

RÉGINE LE JAN

The multiple identities of Dhuoda

Dhuoda's *Manual for My Son* is an exceptional source for the Carolingian period, and for the early Middle Ages in general. It is unique in its genre, although it bears similarities to the *Mirrors* composed in the same period. It is also the work of a woman, a married woman at that, and one who by her marriage at least was a member of the Carolingian aristocracy. Dhuoda undertook the work between 30th November 841 and 2nd February 843 while she was staying at Uzés, in the south of what is now France, far from her son and her husband Bernard of Septimania. It is written not in her own hand but in her name: doubtless she dictated the work.

The problem for the historian trying to uncover Dhuoda's personality, to define her individuality and the shifting identity apparent in her work (that is, the concept of *Ego* as it is explored in this volume), is that the *Manual* is the only available source material. We have neither letters, charters, nor any other document which she might have written or received. Her name neither appears in the entries in the *Libri memoriales*, which give us so much information on the Carolingian period, nor does she feature in any extant necrology. Our impression of Dhuoda, therefore, is solely the one she herself gives us, in one single work, the *Manual*.

For a long time the *Manual* was known only in an abbreviated version from the Paris manuscript copied in the seventeenth century from another manuscript belonging to Pierre de la Marca, archbishop of Toulouse. The Paris manuscript was copied by Etienne Baluze and Jean Mabillon. It differs from two versions discovered more recently, both of which are older and more often in agreement with each other than with the Paris version. Firstly, the discovery in the nineteenth century of a manuscript at Nîmes dating from the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century (which also includes the poems), made it possible to edit the *Manual* for the first time – in France in 1887 and in Germany in 1890. Secondly, the discovery in the twentieth century of the Barcelona manuscript of Catalan origin, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century but revised in accordance with an older manuscript that is now lost, may have been derived from the manuscript received by William himself. This discovery prompted the 1975 edition made by Pierre Riché in the series *Sources Chrésiennes*.¹ What we have then is a unique work, the extent of whose dissemination we do not know, but which must have reached the person for whom it was intended. The two medieval manuscripts which have been discovered seem to be associated with Catalonia and it is possible that the manuscript was in William's possession when he died in Barcelona.

The *Manual* is a complex work, which goes well beyond the treatise on Christian education to which it is often reduced, even though it was doubtlessly later subsequently used for this purpose. I have demonstrated elsewhere that it can also be read as political treatise, intended for other readers besides William, including king Charles the Bald himself.² The very complexity of the work permits a reading at several levels and makes it possible to raise the question of a change in personality of the author herself. But another difficulty arises as soon as one turns one's attention to Dhuoda's personality. Although she is very much present in the *Manual*, writing in the first person – it is Dhuoda alone who speaks to advise, admonish and guide her son in the life which lies ahead of him – she reveals very little about herself although she is. There is in this a paradox not without significance which has led me to search for identities which may be hidden behind the picture which Dhuoda constructs of herself, and to see how these identities are revealed. Thus one returns to the question of the individual and the action of the individual in a society where the constraints of the group weigh heavily on a person and where private and public intertwine.

¹ Dhuoda, *Manuel pour mon fils* (ed. Pierre Riché, SC 225^{bis}, Paris 2¹⁹⁹⁷).

² Régine Le Jan, *Dhuoda ou l'opportunité du discours féminin*, in: *Agire da donna. Modelli e pratiche di rappresentazione (secoli VI–X)*, ed. Cristina La Rocca (Collection Haut Moyen Âge 3, Turnhout 2007) 109–128.

The first level of identity corresponds to the image one would expect of the author in a work of this kind: the image of a Christian mother. In deciding to write a treatise for the daily use of her son, Dhuoda confirmed the ideal of maternity she herself had been taught.³ It is clear that she wanted to transmit to her son in written form the advice she could not give him in person, thus conforming to the image of the good mother, who gives her children the moral education which is her own responsibility, including a rule of conduct and model of the Christian life. This had been one of the obligations of a Christian mother since late Antiquity.⁴

In doing this, Dhuoda may have been inspired by earlier precedents, and especially the collection of letters of Desiderius of Cahors which was actually compiled in the Carolingian period.⁵ Desiderius's origins were in Albi where he lived with his mother Herchenfeda before being sent to the court of the Merovingian king, Chlothar II, so that he might be *nutritus*.⁶ The *Vita Desiderii*, written probably at the end of the eighth century,⁷ mentions "numerous letters" sent by Herchenfeda to her son Desiderius to "exhort him, with a pious ardour, to strive with every fibre of his being to obey the commandments of God."⁸ The hagiographer reproduced three of these letters in which Desiderius's mother exhorted him to love and fear God, to be loyal to the king, to show love for his friends, and to keep himself from every evil deed. These are the same themes which were developed by Dhuoda and one might suppose that she knew the work and was perhaps inspired by the letters. Dhuoda is above all inspired by the 'Mirrors of princes' which were written for Carolingian princes and certain nobles,⁹ and in particular that of Alcuin for Count Wido, which concludes with the following dedication, one very close to that which is found in Dhuoda's Manual:

"I have dictated this short discourse for you, dearest son, as you asked, so that you may have it to hand every day as a kind of little manual and use it to help you consider what you ought to be wary of and how you ought to conduct yourself. In it I have also encouraged you on your path through the various trials and joys of this life, so that by them you may climb and reach the height of perfection."

*Haec tibi, dulcissime fili [Wido], brevi sermone, sicut petisti, dictavi; ut habeas ea quotidie quasi manulem in conspecto tuo libellum, et in quo possis teipsum considerare, quid cavere, vel quid agere debeas, atque per singulas vitae huius prosperitates vel adversitates exhortari, quomodo ad culmen perfectionis ascendere debeas.*¹⁰

Dhuoda, who lived at the imperial court, certainly knew this text, as she must also have known the *De institutione laicali* of Jonas of Orleans for Count Matfrid. From this point of view, the Manual is the fruit of the Carolingian Renaissance and the progress of culture in the circles of the aristocratic laity.¹¹ One finds therefore in the Manual – as in Alcuin's treatise on virtues and vices for Count Wido,¹² the *De institutione laicali* of Jonas of Orleans for Count Matfrid of Orleans, or the *De institutione regia* which this same Jonas addressed to Pippin of Aquitaine¹³ – the admonitions on virtues and vices, and the topics of the second birth by baptism, the Christian faith, penitence and confessions, and respect for holy orders. The tone adopted by Dhuoda to pass on these moral precepts to her son is the same as that in the Mirrors.

At the same time, the tone of the work is more personal than that of the Mirrors and more intimate than that of the letters of Herchenfeda. It is one of a mother who loves her children and who suffers from their

³ Katrien Heene, *The Legacy of Paradise. Marriage, Motherhood and Woman in Carolingian Edifying Literature* (Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern 1997).

⁴ On the categories of the genre, see *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West, 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker/Julia H.M. Smith (Cambridge 2004).

⁵ Giles Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections* (Typologie du Moyen Âge occidental, fascicule 17, Turnhout 1976) 30.

⁶ See Martin Heinzlmann, *Studia sanctorum. Education, milieux d'instruction et valeurs éducatives dans l'hagiographie en Gaule jusqu'à la fin de l'époque mérovingienne*, in: *Haut Moyen Âge. Culture, éducation et société. Études offertes à Pierre Riché*, ed. Michel Sot (Paris 1990) 105–138.

⁷ *Vita Desiderii Cadurcae urbis episcopi 9–11* (ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rer. Merov. 4, Hannover 1913) 548–602, at 569f. (BHL 2143).

⁸ Isabelle Réal, *Vie de saints, vie de famille. Représentation et système de parenté dans le royaume mérovingien (481–751) d'après les sources hagiographiques* (Hagiologia 2, Turnhout 2001) 419.

⁹ Hans Hubert Anton, *Fürstenspiegel und Herrscherethos in der Karolingerzeit* (Bonner historische Forschungen 32, Bonn 1968).

¹⁰ Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis liber ad Widonem comitem*, PL 101, 613–638, especially 638.

¹¹ For further examples see *Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World*, ed. Patrick Wormald/Janet L. Nelson (Cambridge 2007).

¹² Jonas d'Orléans, *De institutione laicali*, PL 106, 121–278 (DIL).

¹³ Jonas d'Orléans, *Le métier de roi (De institutione regia)* (ed. et trans. Alain Dubreucq, SC 407, Paris 1995).

absence. One is left in no doubt as to her maternal love which emerges particularly strongly at the end of the treatise. The vocabulary used to express this affection – *dulcedo, amor* – is proof of her love for her sons, and in particular for her son William.¹⁴ There can no longer be any doubt concerning her pain at being separated from her children, nor of the continuing hope which, as she tells us, she has of seeing them some day soon.¹⁵

Dhuoda had actually been separated from her second son, born on 22nd March 841, only a few months before she began her Manual. She had hardly had time to care for him, for he had been taken away from her a few weeks after his birth. She wrote that she did not even know his name because he had not yet been baptised when on Bernard's orders he was taken by Bishop Elefantus and other supporters of his father, on the latter's orders, to be with him in Aquitaine.¹⁶ Above all, however, it is the separation from her eldest son William which seems to be the cause of Dhuoda's suffering. This may seem surprising since it was the custom at that time for sons to be taken from their mothers at the age of seven and brought up by their fathers. It is true that, in the majority of cases, husbands and wives lived together. William reached the age of seven at the end of 833, when his father was in Aquitaine. It is highly probable that his mother was living in the Spanish March and that, given the family complications at the time, Bernard chose to leave his son with Dhuoda until his adolescence. This may be understood from the passage where she writes of the fear that she had when Bernard left her with her son. Bernard must have taken away his son or had him brought to him only towards 840, for William was living with him during the summer of 841 when Bernard was obliged to present him to King Charles as proof of his loyalty. Thus the separation of William and his mother would have been recent and would have occurred only shortly before the baby too was taken away.

This separation, coinciding with William's sixteenth birthday, was Dhuoda's reason for composing and sending her son the manual in which she spoke of her suffering and her concern to give him the advice to guide him through life, which she owed him as a mother:

“... seeing as the majority of women in this world have the joy of living with their children, and since, my son, I Dhuoda am separated from you by a great distance, and because I am as a result very anxious and very desirous of being useful (*anxia et utilitatis desiderio plena*) I am sending you this little book (*opuscula*).”¹⁷

Dhuoda's suffering and anxiety are recurrent themes throughout the Manual. In fact the family situation was to become more and more a cause of anxiety for her. Bernard of Septimania was in Aquitaine, in a very difficult position between Pippin II of Aquitaine whom he had supported but who had just been defeated, and Charles the Bald, to whom he had only recently given his allegiance and to whom also he had been obliged to entrust his eldest son. And if Bernard of Septimania had sent – under a reliable escort – for his second son, aged only a few weeks, it was not as Pierre Riché suggests, to bring him up as it suited him, for the child was still at the age when he would be brought up by his mother. Rather it was to keep the child safe, and to compensate for the loss of his brother William.

The maternal identity which Dhuoda places to the forefront in her text, to the point of leaving all other identities in obscurity, is nevertheless only one aspect of Dhuoda's individuality. There is another, which is at least as important but hidden behind the first; that of wife and consort.

The Manual begins with an *incipit*, followed by a prologue, a preface and eleven chapters. In the preface which introduces the text, Dhuoda begins with her marriage to Bernard, of which William is the fruit. She relates what could or ought to have been the beginning of a very happy story: she was given as *uxor legalis*, that is, lawful wife, to Bernard, her lord, at the palace of Aachen on 29th June 824. Such a privilege was doubtless the result of Bernard being a godson of the emperor. Dhuoda seemed to have great respect for and attachment to Louis the Pious, based on how she told of his death, while Bernard had distanced himself from Louis after 830. This may suggest that Dhuoda was close to the imperial family before her marriage.

Dhuoda was aware of having made a very good marriage, and further on in the manual, she underlined the illustrious character of Bernard's family and ancestors. In fact, Bernard's father, William, count of Toulouse,

¹⁴ Dhuoda, Manuel X, 3, ed. Riché 348: *Ex nimis amoris dulcedine et desiderio pulcritudinis tuae, memetipsam quasi oblitam postponens.*

¹⁵ Dhuoda, Manuel, praefatio, ed. Riché 87.

¹⁶ Dhuoda, Manuel, praefatio, ed. Riché 85–87.

¹⁷ Dhuoda, Manuel, incipit, ed. Riché 72.

was cousin to Charlemagne and very close to Louis the Pious.¹⁸ Of Austrasian origin, William had stayed at the court of Charlemagne before he was sent to Aquitaine with Louis in 789/790 and it was probably there that Bernard was born. Louis the Pious acted as sponsor at Bernard's baptism, and when William decided to retire to Gellone in 806, to the monastery he himself had founded two years previously, he was able, if one is to believe Ardo,¹⁹ to organise his own succession so that his sons Gauzhelm and Bernard would succeed his *honores*. Bernard must have reached the Spanish March as soon as he was appointed and is attested as count of Barcelona in 827 when he valiantly defended the town against the Saracens.²⁰ In the meantime he had married Dhuoda in 824.

Who had bestowed Dhuoda on Bernard – Dhuoda's father, her brother, or the emperor himself? We do not know because Dhuoda is astonishingly silent on the subject of her own family. Every theory about her family and ancestry has proved to be unverifiable or lacks support.²¹ There has been a recent attempt to attach her to the family of the Sanche counts of Gascony, on the pretext that Sancia is said to be the sister of Bernard Hairy-foot, second son of Bernard and Dhuoda. This is highly unlikely, as Dhuoda had only two children when she finished her *Manual*, 2nd February 843. She said that she was not well, and this daughter of Bernard and Dhuoda would have had to have been born in 844, the year of the execution of Bernard of Septimania. It is possible, however, that Bernard had had a daughter by another woman, before or even while he was married, which would help to explain why Dhuoda defined herself as *uxor legalis*. It was in fact not unusual for a young man to take a wife in his youth before his legal marriage later on. He would leave the first 'wife' when he married the second. The precedent for this was established by the imperial family, for Louis himself, born in 778, had had a son, Arnulf, by his first partner. The child was born in about 794, the same year that Louis married Ermengarde. If Bernard was born about 790–791, he would have been fifteen or sixteen at the time of his father's retreat to Gellone and more than thirty at the time of his marriage to Dhuoda. He certainly had at least one partner in his youth, who could have come from the family of the counts of Gascony and given him a daughter, Sancia, before Bernard himself married Dhuoda in 824. It is clear, however, that at this date Bernard had no son, for Dhuoda wrote that the marriage was followed by the birth of a longed-for son, William, in December 826. This precision, beyond any doubt intentional, would seem to prove that the desire for a son was perhaps the principal motive in Bernard's marriage to Dhuoda.

The first years of their marriage were perhaps the happier years of Dhuoda's life, for clouds were soon to gather over the couple and their family. Dhuoda says very little of these difficulties, unless it is by allusion. She writes nevertheless that she has undergone bodily suffering as a result of her continual illnesses, but also 'because of certain circumstances' and that she may only have escaped from the dangers which threatened her thanks to God and to Bernard.²² Doubtless she was unable to say any more about this, although the nature of her troubles were probably well known.

Was it a matter of accusations made against Bernard and Judith, and the family drama which ensued? Bernard was the emperor's godson and one of his close friends. His marriage took place at a time when the influence of the empress Judith, second wife of Louis the Pious, had become more pronounced, after the birth of Charles the Bald in 823. I have no difficulty in seeing here a link between cause and effect for it is possible that Dhuoda had been attached to the service of the Empress before her marriage. In any case, Bernard's influence at the court increased during those years, when the empress's party rose to power. In August 829, the emperor decided to distance Lothar from the court and to review the order of succession, previewed in 817 in the *Ordinatio imperii*: he took part of Lothar's kingdom and gave it to Charles. He then made Bernard his *camerarius*, a very important role because of the closeness to the king which the title implied, and entrusted him with the care of the young Charles.²³ This choice was doubtless dictated by the confidence which the emperor (or the empress) then had in Bernard. He was considered to be second in the empire after the emperor himself (*secun-*

¹⁸ Philippe Depreux, *Prosopographie de l'entourage de Louis le Pieux (781–840)* (Beihefte der Francia Instrumenta 1, Sigmaringen 1997) nr. 128, 224.

¹⁹ Ardo, *Vita Benedicti* 30 (ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 15, 1, Hannover 1887) 198–220, at 213.

²⁰ Depreux, *Prosopographie* nr. 50, 137.

²¹ This observation is from Christian Settiani, *Les Willelmides* (forthcoming).

²² Dhuoda, *Manuel X*, 4, ed. Riché 350.

²³ *Annales regni Francorum a. 829* (ed. Friedrich Kurze, MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed. [6], Hannover 1895, repr. 1950) 177.

dum a se imperio praefecit).²⁴ Bernard at that time was at the height of his career, based in a position of strength in the Spanish March and being all-powerful at court, where he now had access to the royal treasure which in his function as *camerarius* (chamberlain) he controlled in conjunction with the empress. In fulfilling the duties of his office he had taken Lothar's place at the emperor's side, and the hatred which Lothar felt towards him and his friends only intensified. In 827, count Hugh of Tours²⁵ and Matfrid of Orleans had delayed in going to Bernard's aid in defending Barcelona and were stripped of their offices by the emperor in the following year. Hugh of Tours had been Charlemagne's *camerarius* and his influence reached its peak soon after 820, when his daughter Ermengard married Lothar in 821. Matfrid of Orleans was his brother-in-law and he also occupied a prominent position at court.²⁶ Bernard's rise to power became in fact part of the struggle for influence at the palace between Lothar's party and the empress, to which Bernard and Dhuoda must have belonged. The chronology confirms that the influence of the empress became important only after the birth of Charles in 823, and especially towards the end of that decade.

In 830, a revolt broke out in the west, directed principally against Bernard and against Judith. Bernard was accused of tyranny and of adultery with the empress,²⁷ an accusation which weighed against the emperor as much as against the accused themselves.²⁸ Bernard in turn lost his *honores*, although and his brother Herbert was blinded by Lothar. Bernard acquitted himself of the accusation of theft in the following year and regained his *honores*, but not his influence at court from which he now kept his distance. He settled in Aquitaine where he exerted a powerful influence over Pippin I of Aquitaine. When Pippin himself revolted in 832, the emperor once more stripped Bernard of his *honores* but he seems to have kept them nevertheless, for in 838 a number of the local aristocrats were complaining about him to Louis the Pious. After the emperor's death, Bernard supported Pippin II against Charles the Bald, but after the battle of Fontenay-en-Puisaye, he was obliged to make his peace with the king and 'entrust' him with his eldest son William in 841.

The web of this political and family tragedy constitutes the background of the Manual and Dhuoda's life, even though she herself says nothing about it. What happened to her during all these years? Where was she? What role did she play? What was the nature of her relationship with her husband? These questions are difficult to answer, but form without a doubt the key to understanding at least the political narrative of the Manual.

The little that Dhuoda reveals about herself as Bernard's wife suggests that she was often alone. One may suppose that Bernard left her in the Spanish March when he became *camerarius* in 829, because it was there that she managed her affairs. She was probably not present at court when the accusations of adultery were made against Bernard and the empress. We will never know how she reacted, but she was certainly affected by them because she was probably well-acquainted with the empress and the accusations were, after all, made against her own husband. Dhuoda also seems not to have escaped the hatred of Lothar: in 834 at the time of the capture of Chalon, he had Gauzhelm and the nun Gerberga, Bernard's brother and sister, put to death. As Dhuoda herself says that she was rescued from danger by Bernard, it is not impossible that Lothar tried to kidnap her, and perhaps Gerberga also, in 833 or 834. This would perhaps confirm that Dhuoda, as a result of her relationship with the empress, had played a role in Bernard's rise to power.

Dhuoda seems then not to have followed her husband in her travels, contrary to the custom of many wives at the time who would accompany their husbands even in difficult and dangerous situations. Charlemagne was hardly ever separated from Queen Hildegard who accompanied him everywhere, even when she was with child. Fastrada took care of the children and played a political role during Charlemagne's absences, and Charlemagne missed having her with him and kept up a correspondence with his wife while he was away. Louis the Pious called his wife Judith to be with him as often as he could, and their daughter Gisela, wife of Eberhard of Friuli, followed her husband to Italy and to the north of Francia where their many children were born in swift succession. Now in two decades, Dhuoda had borne only two children, and they were fifteen years apart. She did in fact state that William was her first born and that her second son was her second child. The couple therefore had

²⁴ Nithard, *Histoire des fils de Louis le Pieux I*, 3 (ed. Philippe Lauer, *Les Classiques de l'histoire de France au Moyen Âge* 7, Paris 1926) 10.

²⁵ Depreux, *Prosopographie* nr. 164, 262–263.

²⁶ Depreux, *Prosopographie* nr. 199, 329–330.

²⁷ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris* 36 (ed. Ernst Tremp, *MGH SS rer. Germ. in us. schol. sep. ed.* 64, Hannover 1995) 1–277, at 597.

²⁸ Geneviève Bühner-Thierry, *La reine adultère*, in: *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 35 (1992) 299–312.

no other child between 826 and 841. Even allowing for the uncertainties of childbearing and a few still births, one must still ask how often and for how long her husband and wife were together. The answer is probably that they saw very little of each other, which would explain, at least in part, the absence of children during all these years. The birth of a second son in March 841 proves nevertheless that husband and wife were together for a time during the summer of 840. The meeting may have taken place at Uzès, a count in the Spanish March where Dhuoda was living in 841, “on Bernard’s orders”. Bernard, however stayed there only briefly as he met Charles the Bald at Bourges in January 841,²⁹ and when Dhuoda gave birth to her second son, on March 22nd 841, Bernard was in Aquitaine with William, in the company of Pippin II whom he was supporting.

In her husband’s absence, Dhuoda probably turned to her son William for the affection which she lacked elsewhere. Dhuoda reveals nothing of how she felt about Bernard and, indeed, the tone of certain passages would even seem to suggest a certain ambivalence in their relationship. It is extraordinary that this woman, in other respects a model member of the Christian family as elaborated in various Carolingian treatises, who wrote at length on William’s duty of love and loyalty towards his parents, should say nothing at all about either marriage or the reciprocal love and loyalty which were the foundation of Christian marriage. Bernard was her lord, she said, and she rejoiced over his successes, but there was no discussion of affection in their relationship.

If one takes her at her word, Dhuoda’s marriage seems to have been reduced to an exchange of obligations (*utilitates*) closely connected with *necessitates*. Bernard protected her when she was in danger, and she rendered him the *servitium* which he had a right to expect of her. She says also that these *necessitates* weighed heavily on her and that she was even obliged to act contrary to her Christian duty in order to fulfil them. She frequently had to borrow large sums of money from usurers, Jews for the most part, which was forbidden by the church. And she added that she did this so that Bernard would not leave her and William “as one sees other men do”.³⁰ This phrase is curious. I suggest that with it Dhuoda was attempting to assert the idea that she was obliged to take care of her husband’s interest lest he abandon her son and herself – that is, lest he dissolve the marriage – in order to disguise the fact that elsewhere she was very obviously involved in her husband’s business. For even if Dhuoda had suffered the burdens which circumstances imposed on her, these burdens bear witness to the great trust that Bernard placed in her and that he let her take care of his business affairs in the March.³¹ Dhuoda was a true consort after the manner in which married women at the time were beginning to see themselves.³²

From all of this one is better able to comprehend the political dimension of the Manual. In order to understand the ambiguity of certain passages, we also need to take account of the interpenetration of public and private, and the public face of the characters involved. William, for whom the Manual was written, was to inherit an important position, as Dhuoda points out. She herself took care of public affairs (*causae*), for Bernard was a public figure and through him she was directly implicated in political affairs. In the part of the Manual which deals with loyalty, Dhuoda imparted a message to the world which, although it came from her, was also, in the peculiar circumstances in which the couple were placed, a message from her husband. Bernard was obliged to entrust their son William to Charles the Bald. Charles the Bald had not freed Pippin II as he had promised, so that William was now a *fidelis* or vassal of the king. In order to give the public this potentially dangerous message, Dhuoda portrayed herself as a submissive and suffering wife.

The figure of the father was therefore central. It is true that Dhuoda reminded William that he owed Charles the Bald loyalty because he was his lord. Dhuoda gives William an *admonitio* on how he had to behave towards him with a summary on the loyalty of a vassal to his lord, in the context of the Carolingian power structure.³³ A lord’s authority was seen as a gift and a command from God, and apart from the loyalty due to one’s father, was the only relationship to which this applies. To defy it would be a crime none of William’s ancestors had ever committed.³⁴ Dhuoda might in fact have been afraid that urged on by the ardour of youth William would

²⁹ Nithard, *Histoire* II, 5, ed. Lauer 50.

³⁰ Dhuoda, *Manuel* X, 4, ed. Riché 350: *nec a te uel a me se separasset, sicut mos est in aliqui*.

³¹ Dhuoda, *Manuel* X, 4, ed. Riché 351–353: *Pro utilitatibus domini et senioris mei Bernardi, ut meum erga illum, in Marchis uel in multis locis, non uileseret seruitium ...*

³² Régine Le Jan, *L’épouse du comte du IX^e au XI^e siècle: Transformation d’un modèle et idéologie du pouvoir*, in: ead., *Femmes, pouvoir et société dans le haut Moyen Âge* (Les Médiévistes français 1, Paris 2002) 21–29.

³³ Dhuoda, *Manuel* III, 4, ed. Riché 149–153.

³⁴ Dhuoda, *Manuel* III, 4, ed. Riché 151.

make some sort of attempt against Charles's authority or person, that his loyalty to the king would falter and that the Carolingian style of vengeance from which his uncles and aunt had suffered would fall in its turn upon him. These fears proved to be justified, for William was put to death for treason in 849. But even more than this, Dhuoda seemed to be afraid that William, whatever pressure the king and the nobles might exert over him, should not side with the king against his father in a campaign against him. This anxiety, arising as it does from a very difficult family situation, fills the pages of the Manual.

Dhuoda next stated very clearly that it was thanks to his father, and him alone, that William held his current position in the world. His father was *de stirpe regali*, as was widely known and noted by Thegan,³⁵ and was closely related to the Carolingians through several of his family members,³⁶ besides being the emperor's godson. The Wilhelmids based their superiority on the long history of their family line, as Dhuoda pointed out, and on their royal origins which were as good as those of the Carolingian kings themselves.

Dhuoda then drew up a list of the relations whom William must include in his prayers, a list which was composed entirely of kinsmen on his father's side. She went back as far as his grandfather, William of Gellone, a valiant and loyal companion of Charlemagne's, and she made a selection from his descendants, passing in silence over three of his children but giving a prominent place to Bernard's brothers and sister, Gauzhelm, Herbert and Gerberga, who suffered from the Lothar's enmity. Here Dhuoda fully assumed the family and aristocratic identity which linked the imperatives of *memoria* to those of *hereditas*. She explained clearly to her son that he ought especially to pray for his parents and for his ancestors on his father's side who had bequeathed him their property. This 'property' (*res*) includes both title deeds and the land itself. There could be no doubt that the late ancestors for whom William must pray were the very same as those who left his father Bernard his inheritance.

The chapter dedicated to Theuderic, William's godfather is also linked to *hereditas*. Theuderic was a cousin of Bernard of Septimania, probably count of Autun as his father had been, and was chosen as godfather for Bernard's eldest son. In sponsoring him at his baptism, Theuderic became, according to Dhuoda herself, his "father in Christ", a kind of second father. The evidence seems to be that the family used this relationship for the purposes of inheritance: Theuderic was later to adopt William as his heir. Before his death, wrote Dhuoda, he handed over all his property to "the lord and master we share", that is to say, to Bernard, in order for him to pass it on to William at a later date. Bernard of Septimania thus became guardian, on his son's behalf, of the property inherited from his 'uncle' and godfather, Theuderic. Here then, *memoria* was closely linked to *hereditas*. Starting with Bernard, the father from whom William inherited the *honores* and property, one goes back to his paternal grandparents, Bernard's brothers and sisters, and perhaps also cousins who made him their heirs, making special mention of the one who was chosen by his son's godfather and coming back to the father. Thus the circle is closed.

It is hardly surprising that the *genealogia* featured the father's side so prominently.³⁷ Dhuoda certainly had a family, ancestors, in short a family heritage to leave to her sons, and her list of people to be remembered did not exclude her son's obligation to pray for his living relatives besides his father and mother, as well as for the ancestors on his mother's side. But Dhuoda had other purposes in mind when she compiled a list in which Bernard's brothers and sister, Gauzhelm, Herbert and Gerberga – who, as we stressed earlier, had suffered from the hatred of Lothar – are given a prominent place. The list proclaimed to whoever could read it that the Wilhelmids paid dearly for their loyalty to Louis the Pious but that their political choices were determined by their rank: the nobility had an obligation of loyalty to kings, provided that the kings were just.

³⁵ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici* 36, ed. Tremp 597.

³⁶ William of Gellone Septimania's grandmother was Alda, daughter of Charles Martel and Chrotrude. William and Charlemagne were cousins on his father Theuderic's side. Theuderic's grandmother Chrodelindis was probably one of Charibert of Laons's sisters, Charibert of Laon being also the father of Queen Bertrada. But there are also several connections between the Wilhelmids and the Italian Carolingians. Wala married a daughter of William of Gellone, who was certainly Chrodelindis. Wala also arranged the marriage of their son Bernard, his nephew, to Cunigund, granddaughter of William of Gellone by his father Herbert. Elsewhere the Wilhelmids were also descended from the Merovingians, as is indicated by the names Theuderic Heribert (Charibert) and Bertha.

³⁷ Contrary to the hypothesis offered by Constance B. Bouchard, *Family structure and family consciousness in the ninth through eleventh centuries*, in: ead., *Those of My Blood. Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia 2001) 58–73, especially 62–64.

Dhuoda recommended that her son served the king and all his family because God “elected and predestined them for royalty”,³⁸ but also because of the ‘natural’ hierarchy of father and son which came directly from God. Nobody, she wrote, is the child of anyone apart from his father, nor can any other person, however important, be the justification for their position in the world.³⁹ In the chapter entitled *Item eiusdem, ad patrem* she gave a long explanation of her fears of seeing her son later following bad examples or disobeying his father’s orders. We find here some unusual words.

“Doubtless in the eyes of men it is royal or imperial dignity and power which are the most important in this world: it is the custom of men also to revere before all others the names and actions of kings and emperors; they are to be respected and their power rests on the excellence of their dignity ... And yet my son, here is my wish for you: that on my humble advice, and according to the ordinances of God, you begin first by render particular service (*obsequium*) particular and by being loyal and true to your father who begat you, for as long as you shall live.”⁴⁰

Thus loyalty and service to one’s father come before service to the king, and a nobleman could not follow a tyrant king, who swept aside the hierarchy instituted by God and divided sons from their father. In this Dhuoda justified implicitly the right of nobles to break off their service to an unjust king. Jonas of Orleans did not go so far in his *De institutione regia*, but in Chapter 6, he “invoked biblical precedents for deposing a king in order to affirm that wrongs done to widows and children, unjust accusations against the underprivileged, cruel judgments and the corruption of justice: these are the evidence of the downfall of royalty”.⁴¹

The question of the lot of an unjust king, one accused of tyranny, was brought up regularly in the years 830–850 by bishops among others. It was a question which led to the deposition of Louis the Pious in 833, but subsequently the bishops affirmed that a king cannot be judged except by God. The aristocratic laity had always had another point of view and tyranny was the motive regularly invoked by them for revolt and the passing from one king to another. It was these political and family circumstances which guided Dhuoda – although she herself said that she was very respectful of royal authority – to stress her son’s right to be disloyal to a king, if he should attack the very foundations of Christian society by raising sons to oppose their father.

The Manual, centred on the figure of the father, reveals the faults in the political system in the years 830–840. The infidelity of the sons of Louis the Pious towards their father, followed by the dissensions and wars between brothers, brought disorder and the kind of conflicting loyalties of which the Manual is an echo. The crisis was at its peak during 840–843, when Dhuoda was writing her book. It was a crisis that tore the royal family apart and could destroy noble families. The Manual tried to resolve these problems, problems which William had to face, by proposing several alternative solutions to him: in the first place he was to be loyal to the king whom his father chose for him and to serve him, but, in the case of a quarrel between the king and his father, if the king should seek to do his father harm, he was to give his loyalty to his father before the king. Dhuoda thus affirms that, in the face of the crisis posed by the divisions between the Carolingian princes and the short-circuiting of the political system, the nobility must find the solution to these problems within itself. This would lead it to elect Boso in 878 and the *reguli* in 888.

In constructing a part of her treatise around the subject of loyalty, Dhuoda assumed the interests of Bernard of Septimania. Did she substitute herself for him on her own initiative? Or did Bernard order Dhuoda to write this Manual? Did he put pressure on her by taking away her new born son and adding to her pain and anxiety? We cannot answer these questions, but we can affirm that in writing these passages, Dhuoda took her husband’s part and acted as a consort, a wife involved in her husband’s business affairs.

Bernard and Dhuoda knew, moreover, that she alone had freedom of speech, a freedom which was special for at least three reasons: first she was staying at Uzès which was outside the kingdoms of Charles and Lothar, as the formula used for the dating clause of her work makes clear: it was finished “under the glorious reign of Christ and in expectation of the king whom God will appoint.”⁴² Second, she was sheltered by the number of

³⁸ Dhuoda, Manuel III, 8, ed. Riché 169.

³⁹ Dhuoda, Manuel III, 2, ed. Riché 140: ... *nullus nisi ex genitore procedat, non potest ad aliam et summam personam culmine peruenire senioratus.*

⁴⁰ Dhuoda, Manuel III, 2, ed. Riché 141.

⁴¹ Jonas d’Orléans, *De institutione regia* VI, 25–30, ed. Dubreucq 215.

⁴² Dhuoda, Manuel XI, 2, ed. Riché 371.

Bernard's supporters among whom she was living, and to whom she alludes in the preface.⁴³ She could therefore pass a message at once both private and public, in the guise of a treatise on moral education, which would not otherwise have been permitted. It was private because it was to be read by William and his companions at the court of Charles the Bald,⁴⁴ and public because it was in fact destined to be read by the members of the court and ultimately by the king himself. Third, the ambivalent tone in which Dhuoda wrote of her husband may reveal a certain resentment on her part, but may also be a stylistic device intended to put the distance between Dhuoda and her husband, out of favour at Charles' court as he was, which allowed her to pass on her most important message: that nobility cannot be loyal to a tyrant.

CONCLUSION

The historian cannot go beyond his sources. We will never know who Dhuoda was apart from the picture she presented of herself in the unique work of the *Manual*. She had a strong awareness of her feminine identity, with its weaknesses and strengths. She presented herself as a Christian mother – suffering but responsible – which she assuredly was, and which gave to the *Manual* a tone at once both firm and pleading. However, the mother was also the wife of Bernard of Septimania. Conscious of the identity of the family and of her own prominent position in the Wilhelmid kin group, she assumed its past and future in a challenging political dialectic which is clearly intended to serve her husband's interests. Finally, there was behind the woman a member of the aristocratic elite, in possession of the elites codes, signs and culture, who affirmed loudly and clearly the superiority of the nobility and its right to choose its own degree of loyalty to the king. Dhuoda's individuality, that is, her capacity for individual action, was a compound of all these identities and was shaped by the tragic events which she had to confront. The changes of identity are responses to the problems with which Dhuoda, Bernard and their family had to cope, and bear witness also to the fact that her action as an individual sought no goal other than that which would serve the interests of her circle as a whole.⁴⁵

⁴³ Dhuoda, *Manuel praefatio*, ed. Riché 20.

⁴⁴ Janet L. Nelson, *Gendering courts in the early medieval west*, in: *Gender in the Early Medieval World. East and West, 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker/Julia H. M. Smith (Cambridge 2004) 185–197, at 194–195.

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Lucy McKitterick for translating my text into English.

