a character who transgresses in unusual ways between the realm of the religious, transcendental world and the realm of Arthurian myth.

For example, after the initial reunion with his parents, Lewé rides to Bourges, travels up the Rhine and finds himself in the Eyfflinger forest, near Koblenz, where he finds a castle. A dwarf rides out of the castle and strikes him so hard Lewé falls off his horse. Already, the story is highly reminiscent of Erec, the inexperienced knight of King Arthur's court, dishonoured after being struck by a dwarf (and who

16. See Bastert, *Helden als Heilige*, for a detailed typology of German-language *Chansons de geste* adaptations.

has also won his wife's hand in a tourney) and the hero of both French and German-language texts, like Chrétien de Troyes' *Érec et Énide* (c. 1160–70) and Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (c. 1180–90). Yet Lewe is further included in the Arthurian world of the *Erec* tradition as the story continues. Appalled by the thought of having been struck down by a dwarf, Lewe climbs back on his horse. Then the giant Abrahon comes out of the same castle and tricks Lewe into entering his magical castle where Morgue resides with other fairies, where the hero delays for six years, believing his stay only lasted four days. Lewe is rescued by the white knight – a character sent by God, inhabited by the soul of a man Lewe had previously saved by paying for him to be buried in a church (*Herzog Herpin* 193). The white knight explains: “Lieber geselle, [...] ‘is ist sechs iar vor war. Diese burg ist von sollichem wesen, wer hündert iare hie inne ist, den düncket is küme vier wochen syn. Das ist vmb der vberencie freude willen, die hie inn ist, ist mit zeubery also gemacht.“ (*Herzog Herpin* 563, “My dear companion, it has truly been six years. This castle's nature is such that he who is inside for a hundred years, he thinks that he has been for hardly four weeks. This is because of the abundant joy which is inside here, it is thus made with magic”). For Bastert, the text, in making the intervention of a religious character necessary, “verwischt und negiert [...] die Trennlinie zwischen zwei einflussreichen großepischen Erzählstoffen des Mittelalters, der *matière de France* (Chanson de geste) und der *matière de Bretagne* (Artusroman)” (“Zwischen Artus und Jesus” 462, “blurs and negates [...] the dividing line between two influential epic narrative materials of the Middle Ages, the *matière de France* (chanson de geste) and the *matière de Bretagne* (Arthurian romance)”). While focusing on Lewe brings to the fore the superimposition of traditions in the text, and another example of boundary crossing, considering how exactly these traditions are introduced in the text and in which context points to another example of female influence in the creation of transcultural textual networks relying on the mention of place names, characters or symbolic objects.

Morgue, who was already present at the beginning of the epic, is another prominent character in the episode mentioned by Bastert. While it is the white knight who rescues Lewe, the otherworldly castle of Abrahon is firmly tied to the Arthurian world as the narrator insists on Morgue's identity: “Lewe, der nam vrloup von Morgue, der frouwen, die was konnig Artus süster. Konnig Artus suster, die was sere bedrübet, da sy gesach, das Lewe enweg wolt.” (*Herzog Herpin*

564, “Lewe took leave of Morgue, the lady, who was King Arthur’s sister. King Arthur’s sister was very sad to see that Lewe wanted to be on his way”). Similarly, the Arthurian world is evoked in conjunction with the white knight at a key moment in the narrative. After Florentyne succumbs to a disease, Lewe retreats into the woods of Sicily to live as a hermit, mirroring his father’s decision to do so after his initial separation from Alheytt and his then unborn son, thus creating another echo within narrative cycles. However, as Lewe has already retreated, his two sons are captured while attempting to reclaim Bourges. The white knight intervenes once more to tell Lewe his sons need his help. Lewe rides to Bourges and is greeted near the city by a lady: “Yme erscheyne zü der selben zijt ein frouwe, brocht yme phert vnd harnesch vnd sprach zu yme: ‘Dis hait uch konnig Artus geschickt [...].’ Das selbe phert was Malberous gewest, das swert was konnig Artus.” (*Herzog Herpin* 788, “At the same moment a lady appeared to him, brought him a horse and armour and said to him: ‘King Arthur sent you these.’ This very horse was Malberous, the sword was King Arthur’s.”) Again, while it is Lewe who breaks the division between Arthurian and Christian worlds, the Arthurian realm is invoked by the presence of a woman who acts as a mediator for Arthur. Through a range of hints to the Arthurian tradition fostered by the intervention of female characters, *Herzog Herpin* is tied to a multilingual literary network.

Similarly, Carolingian material is anchored in the text not only through the overall framework of the four epics, but also in key moments, as specific characters and instances are mentioned, triggering a sense of cultural memory in the audience of the epic. The text opens with a scene at the court of Charlemagne and hints at the Roland tradition when the narrator lists the lords present at court. The list begins with good and worthy knights but ends with the mention of “Gannelon vnd Clarien, ir vetter, die diebe, die dar auff griffen, die ir lebetage nye gut geteten” (*Herzog Herpin* 2, “Gannelon and Clarien, their cousins, the thieves, who reached above their station, who had never done good in their lives”).¹⁷ To an audience with any knowledge of the *Chansons de geste* tradition, the two names are likely recognisable: in the Roland tradition, Gannelon is known as the traitor who foments the attack on the rear-guard with the king of Saragossa Marsilie and Clarien is the name of the envoy who Paligan sends to Marsilie to offer his help to the Iberian troops.

Another important reference is made to the Roland tradition later on in the epic, as Alheytt in hiding in Toledo and the city is attacked

17. My translation is based on the reading of “die dar auff griffen” suggested in Bastert’s edition: “die über ihren Stand hinausgriffen (sich selbst überschätzen)” (*Herzog Herpin* 2, “who reach above their station (who overestimate themselves)”). This strange phrasing, however, could be the result of a translation issue, like the mention of Ramzebaux discussed below. See Herz, “Frau. Macht. Text.,” 89–90 for more details.

– leading to her fight with the giant. The narrator explains that the assailant is none other than “eyn heydischen konnig, hieß Marciles, der Ramczeboux und Rolant erdodet, die zwen warent konnig Karl neuen” (*Herzog Herpin* 82, “a heathen king, called Marciles, who killed Ronceval and Roland, the two were the nephews of King Charles”). The reference to Marsilie, especially next to Roland and Roncevaux, is impossible to miss. The personification of the valley of Roncevaux into a nephew of Charlemagne, however, is peculiar, especially considering the context in which Herpin appears. Why did the compiler or translator make this mistake?

Though this reference appears as an intertextual reference to literary historians, Maren Großbröhmer explains, for a contemporary audience it functioned as a connecting link to a system of epic knowledge or to what Bastert terms a *Sagengedächtnis* (“memory of legends”).¹⁸ Ideally, the recurrence of pieces of a collective memory, of a *Sagengedächtnis*, functions as a means to secure and reinforce a sense of collective identity. In the case of *Herzog Herpin*, however, the appearance of Ramczeboux, both as a personification and because of spelling variations, might appear to cut off the German recipients from the French *Sagengedächtnis* evoked here and therefore from the cultural knowledge that would have been quite evident to a French audience (Großbröhmer 84). The reference, then, becomes a *Scheinanalepse* (pseudo-analepsis)¹⁹ for the compiler of the text themselves (if not for modern scholars). The mention of Roland and Ramczeboux, then, provides the text with seeming historicity and a direct link to Charlemagne.

Whether a German audience would have needed access to the French narratives and *Sagengedächtnis* for the reference to Roland to have a similar capacity to reinforce a sense of collective identity and cultural memory is arguable. It is unlikely that the body of knowledge relating to legends of a German audience would have been so different from that of a French audience so as to allow a possible mistake, or an intentional play on the name of Roncevaux, to change the function and meaning of the Roland references in the German adaptation. But the connections between the different names – Marsilie, Roland, Ramczeboux, “die Bausteine des intertextuellen Verweises” (Großbröhmer 85, “the building blocks of the intertextual reference”), – might be made differently in a German-speaking context. In Großbröhmer’s words:

18. Bastert defines the *Sagengedächtnis* as “ein selbstverständlicher und leicht abrufbarer Teil des kulturellen Gedächtnisses [...], das sich freilich als nur scheinbar solide und damit in irgendeiner Form ‘greifbare’ Größe erweist, indem es zwar in der Literatur als fester Bezugsrahmen funktionalisiert, gleichzeitig aber durch sie wesentlich bestimmt und immer neu geformt wird” (*Helden als Heilige* 56, “an evident and easily retrievable part of the cultural memory, which turns out to be only seemingly reliable and thereby in some way of a ‘tangible’ breadth. While it is indeed functionalised in literature as a firm reference framework, it is simultaneously essentially asserted and always newly reformed through it”).

19. Großbröhmer also borrows this term from Bastert to refer to a historical or literary event that cannot be reconstructed by literary scholarship but that allows text to give the illusion of a complete narrative world referring to an established and authoritative epic knowledge (*Helden als Heilige*, 49–55).

Der Verweis auf die Verbindung von Marciles und Karl dem Großen schafft neue Formationen im kollektiven Gedächtnis der Rezipienten. Auf diese Weise arbeiten die Scheinanalepsen ebenso wie die “echten” Analepsen performativ mit am kulturellen Wissen und damit auch an der kulturellen Identität der Rezipienten. Dafür genügt die Geste des Verweisens – ob der Verweis heutigen Ansprüchen von historiographischer Korrektheit genügt, ist nebensächlich (Großbröhmer 86).

(The reference to the connection between Marciles and Charlemagne creates new formations in the collective memory of the recipients. In this way, the pseudo-analepses, just like the ‘real’ analepses, contribute performatively to cultural knowledge and thus also to the cultural identity of the recipients. The gesture of referencing is sufficient for this - whether the reference meets today’s demands of historiographical correctness is besides the point).

Following Großbröhmer’s argument, shifting the focus from the reference’s (in)accuracy to its performative contribution to the intertextual networks present in the text, I argue that the Ramczeboux reference can be best understood by considering the context in which it appears and what possible connections it creates with specific Carolingian motifs beyond the Roland tradition. Ramczeboux appears as the narrator describes Alheyts stay in Toledo and the reference is directly preceded by her decision to remain in the city: “Ich enweyß nit, ob es noch lebe, aber als lange gotz wil ist, so wil ich hie zu Töllet bliben.’ Also gedachte dye frouwe in yrem hertzen. Vor den heyden arbeit sij sere, aber so sy nieder lag, so sprach sij manig güt gebet vnd clagde vnd schrey in große{r} bedrüpsal” (*Herzog Herpin* 82, “I do not know if he [Lewe] still lives, but as long as it is God’s will, I will stay here in Toledo.’ So the woman felt in her heart. In front of the heathens she worked hard, but when she lay down, she said many good prayers and lamented and screamed in great distress.”) As such, not only is Alheyts incorporated into pre-existing intertextual networks, but because of her presence in the city, Ramczeboux is mentioned in clear association with Toledo, a city which likely has a place in the cultural memory of *Herzog Herpin*’s audience, since it provides a connection to narratives of Charlemagne’s youth, forming yet further pathways with traditions existing in the German language and beyond.

According to a story which circulates in different texts in Latin and European vernaculars and is largely known as the *Mainet* tradition, Charlemagne escaped to Toledo in his youth, disguised under the name Mainet, where he fell in love with a Moorish princess, daughter of the King Galafer. The earliest allusion to the emperor's stay in Toledo appears in the Latin *Pseudo-Turpin*, in which the audience learns that Charlemagne has been received in Toledo by King Galafer in his youth as he was escaping his land and that he knows Arabic as a result of his stay there, although the text does not mention the emperor's love interest (Horrent 41). The story of Charlemagne's youth can also be traced back in texts in French, Italian, German and Castilian, such as the German *Karlmeinet*, a German collection of stories about Charlemagne from the first quarter of the fourteenth century or Der Stricker's *Karl der Große*, a thirteenth-century adaptation of the *Rolandslied*, both texts also appearing as part of the large context of *Chansons de geste* reception in the German language.²⁰

20. For more information on the *Karlmeinet* and on *Karl der Große* in this context, see Bastert, *Helden als Heilige*, 78–86, 121–26 and more generally 11–161 for more details on the transmission and reception context of French epics in German-language Europe.

In *Karl und Galie*, the title by which the first part of the *Karlmeinet* is known, Toledo is the city in which Charlemagne seeks refuge as he is driven out of his father's kingdom by the traitors Hanfrat and Hoderich who conspire to usurp the throne, and where he meets his Iberian bride Galie. In *Karl der Große*, the story of Charlemagne fleeing to Iberia is told, and it is none other than Marsilie who offers the young emperor refuge (ll. 185–93). This story of Charlemagne's youth, through its disseminations in European vernaculars, forms a path between *Herpin*, Toledo, Carolingian legends and a multilingual body of literature. The link is reinforced by the inclusion of Galie as a character in *Herzog Herpin*: Oleybaum, Lewé's son, marries Gallien, the daughter of King Ansijs, the Iberian king from whom he receives the kingdom of Burgos. By using the name Gallien especially in an Iberian context, the narrative once again forms an intertextual network in which a woman plays a connective role as it recalls Charlemagne's young Spanish bride Galie, albeit in a form closer to the French Gallienne or the Castilian Galiana.

Much as Großbröhmer argues regarding the reference to a connection between Marciles and Charlemagne, the context in which this reference appears, I argue, has the potential to create new formations in the collective memory of its recipients – or to bring back to the fore pre-existing connections existing on an established intertextual network. While considering that the context of the reference could bring up other associations simply via a specific name or place might seem associative, the process of connections I describe corresponds to the

very nature of memory, especially of cultural memory following Astrid Erll's definition. Beyond broadly qualifying "the interplay of present and past socio-cultural contexts" (Erll 2), the term "accentuates the connection of memory on the one hand and socio-cultural contexts on the other" (Erll 4). Erll distinguishes two levels of memory (the individual and the collective), arguing that "the notions of 'cultural' or 'collective' memory proceed from an operative metaphor. The concept of 'remembering' (a cognitive process which takes place in individual brains) is metaphorically transferred to the level of culture" (Erll 4). The parallel Erll draws between individual and collective processes of remembering is thrown into sharp relief by the influence of the two levels of memory and the role that trained individual memory plays in constituting a collective memory in medieval literature.

In her book on the uses of memory in medieval European cultures, Mary Carruthers describes a tight connection between memory and literature: "*Memoria* [...] was a part of *litteratura*: indeed it was what literature, in a fundamental sense, was for" (11). The memorial culture of the Middle Ages, as Carruthers describes it, relies on memory rather than imagination as the creative force driving literary production, and the author, to whom authority is conferred, is not a version of the Romantic genius, but a person who arranges textual elements and produces a new text by exercising their memory. Carruthers continues:

The Latin word *textus* comes from the verb meaning 'to weave' and it is in the institutionalization of a story through *memoria* that textualizing occurs. Literary works become institutions as they weave a community together by providing it with shared experience and a certain kind of language, the language of stories that can be experienced over and over again through time and as occasion suggests (14).

In that sense, works of literature become repositories of the individual memory of their composer, and by proxy (as Erll previously emphasised) repositories of the socio-cultural contexts that necessarily influence them. Processes of remembering enable processes of re-writing and adapting, which in turn become constitutive of textual communities who share a knowledge of specific motifs and stories. Considering Erll and Carruthers in dialogue with each other, it appears that the filiation of individual and collective cultural memory might operate on a less metaphorical level in medieval literary production: individual, trained memory forms part of the very fabric of

the literature that, I argue, takes the shape of ongoing networking taking place at the intra- and extra-textual level and in which women act as transcultural connective agents. Inevitably, questioning the interaction of the individual and collective levels centres writers, authors, sponsors and more generally people involved in literary production as mediators of cultural memory: in the case of *Herzog Herpin*, it centres Elisabeth.

Levine's network, as a literary form through which to read the social, offers an alternative analysis that embraces the blurriness of cultural transfer in the case of Elisabeth of Nassau-Saarbrücken and *Herzog Herpin* by focusing on connectivity and noticing how the interactions of literary shapes shed light on the social forms that structure women's involvement in premodern literature. By means of conclusion, an episode involving Frolich/Bedrüpnis, that daughter of the King of Cyprus, proves particularly productive in highlighting the interaction of the family with the Mediterranean network within an intertextual motif. The King of Cyprus, recently widowed, searches for a new wife but promised his late wife on her deathbed that he would only remarry someone who looked exactly like her. The only woman whose beauty resembles that of the late queen is none other than Frolich, the king's own daughter. The king resolves to marry Frolich and obtains the blessing of the Pope. Desperate to no longer qualify as her mother's look-a-like, Frolich cuts off her own hand and throws it into the sea, following which her father decides to banish her. Reaching the shore of the Iberian Peninsula, Frolich ("Happy") hides her identity, taking on the name Bedrüpnis ("Sadness") and pretending she is the daughter of a fisherman from the island of Rhodes. She meets Oleybaum who – having lost his first wife Gallien to an illness – falls in love and marries her. The family network of the king of Cyprus is stretched almost to breaking point, as Frolich flees across the Mediterranean Sea, moving between narrative nodes established by previous characters. Frolich displays an impressive agency in her attempts to save herself, not only as she cuts off her own hand but as she seeks out her husband herself, rather than fulfilling a more usual *Brautwerbung* scheme.²¹

After his marriage to Frolich, Oleybaum departs for Bourges to help his brother Wilhelm to reclaim the city from conspirators. While he is away, Frolich gives birth to their daughter and son and asks Beatrix, Oleybaum's foster mother, to write a letter to him to share the news. Oleybaum is ecstatic and replies that the son should be named Herpin and the daughter Florentyn after his great-grand-

21. See Bennewitz, "Mädchen ohne Hände", 165–66 and Kiening, 251 for discussions of the reversals of patriarchal structure in the Maiden without Hands topos.

father and his mother, emphasising the genealogical focus of the text while centring Frolich as an essential character in the family network. Beatrix, however, hires a scribe and swaps the letters to a false reply, in which Oleybaum supposedly asks for Frolich and the children to be burned. Beatrix's intrigue forces Frolich to flee once again and find refuge in Rome. Oleybaum discovers the stratagem but, with no way of knowing where Frolich went, rides to Palermo with his father and brother to defend the city from another attack. The king of Cyprus himself comes to help them and, as he share stories with Oleybaum, the two men realise Oleybaum's wife Bedrűpnis is none other than the king's daughter Frolich. Both decide to go to Rome together. With the reunion of Oleybaum, Frolich and their children, the final cycle of family separations and reunions closes. Frolich conditions the final reunion destination as she moves around the Mediterranean, escaping first her father, then Beatrix. While her original family network stretches to breaking point as she physically flees to the opposite end of the Mediterranean basin, the reunion of Oleybaum and the king of Cyprus reforms the family network but can only happen after Frolich has been integrated in a legitimate, non-incestuous family following her marriage with Oleybaum and the birth of her children. Finally, as the family is reunited in Rome, the cook, cutting open a sturgeon while preparing dinner, finds inside a beautiful white hand. Frolich recognises her own hand and brings it to the pope: by a miracle, the hand reattaches on Frolich's arm.

Beyond Frolich's role in the family network and her movements around the Mediterranean, the episode forms part of an intertextual network as it re-enacts the topos often known as 'Maiden without Hands', following a fairytale of the Grimm brothers and the classification of this topos as type 706 in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index of folktales motifs.²² The story can be found in many iterations, but the Frolich episode follows almost exactly the structure of Philippe de Rėmi's *La Manekine* (c. 1240), a French-language version narrating the attempted incest of the King of Hungary with his daughter Joie (who changes her identity to La Manekine).²³ The context of transmission of *Herzog Herpin* once again explains this similarity since, according to Kiening, *La Manekine* served as example for the episode as it is told in the *Lion de Bourges* (262). Kiening closes his study of the topos by considering what might have made such a story popular:

Die Geschichte einer Frau, die gottgelenkt das Spannungsfeld von Genealogie und Herrschaft durchquert und zugleich

22. See Kiening 237–38 for more on the Grimm brothers' tale and the topos in its postmedieval iterations; see Uther for a recent edition of the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index.

23. For a detailed summary of *La Manekine* and its structure, see Kiening 241–42.

neu begründet, die aus problematischen Kernfamilien flieht und diese zugleich rettet, nährte doch eine sehr spezifische Hoffnung der adligen Geschlechter des feudalen Mittelalters. (268)

(The story of a woman who, guided by God, bridges the tension between genealogy and rulership and at the same time re-establishes it, who flees from problematic nuclear families and at the same time rescues them, nourishes indeed a very specific hope of the noble families of the feudal Middle Ages.)

Reading the text as an example of noble families striving for secular power, the continuation of the family line and salvation, Kiening too emphasises the social implications of a literary topos.

The family network spreads through time and space and extends thanks to the movement of female family members. The Mediterranean network, space of connectivity in which specific locales associated with women play key narrative roles, shapes the movement of characters. The intertextual network contributes to the development of a sense of cultural memory for the audience of *Herpin* and Elisabeth's contemporaries. In turn, these three forms, when considered through the lens of Levine's "literary criticism turned upside-down" (122), shed light on a gender-specific involvement in literature by women operating as transcultural agents within the literary and social systems of late medieval aristocracy on the extra- and intra-textual levels, fostering a constitutive connectivity between courts, languages, characters, locales, topoi.

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