Karl Schmid deepened our understanding of the German nobility's changing self-consciousness between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, most brilliantly, perhaps, in his article on the Welfs' rewriting of their dynastic history. Although critics have challenged and modified many of Schmid's specific points, it is clear that there was a change in family structure from amorphous sips composed of individuals who could claim kinship, whether agnatic or cognatic, with a powerful magnate to patrilineal dynasties that were often identified with the fortified center of the lineage's lordship, such as the Habsburgs.¹ This transformation was both a cause and a consequence of the process of territorialization and occurred, as the work of Georges Duby has made clear, at the expense of daughters and younger sons.²

In this chapter I look at three highly problematic and disparate artistic and literary texts that can be read as reflecting the tensions caused for


and within noble or formerly noble families by the strengthening of princely authority. Each work was a response to a painful and troublesome past and an attempt to shape the lineage’s future destiny. What the three pieces have in common is that each was produced by a man and/or woman who was or who perceived himself or herself as a loser or potential victim in the formation of the territorial principality. I focus primarily on the family portrait in the Codex Falkensteinensis that was drawn at the behest of Count Sigiboto IV of Falkenstein and that has aroused surprisingly little scholarly interest. I compare the portrait with two works that have inspired far more attention and that I have discussed in greater detail elsewhere: the Rodenegg frescoes, the oldest known Romanesque paintings with a secular theme, which were commissioned, I believe, by the noblewoman Mathilda of Hohenburg, the wife of Arnold III of Rodank, a ministerial of the bishop of Brixen; and the Frauendienst (Ladies’ Service), the oldest European vernacular autobiography, composed by the Styrian ministerial, Ulrich of Liechtenstein.3 The unique character of these three sources makes them inherently difficult to interpret, but I believe that these texts become more comprehensible by situating them in their familial context and that such contextualization in turn illuminates their creators’ understanding of their own and their lineage’s societal position.

Before leaving in 1166 on Frederick Barbarossa’s ill-fated fourth Italian campaign, Count Sigiboto IV of Falkenstein commissioned a unique historical source, the Codex Falkensteinensis, the oldest extant family archive. Among its treasures are the only Traditionsbudi (collection of conveyances) and the oldest Urbar (manorial register) from a secular German lordship; two key texts about the Hantgemal, the Falkensteins’ predium libertatis or earnest of free status (nos. 3, 131); Sigiboto’s notorious so-called murder letter (no. 183); and a family portrait.4 Max Kemmerich in his Die frühmittelalterliche Portratmalerei in Deutschland (Early Medieval Portraiture in

Germany) called this miniature "the first family portrait of which I know." The portrait, which measures 12.3 by 16.2 centimeters, appears at the top of what was the first page of the manuscript when it was originally bound (see Figure 11.1). It shows Sigiboto, who is identified as "Lord Count Sigiboto" (Dominus Siboto comes), seated on a benchlike structure against a backdrop of stars with his wife Hildegard of Mödling and their two half-grown sons, Kuno and Sigiboto V. They hold across their laps a banner with Sigiboto's parting words: "Dic valeas patri, bene fili, dicite matri. Qui legis hec care, nostri petimus memorare. Hoc quidem cuncti, mage tu, carissime fili." Elisabeth Noichl, the most recent editor of the text, translated this difficult passage as: "Sag Lebewohl dem Vater, und Ihr, Söhne, befeissigt Euch einer ehrerbietigen Sprache gegenüber der Mutter. Lieber, der Du dies liest, gedenke, bitte, unser. Das mögen zwar alle (tun), in erster Linie aber Du, liebster Sohn." An idiomatic English translation is: "Sons, bid your father farewell and speak respect-

5 Cited by Noichl, CF, 30*.
fully to your mother. Dear one who reads this, we beseech you, remember us. All may do this, but especially you, dearest son.”

This portrait appears, at least at first glance, to be a visual representation of the patrilineal lineage that by the twelfth century had allegedly replaced the bilateral kinship groupings among the northern European nobility of the earlier Middle Ages. At the heart of this new family structure was a single dominant couple who, if we are to believe Sigiboto’s words, were bound to each other and to their children by strong ties of affection but who, we know, actually favored their eldest son at the expense of his sisters and younger brothers. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Sigiboto and/or the artist chose not to include the count’s daughters in the portrait or in the genealogy that Sigiboto himself inserted into the codex after his return from Italy (no. 181). He later directed his sons to provide one of their sisters with a suitable dowry if he died before she married (no. 142) and required his son-in-law to designate his entire estate as the widow’s dower of Sigiboto’s daughter (no. 143). But the count also commanded that his daughters were to possess no share of the Austrian lands he had purchased from his niece (no. 171). At no time did Sigiboto deem it necessary to record the names of any of his daughters in the codex.

Understanding the portrait requires placing the miniature in its proper place within the manuscript. Beneath the portrait is the notice in which Sigiboto appointed his father-in-law, Kuno III of Mödling, as his sons’ guardian were he to die on the expedition (no. 1). Before the codex was rebound in the sixteenth century, the facing page and its back (now f. 7–7’) contained the list of the count’s fiefs (no. 2). After this came the first entry about the Falkensteins’ Hantgemal (no. 3) (the second entry, no. 131, was added after the count’s return) and on the reverse side of this page (now f. 2) was the notice about the endowment of Sigiboto’s three Bavarian castles: Neuburg, Falkenstein, and Hartmannsberg (no. 4). The Urbar and Traditionsbuch followed. In other words, if a reader had opened the codex to the first page in 1166, he would have seen on the left side

6 Noichl, CF, 29*-33*. The portrait appears on f. 1’. The front side of this page (f. 1) was originally empty. Today it includes a number of entries and a title that was added by a thirteenth-century hand (37*). Noichl translated the inscription with the assistance of an expert in medieval Latin.

7 See David Herlihy, “The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment,” Journal of Family History 8 (1983): 116–30, and David Herlihy, Medieval Households (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 112–30, saw the expression of sentiment within the family as a late-medieval phenomenon, a response to the breakdown in society caused by such events as the Black Death. Sigiboto’s parting words suggest that the expression of such feelings may have existed earlier.
the portrait and Kuno of Mödling's appointment as guardian and on the right side the start of the list of the properties with which Sigiboto had been enfeoffed. Turning the page, the reader would have learned about the Hantgemal and then, turning the page once more, about the chapels' endowment. The initial manuscript, nearly half of the present codex, was the work of a single scribe (Noichl's Fl), a canon of the Augustinian house of Herrenchiemsee who drafted the notices about Kuno's appointment and the Hantgemal, the list of fiefs, and the entire Urbar. He also copied the older conveyances into the codex and drew the miniatures but probably not the family portrait.8

The portrait and its inscription must be interpreted as part of this complex of materials. Two things, one temporal, the other eternal, weighed on Sigiboto's mind in the summer of 1166. The first was the fate of his young sons and his lands should he die on the expedition. For their protection, he appointed their maternal grandfather as their guardian, but whether Sigiboto realized that Kuno would be preoccupied with his own lordship or whether he did not fully trust a rival lord, the count circumscribed his father-in-law's authority. Five of Sigiboto's ministerials (proprios viros), one of whom, Otto of Hernstein, also was his first cousin, were to swear to Kuno in the presence of Sigiboto's other men that they would not permit their young lords to grant any fiefs from their revenues until they reached their majority. The count's other men were required to give their consent and aid the five ministerials in discharging their duties (no. 1).

As we have seen, the scribe listed the count's fiefs opposite the portrait. (It is the second-oldest extant German Lehensverzeichnis; the oldest is Werner of Bolanden's.) He had been enfeoffed by three dukes, two count-palatines, two margraves, seven counts, an archbishop, four bishops, and an abbot.9 But Sigiboto's real concern was his Austrian domains, outside Vienna, which would have been difficult to manage under the best of circumstances either from his own Upper Bavarian castles or from Kuno's Mödling on the Inn in Upper Bavaria. The count admonished his ministerials, friends, and kinsmen (proprios et amicos cognatosque - as the case of Otto of Hernstein shows, it was possible for a man to fall into more than one category) to spare no amount of wealth and effort to secure for his sons four fiefs in particular. At stake were more than 400 hides situated near Tulln and St. Pölten in Lower Austria, which Sigiboto

8 Noichl, CF, 24*–26*, 32*, 36*–38*, 48*, 70*–71*.
9 Noichl, CF, 70*. 
held from the bishop of Passau; another 400 hides, most of which were in Austria, held from the sons of the late Count Gebhard of Burghausen, who had died in 1163; nearly 400 hides with which Count Gebhard III of Sulzbach had enfeoffed him; and 100 hides that Otto VI of Wittelsbach, the count-palatine of Bavaria, had granted him. Sigiboto feared that the ministerials of Duke Heinrich Jasomirgott of Austria would be enfeoffed with these lands during his sons’ minority and that the fiefs would be permanently lost. (The legal basis for such an action was, according to the entry itself, a feudal right known as *aneufl* that gave the lord use of a fief during the vassal’s minority.) Sigiboto was so worried about the possible loss of these four fiefs that after listing all his other holdings he once again warned, urged, and asked all his vassals (fideles suos) to give the highest priority to obtaining these fiefs for his sons (no. 2). The count’s admonition reveals how a determined prince such as Heinrich Jasomirgott could use his ministerials as proxies to acquire the lands of weaker lords and how the Babenbergs consolidated their authority.

Sigiboto, however, had even greater reason to be concerned about his Austrian holdings and the future of his lineage. His paternal grandfather, Herrand I of Falkenstein, had built the eponymous castle of Hernstein (Herranteiaine) southwest of Vienna, on five royal hides that Emperor Henry II had given to Tegernsee in 1020. Herrand’s father, Patto of Dilching, the advocate of the abbey in 1020, had presumably usurped this gift. The Falkensteins’ title to Hernstein thus could be challenged at any time. In 1204 Duke Leopold VI confirmed the emperor’s grant, although

10 The *Anfall* (in modern German *künftige Anfälle* are inheritances in reversion) was a problematic issue in the twelfth century, in part, seemingly, because there was some confusion about what the *Anfall* was. The issue was of concern to the Styrian ministerials in the *Georgenberger Handfeste* (the Georgenberg Compact), the privilege that Duke Otakar of Styria granted to his men in 1186 in anticipation of the Babenbergs’ acquisition of the duchy. According to article 10 of the Compact, the Styrian ministerials were not to bear in the case of fiefs the imposition that was called in the vernacular *aneuell* (the only German word in the Compact), but rather that those who had daughters would not be forbidden to bequeath their fief to their daughters. (In beneficiis nullam molestiam, que vulgo aneuell vocatur, sustinere cogantur, sed etiam qui filios non habuerint, filiabus beneficium dimittere non prohibeantur.) Heinrich Fichtenau and Erich Zöllner, eds., *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Babenberger in Österreich*, vol. 1: *Die Siegelurkunden der Babenberger bis 1215*, Publikationen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 3rd series (Vienna, 1950), 85–90, no. 65. Thus, the Compact would suggest that in Styria *Anfall* referred to the custom that the fief of a man who died without male issue escheated to the lord. This was obviously not true in Sigiboto’s case. However, because Emperor Frederick II separated the clause about the *Anfall* from the right of daughters to inherit their fathers’ fiefs when he confirmed the Compact in 1237, Karl Spreitzhofer (*Georgenberger Handfeste: Entstehung und Folgen der ersten Verfassungsurkunde der Steiermark*, Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, n.s. 3 [Graz, 1986], 65), believes that the primary meaning of *Anfall* in the Compact was guardianship of a minor, i.e., Duke Otakar was protecting his ministerials from the abuse of the lord’s right of guardianship, the issue that concerned Sigiboto as well.
there is no evidence that the hides had ever been in the monks' possession. Still, the ducal confirmation indicates that Tegernsee had not forgotten its rights and raised the possibility that the Babenbergs, or more precisely the Kuenringer, the ducal ministerials who were the hereditary advocates for most of Tegernsee's possessions in Austria, could lay claim to Hernstein. Let me stress, however, that there is no evidence that this was an issue in 1166.

Patto of Dilching, the advocate of Tegernsee, not only was the grandfather of Sigiboto's father; he also was the great-grandfather of Sigiboto's mother, the heiress Gertrude of Weyarn. Sigiboto's parents thus were first cousins once removed and had presumably contracted this flagrantly consanguineous union to reunite their Upper Bavarian and Austrian lordships. The count was so embarrassed by his parents' marriage that he deliberately falsified his genealogy in the codex to conceal the truth (no. 181). More significantly, Sigiboto was not the sole owner of Hernstein or even the Upper Bavarian lands. Both his paternal uncle Wolfker and the count's younger brother, Herrand II, had inherited portions of the lineage's patrimony. After Herrand II's death around 1155, Sigiboto laid claim to some of his brother's men and properties. Wolfker and the count's friends and retainers had persuaded Sigiboto to drop his suit against Herrand's sons, and in return Wolfker, who was dead by 1158, had bequeathed his share of Hernstein to Sigiboto and his sons (nos. 114, 115). Shortly before his departure to Italy, Sigiboto and the older of his nephews, Sigiboto of Antwort (near the castle of Hartmannsberg in Upper Bavaria), had formally divided their alohs, fiefs, and men and renounced all further claims to each other's share of the lineage's patrimony (no. 118). Perhaps significantly, this agreement was not included in the original collection prepared in 1166 because, as Noichl thinks, it brought Sigiboto no new acquisitions, or possibly, as I would suggest, because the count was not really ready to drop all his claims. After his return from Italy, Sigiboto spent a quarter of a century systematically acquiring, piece by piece, all the possessions that had passed to his brother's widow, her second

11 Freed, Counts of Falkenstein, 22-8. The imperial charter is in Harry Bresslau, ed., Die Urkunden Heinrichs II. und Arduins, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Diplomatum regum et imperatorum Germaniae 3 (Berlin, 1957), 431, no. 552. The ducal charter is in the Urkundebuch zur Geschichte der Babenberger, 1:188-9, no. 145.


13 Freed, Counts of Falkenstein, 22-30.

14 Ibid., 33-5.

15 Noichl, CF, 84, headnote to no. 118.
husband, his two nephews, their sister, and her children (nos. 135, 136, 148–52, 157–60, 171, 172). Sigiboto’s infamous so-called murder letter to Ortwin of Merkenstein, who may have been his kinsman, to get rid of or at least blind Rudolf of Piesting (no. 183) may have been written in conjunction with this family feud (both men lived in the vicinity of Hernstein).

The legacy of Sigiboto’s uncle Wolfker potentially may have been even more troublesome. Wolfker was the father of at least two sons: Otto of Hernstein, a Falkenstein retainer whom Sigiboto designated as one of Kuno of Mödling’s five advisers (no. 1), and Lazarus of Falkenstein-Wolfratshausen (no. 115), a ministerial of the counts of Andechs-Wolfratshausen. Both Franz Tyroller and Noichl identified Otto and Lazarus as the sons of a mésalliance but ventured no guess about their legitimacy or whether they had a common mother. Both of Wolfker’s sons held property that belonged to the Falkenstein patrimony. Otto sold to Sigiboto the property along the Panzenbach in Lower Austria (no. 125) that figured in the murder letter (no. 183), and Otto’s toponym suggests that he may have been the burgrave of Hernstein. Sigiboto sub-enfeoffed Lazarus with an income of two pounds that he held from Count Berthold III of Andechs (no. 2); and at Wolfker’s request the count had given a certain Hartlieb of Truchtlaching (in Upper Bavaria) to Lazarus (no. 115). These are the tidbits that a father might have conferred on a bastard, but it also may have been Falkenstein family policy, perhaps invoked for the first time in the case of Wolfker’s marriage or marriages, to require a family member who married a ministerial to renounce his or her inheritance. At least we know that Sigiboto’s granddaughter Adelaide did so later when she married the powerful Austrian ministerial, Henry of Kuenring. Thus, it is possible that Otto of Hernstein and/or Lazarus

16 Freed, Counts of Falkenstein, 46–9.
18 For additional references to Lazarus, see Freed, Counts of Falkenstein, 30n63.
19 Noichl, CF, 3, headnote to no. 1; 5, headnote to no. 2; and Franz Tyroller, Genealogie des altbayerischen Adels im Hochmittelalter, Genealogische Tafeln zur mitteleuropäischen Geschichte 4 (Göttingen, 1962), 218, no. 11.
20 Josef von Zahn, Geschichte von Hernstein in Nieder-Österreich und den damit vereinigten Gütern Starhemberg und Emmerberg, in Moritz Alois Becker, ed., Hernstein in Nieder-Österreich: Sein Gutsgebiet und das Land im weiteren Umkreise 2/2 (Vienna, 1889), 441–3, no. 6: “that Lady Adelaide, sister of Lord Conrad, count of Neuburg, mother of Lady Euphemia of Pottendorf, renounced all the inheritance, which she would have obtained from her father’s or mother’s properties when she married an inferior, namely, a ministerial” (quod domina Alhedis soror domini C. comitis de Newenburch, mater domine O. de Potendorf, renunciavit omni hereditati, quam adeptura fuisse de bonis paternis siue maternis cum nuperst inferiori, videlicet ministeriali). Benjamin Arnold, German Knighthood, 1050–1300 (Oxford, 1985), 171, discusses this case.
of Wolfratshausen were legitimate but were the offspring of a morganatic marriage or marriages. It is worth noting that I have never encountered any other man in twelfth-century Bavaria or Austria who was named Lazarus. He may have been given this unusual name to show that he was not a member of the lineage. It should be stressed that marriages between less powerful noblemen and ministerial women (Dienstweiber) were becoming increasingly common in the twelfth century and may have been deliberately encouraged by the princes to bring such men and their lordships under their control.

If Sigiboto's cousins were legitimate, he may have feared that the Falkensteins' enemies might at some later date call into question his own and his sons' free status. The revelation of the servile origin of the Erembald clan that had led in 1127 to the murder of Count Charles the Good of Flanders offers an inkling about what may have been at stake. Sigiboto's response to this potential threat may have been the inclusion of the famous passage about the Falkensteins' Hantgemal, the token of their free birth, in a prominent place in the codex. He revealed to his descendants that they and his nephews, the sons of his brother — his ministerial cousins, it should be noted, were not included — shared with two other noble houses, the Haunsbergs, who lived north of Salzburg, and the Bruckbergs, whose castle was situated southwest of Landshut, a noble hide located in Geislbach, about fifty kilometers north of Falkenstein, as their common Hantgemal (no. 3). On August 4, 1168, after Sigiboto had returned, he procured a ruling from the count-palatine of Bavaria, Otto V of Wittelsbach, that this alod of freedom, the predium libertatis, belonged by perpetual right to him because Sigiboto appeared to be the senior member of his generatio, which can mean, of course, both generation and lineage (no. 131). This entry was recorded in the codex below the first one. Sigiboto's interest in his Hantgemal was not merely antiquarian; he was taking no chances that anyone could challenge the Falkensteins' status as free nobles. In short, Sigiboto did everything in his power to secure his sons' inheritance.

Like most medieval people facing death, Sigiboto also was concerned about his eternal well-being, as the inscription on the portrait shows. There is no evidence that he made extensive donations before his departure to any monasteries, not even to the Augustinian canons of Herrenchiemsee and Weyarn, where he was the advocate. But the Traditionsbuch of Herrenchiemsee is poorly edited, and Weyarn's own records

21 Freed, Noble Bondsmen, 44, 122n92, 184–94.
only start in the fourteenth century because the church and house burned down in 1236 and again in 1350. Thus, we cannot exclude the possibility that Sigiboto made suitable arrangements in these two houses, in particular at Weyarn, which had been founded by his maternal grandfather in 1133, an event the then seven-year-old Sigiboto had witnessed.

As far as we can now tell, the count focused his attention instead on the endowment of the chapels of his three Bavarian castles, where church services were to be conducted in perpetuity (no. 4). These arrangements were, it will be recalled, the fourth item in the original manuscript. The endowment of the lower altar in the chapel of Neuburg, which had been dedicated, according to another entry (no. 180), to the Virgin by the bishop of Freising on September 8, 1164, consisted of property in the village of Seeham. One of Sigiboto's own servile knights had challenged Weyarn's right to this property, and Sigiboto had settled this dispute and given the land to the canons, to whom he had committed the celebration of the divine office in the chapel. He had endowed the upper altar of Saint John the Baptist and Saint James in the same chapel with some property and serfs in Steingau. He had placed the monks of the Benedictine abbey of St. Peter am Madron, whose advocacy he had obtained in 1163, in charge of the chapel of Saint Leonard and Saint Giles in Falkenstein, to which he had given property in Durrhausen. Finally, he had endowed the chapel of Saint James and Saint John the Evangelist in the castle of Hartmannsberg with property in Sonnering; the archbishop of Salzburg had consecrated this chapel in 1160 (no. 179). It should be noted that all these arrangements had occurred within a period of approximately six years preceding the commissioning of the codex and that Sigiboto made no comparable provisions for the disputed castle of Hernstein. He was chiefly concerned, it would appear, with his own and his immediate family's daily spiritual care at the seats of his lordship.

Let us turn our attention back to the inscription on the portrait. He asked whoever read the book to remember him. Whom did Sigiboto have in mind? Presumably, first of all, the canons of Herrenchiemsee who maintained the codex. This was, after all, their reciprocal obligation for his advocatorial protection. But if we define reading, as some charters did, as whoever seeing or hearing “read” the instrument, then Sigiboto may have had a larger circle in mind. It encompassed his father-in-law and the

22 Noichl, CF, 39*.
23 Willibald Hauthaler and Franz Martin, eds., Salzburger Urkundenbuch, 4 vols. (Salzburg, 1910–33), 2:234–6, no. 158. Sigiboto indicated he was seven when an eclipse of the sun occurred on August 2, 1133 (no. 181b).
24 Noichl, CF, 5, headnote to no. 2.
Representations of Family Consciousness

five retainers whom he had selected as Kuno's advisers and more broadly
the "fideles suos" and the "proprios et amicos cognatosque" whom the
count addressed below the miniature and on the page facing it. They were
the ones meant to use the codex if he did not return.

But what special role did Sigiboto assign his son or sons in his
remembrance? The inscription itself consists of two parts: The first, nearly
indecipherable half, which Hildegard holds (Die valeas patri, bene fili, dicite
matri — "Sons, bid your father farewell and speak respectfully to your
mother"), is written in majuscule; the second, Sigiboto's portion (Qui legis
hec care, nostri petimus memorare. Hoc quidem cuncti, mage tu, carissime
fili — "Dear one who reads this, we beseech you, remember us. All may
do this, but especially you, dearest son"), is in minuscule. Moreover, the
portrait itself is bipolar: A vertical row of stars separates the couple; a
cross, in line with the stars, divides the inscription; and the left side of the
portrait is predominantly brown, whereas the right is mainly violet.

Above all, the parents are turned away from each other and, with fingers
uplifted in gestures of instruction, seem to address different boys. Thus,
Hildegard appears to be admonishing one son to say farewell to his father
and to be nice to her, whereas Sigiboto commands the other boy to
remember him.

Such an interpretation is not, however, without its problems. Although
it makes perfect sense for a mother on the eve of her husband's depar-
ture on a dangerous undertaking to advise her son to bid goodbye to his
father, the admonition to treat the mother with proper respect is more
appropriate for the father. Moreover, there is the shift from the singular
imperative (Die) to the plural (dicite), which suggests that the first part of
the inscription or at the very least the entreaty to be nice to the mother
may have been addressed to both sons. In other words, the artist and/or
scribe may have combined, somewhat clumsily, in the first half of the
inscription the final words of instruction of both parents, that is, the shift
from the singular to the plural imperative may have been an awkward
device to indicate that both parents were speaking; or, alternatively, the
whole first half of the inscription may have been Sigiboto's symbolic last
words for both his sons. In the latter case, the tortured Latinity of the
inscription, like that of the infamous murder letter, may have been quite
literally Sigiboto's own words, the crude working Latin of a lay magnate.

25 Noichl, CF, 29*n2.
26 Noichl, CF, 30*.
27 The text of the letter reads: "Sigiboto) comes de Hademarperch O(trwino) dilecto homini suo de
Merchenstain salutem et omne bonum et quicquid amico. Mandatum istud, quod demandamus
in secreto, si persolvitis in fide, omnia, quecumque cara sunt vobis, faciam vobis. Inimicum meum
Rodolfum de Piesnich, qui multum infestavit me, si deponitis eum, ne fiat vobis et ei in
Whoever spoke the first words, the second half of the inscription, written in the singular, is clearly supposed to be Sigiboto’s parting words to the son whom he faces, “tu carissime fili,” and whom he singles out to remember him. The importance Sigiboto attached to this obligation may be reflected in the prominent place of the word memorare in the inscription. Although the boy on the right appears to be somewhat smaller than his brother (a realistic element in the portrait?), he was presumably Sigiboto’s older son Kuno. As Sigiboto’s primary heir, Kuno was destined to obtain the greater part of the Falkensteins’ lordships and would consequently have been in a better position financially than his younger brother to arrange for the proper commemoration of Sigiboto in the lineage’s dynastic monasteries and other houses. The count’s words assigning to Kuno a special memorial responsibility thus may have been Kuno’s designation as Sigiboto’s principal heir and, simultaneously, an admonition that the Falkenstein patrimony not be divided.

Conversely, Hildegard may have been bestowing to her younger son Sigiboto V her residual rights to Mödling. Interestingly enough, Sigiboto IV did lay an unsuccessful claim to Mödling in 1182–1183 after his father-in-law’s death, even though Hildegard still had two living brothers (no. 163). The placement of the portrait above Kuno of Mödling’s appointment as the boys’ guardian thus may also have been intended as a reminder to Kuno of his grandsons’ potential rights to his domains.

What does this interpretation of the portrait tell us about Sigiboto’s situation in 1166? He presented himself as the head of a patrilineal

28 Kuno was never explicitly identified as the older brother, but several pieces of evidence indicate that he was. See Freed, *Counts of Falkenstein*, 31.

lineage, but this was more a program for the future than a present reality. The breakup of the bilateral kindreds had occurred so recently in Bavaria that the Falkensteins still shared a common Hantgemal with the Haunsbergs and Bruckbergs. The inheritance of Patto of Dilching, the advocate of Tegernsee at the beginning of the eleventh century, had been divided among his Weyarn and Falkenstein descendants and reunited only by the embarrassing consanguineous marriage of Sigiboto’s own parents. The count’s father and paternal uncle Wolfsker had shared their Austrian lordship, and Sigiboto and his younger brother Herrand II had done the same. In 1166 Hernstein was split between the count and his two nephews and niece, and was threatened by the rapacious ministerials of the duke of Austria. Wolfsker’s marriage or marriages, if they were such rather than extramarital unions, had called into doubt the Falkensteins’ free status; and if Otto of Hernstein and Lazarus of Wolfrathausen had not been disinheritcd, one branch of the Falkensteins might have become like so many formerly free Austrian and Styrian nobles, Babenberg ministerials. Sigiboto had cause enough to be alarmed.

Sigiboto’s response to this looming dynastic crisis was to commission the codex, a clerical tool usually wielded by those for whom the pen was mightier than the sword, in which he recorded his and his heirs’ rights. In addition, he imposed a ruthless patrilineal strategy on his lineage. From Sigiboto’s perspective his nameless daughters were a liability—unlike his niece Judith, they obtained no known share of the Falkenstein patrimony—and even Hildegard was an outsider, although he hoped to obtain Mödling through her. After his fortunate return from Italy, he spent a quarter of a century acquiring the lands that had passed to his brother’s descendants, and the murder letter may tell us something about the tactics he employed. To prevent another ruinous fragmentation of the lineage’s holdings, Sigiboto may have discouraged or even forbidden his sons to marry in his lifetime, a policy that may have been anticipated in the words, “tu, carissime fili,” designating Kuno as his principal heir. As far as we know, the thirty-fiveish Kuno was a bachelor when he left on the Third Crusade, from which he never returned; and the count’s surviving son Sigiboto V was approximately forty when he finally married in 1196 (no. 175). Ironically, this risky family strategy of limiting the number of sons who married, enunciated in the portrait, was a major cause in the lineage’s extinction a generation later and the devolution of its patrimony to the Wittelsbachs and Habsburgs.30

If Sigiboto felt endangered by the growing power of the dukes of Bavaria and Austria, then the Rodenegg frescoes and Ulrich of Liechtenstein's **Frauendienst** can be interpreted as expressing the anxiety that noble or formerly noble families felt about territorialization and their mediatization by their former peers. The frescoes were painted around 1220 in the castle of Rodenegg (today Rodengo, Italy), outside of Brixen in South Tyrol, in a room approximately 7 meters long, 4.3 meters wide, and 3 meters high that has been identified as the lord's study or drinking chamber. The paintings show eleven scenes from Iwein's first cycle of adventures. These are: Iwein and the lord of the castle of Breziljan; Iwein's meeting with the wild man of the forest; Iwein pouring water at the fountain; Iwein and Askalon fighting with lances and swords; Iwein's final fatal blow as the portcullis falls at the gate of Askalon's castle; Askalon's death in the lap of his wife Laudine; Lunete, Laudine's maid, giving Iwein the magic ring that makes him invisible; Iwein watching the burial and mourning for Askalon; the fruitless search for Iwein; and Lunete presenting Iwein to the grieving Laudine. It is not known whether the artist worked directly from Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*, which is customarily dated between 1199 and 1205, or relied on some oral version of the tale.  

The fascinating aspect of the frescoes, besides their early date and the insights that they may provide on how a lay audience understood the problematic story of a widow who married her husband's killer, is that the artist shifted the focus from the ostensible hero Iwein to Laudine. The central scene (Scene Seven), both in its placement in the room (it is the central scene on the wall opposite the door) and in the narration of the story, shows Askalon's death in Laudine's lap (see Figure 11.2). This depiction of Laudine as the **Mater Dolorosa** separates Iwein's triumph over Askalon from his subsequent submission to Laudine. The cycle closes with Lunete presenting a kneeling Iwein to a grieving Laudine, who wears a crown (Scene Eleven; see Figure 11.3). There is no hint of the happy ending of the first part of the romance, Iwein's marriage to Laudine. In short, there is a distinctly feminine perspective to this narration of the Iwein tale: the sorrow caused by a knight's search for adventure.

31 James A. Rushing Jr., *Images of Adventure: Yvain in the Visual Arts* (Philadelphia, 1995), 30–90, argues, as he did in his Princeton dissertation, for an oral transmission of the story; but, as I pointed out in *Noble Bondsmen*, 225–6, the Rodanks were also in a geographical location and social position that would have enabled them to procure a copy of Hartmann's text at an early date.
Figure 11.2 Askalon’s Death in Laudine’s Lap. Courtesy of the Provincial Historical Monuments Office for South Tyrol, Bolzano. Reproduced by permission.
Why may such a rendition of the romance have appealed to the lord and lady of Rodenegg in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, Arnold III of Rodank (1155/65–1221) and Mathilda of Hohenburg (d. ca. 1218–1224)? The Rodanks, who were first mentioned about 1090 and who may originally have been free episcopal vassals, were ministerials of the bishops of Brixen. Arnold’s father had built Rodenegg in the 1140s and divided his lands with his younger brother, Arnold I, who had founded a cadet branch of the family at Schöneck, approximately eighteen kilometers from Rodenegg. Because both of Arnold I’s sons died without an heir (one never returned from the Third Crusade), Arnold III, like Count Sigiboto, had by the 1190s reunited the entire Rodank patrimony. In the early 1190s Arnold married Mathilda, the daughter of the Bavarian nobleman Richer V of Hohenburg and Countess Mathilda of Peilstein and the widow of the Tyrolese nobleman Hugo III of Taufers, who had probably died on Barbarossa’s crusade. Arnold’s marriage to the granddaughter of a count was indicative of his status in society. The Rodanks reached the height of their power in 1200, when his first cousin Conrad of Rodank (as bishop 1200–1216) became the first ministerial to serve as prince-bishop of Brixen. It was upwardly mobile ministerial lin-
eages such as the Rodanks, whose lifestyle and wealth were increasingly indistinguishable from that of free noble dynasties like the Falkensteins, whom Sigiboto feared.

It is hard to imagine that Arnold would have decorated his castle with this particular story if he had perceived Iwein as a murderer who had obtained his lordship through a criminal act. Rather, Iwein was an exemplary knight, the son of a king, who was presumably in some way a role model for Arnold or the guests whom he may have received in the room with the frescoes. Beyond that, viewers who were already familiar with some version of the Iwein story could easily have supplied the missing happy ending: Iwein’s marriage to Laudine. Thus, the room with its emphasis on Laudine, who wears a crown, would have been a reminder of Arnold’s own marriage to a noblewoman.

However, what if Mathilda as the mistress of the castle commissioned the frescoes, say, during one of Arnold’s absences? The story of a defenseless widow who had married her husband’s killer may have resonated with a noblewoman who had contracted a questionable second marriage to a ministerial, no matter how powerful. After all, Mathilda’s position in the early 1190s after the death of her husband Hugo III of Taufers was a precarious one. She was the last Hohenburg and her son Hugo IV was a child. It is noteworthy that neither of Mathilda’s husbands, unlike Sigiboto who named his older son Kuno after his father-in-law, gave one of their sons the distinctive Leitname or leading name of the Hohenburgs, Richer. Such a name was in itself often a claim to the mother’s inheritance. It is as if neither Hugo nor Arnold thought they had much hope of acquiring, let alone retaining, a lordship on the other side of the Alps, probably an accurate assessment of their position. In fact, we learn about Mathilda’s family of origin from a 1214 document in which she and the children of her two marriages sold to Tegernsee for 100 marks their rights to the possessions that pertained to Hohenburg. Moreover, Mathilda’s noble son Hugo IV of Taufers, with his ministerial half-brothers, was a man teetering on the edge between noble and ministerial status. In 1225 Hugo surrendered his castles to the bishop of Brixen and received them back in fief. In return the bishop promised to defend and protect Hugo as if he were an episcopal ministerial. (Plane nos fide data promisimus quod sepedictum Hug[onem] in ivre suo tamquam ministerialem nostrum contra quemlibet defensabimus et

32 Freed, Noble Bondsmen, 107–11.
33 Tyroller, Genealogie des altbayerischen Adels, 392, no. 24.
Thus, the frescoes may have been Mathilda’s explanation why she, like Laudine, had made such a socially dubious choice of a second husband and also may have been a reminder to Arnold of the deference he owed his noble-born wife.

The problem with such an interpretation of the frescoes is why Arnold III would have tolerated such a cycle in his castle. The answer may be a gendered one: Each spouse read the story differently. For Arnold the frescoes showed the story of an exemplary knight who married a queen; for Mathilda the cycle depicted the limited choices of a defenseless widow. Beyond that, Arnold, like Iwein, may toward the end of his life have been in a penitent mood. As the most powerful ministerial in the diocese, Arnold may have utilized the ministerials’ electoral rights to secure his cousin’s election after the previous bishop was elected archbishop of Salzburg (Eberhard II, 1200–1246) in defiance of the pope. Conrad of Rodank’s election may have been even more scandalous because, as the son of Arnold’s paternal uncle Reginbert, the provost of the cathedral chapter of Brixen, Conrad was in accordance with canon law illegitimate and ineligible to hold a high church office. Like Iwein, Arnold may have been pondering in old age the consequences of his actions. Thus, the Rodenegg frescoes may express the tensions that existed in a marriage between a noblewoman, the last representative of her lineage, and a ministerial, even one such as Arnold, whose family may have been of free ancestry and whose cousin was a bishop.

If the portrait was commissioned by a man who feared for the future of his dynasty and the frescoes by a woman who was the last scion of her noble house, then Ulrich of Liechtenstein’s *Frauendienst*, probably written in 1255, expresses the regrets and dreams of an influential ministerial whose family was of noble ancestry. Ulrich’s alleged autobiography has been extensively studied since the nineteenth century.

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35 For further information on the frescoes, see Freed, *Noble Bondsmen*, 224–49.

because of its unprecedented mixture of lyric and narrative elements and supposed account of courtly life. Three incidents in particular have aroused the interest of historians: the Friesach tournament of 1224, an assembly of the princes of southeastern Germany, where Ulrich became the center of attention; the Venusfahrt (Venus tour) of 1227, when Ulrich dressed as Queen Venus jousted with hundreds of men on an adventure that took him from Mestre, near Venice, to the outskirts of Vienna; and the Artusfahrt (Arthur tour) of 1240, when, traveling through the Babenberg lands as King Arthur, Ulrich invited all who broke three spears with him to join his round table. These events were long treated by scholars as historical facts because of Ulrich's references to hundreds of specific places and men who can be independently identified. In reality, the Frauendienst is a carefully contrived piece of literature that deals with imaginary events. For example, there is no independent evidence that the princes of southeastern Germany, including the patriarch of Aquileia, the archbishop of Salzburg, and the dukes of Austria and Carinthia, assembled in Friesach for ten days in 1224. Most of the incidents in the "autobiography" are modeled after scenes that occur in earlier romances or are familiar motifs and themes in lyric poems. The obvious question is why Ulrich, the seneschal, marshal, and chief justiciar of the duchy of Styria who played a prominent role in Styrian politics for nearly half a century, chose to present himself as a madcap knight.

If nothing else, Ulrich demonstrated his knowledge of a great repertory of literary works, a hallmark of good breeding, that he either cited directly or alluded to. Such familiarity with the latest literary and cultural fashions was an assertion of Ulrich's claim to noble status. Beyond that, Heinz Dopsch argued that Ulrich knew that the Liechtensteins, who had entered the Styrian ministerialage in the mid-twelfth century, were the descendants of a great noble clan, the Traisen-Feistritz, whom the Otakare, the margraves of Styria, had eliminated when consolidating their power. In other words, Ulrich's ancestors had not escaped the fate that Sigiboto feared in 1166 might await his sons. The "autobiography" was a plea to remove the barriers that separated the great ministerial lineages, many of whom, such as the Liechtensteins, were of noble ancestry, from the few surviving families of comital and free noble status in the duchy. Ulrich's vision foreshadowed the Styrian Herrenstand or Estate of Lords, which formed a few decades later and which consisted of the few surviving noble dynasties and the most powerful ministerial families, such as the
Liechtensteins.\textsuperscript{37} In Ulrich’s imaginary world Duke Frederick II, the highest regional representative of the feudal order, could ask to serve Ulrich disguised as King Arthur. Unlike the Falkensteins, the Liechtensteins survived and prospered in the service of the Otakare and later the Babenbergs and Habsburgs, but at the cost of their status as free men.\textsuperscript{38}

In conclusion, Sigiboto’s family portrait, like the Rodenegg frescoes and the \textit{Frauendienst}, is the product of a noble family that lost out in the process of the formation of the high-medieval German principality. The difference is that whereas Sigiboto feared for his sons’ future, Mathilda of Hohenburg and Ulrich of Liechtenstein regretted a lost past.


\textsuperscript{38} Freed, \textit{Noble Bondsmen}, 249–65.