

‘VIRILE STRENGTH IN A FEMININE BREAST.’ WOMEN, HOSTAGESHIP,
CAPTIVITY, AND SOCIETY IN THE ANGLO-FRENCH WORLD, c. 1000- c.1300

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‘VIRILE STRENGTH IN A FEMININE BREAST:’ WOMEN, HOSTAGESHIP,
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Hostage and captive-taking were fundamental to medieval warfare and medieval society in general. Despite their importance, however, until recently, these practices have received very little scholarly attention. In particular, the relationship between gender and these practices has been virtually ignored. The evidence, however, belies this neglect, and the sources are littered with examples that not only illuminate the importance of women and gender to these customs, but also how women used them to exercise power and independence militarily, politically, socially, and religiously. Moreover, women worked within a patriarchal society that was often deeply distrustful of their participation in hostage and captive situations in any capacity.

This thesis attempts to fill the gaps in the scholarship and illuminate the importance of considering gender when examining hostage- and captiveship. It pulls together evidence from a wide variety of historical and literary sources to suggest that women were not only victims of these processes as hostages and captives themselves, but were also active participants in them as hostage and captive takers, ransomers, and holders. Moreover, they were sometimes but not always accepted in such roles. It will also be suggested here that women were essential to medieval men’s understanding of male roles in these activities. Medieval society possessed deep-seated anxieties about the fate of hostage and captive women that were played out in a

wide variety of sources. As will be demonstrated here, by exploring all the ways in which women and gender intersection with hostage and captive-taking practices, we can more greatly understand not only how women shaped medieval military matters, but also familial relationships social hierarchies, family relationships, religious conflicts and agreements, understandings of emotions, power, authority, love, and hate; as well as theories and practices of rulership.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colleen Elizabeth Slater received her Bachelor of Arts in 2002 from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. She graduated *summa cum laude* with honors in her department and won the university prize for best undergraduate thesis. Prior to receiving her Ph.D., she received her Masters of Arts in History from Cornell University in 2005 and was the recipient of several fellowships, including the Jesse F. and Dora H. Bluestone Peace Studies Fellowship and the Mommsen Research Fellowship.

To my Mom and Dad: for putting me on the right path.
To James: for saving me from myself when I needed it most.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASC	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.</i> Ed. and Trans. by Michael Swanton. London: Phoenix Press, 2002.
CM	Paris, Matthew. <i>Chronica Majora.</i> 7 vols. Ed. by Henry Richards Luard. London: Rolls Series, 1872-83.
GND	<i>The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni.</i> 2 Vols. Ed. and Trans. by M.C. Van Houts. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
GS	<i>Gesta Stephani.</i> Ed. and Trans by K. R. Potter. Intro and notes by R.H.C. Davis. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
GR	William of Malmesbury. <i>Gesta Regum Anglorum.</i> 2 vols. Ed. and trans. by R.A.B. Mynors. Completed by R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
HH	Henry of Huntingdon. <i>Historia Anglorum: the history of the English People.</i> Ed. and trans. by Diana Greenway. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
HN	William of Malmesbury, <i>Historia Novella.</i> Ed. by Edmund King. Trans. by K.R. Potter. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998
JW	John of Worcester. <i>The Chronicle of John of Worcester.</i> 3 vols. Ed. by R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk. Trans. by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995-.
OV	Orderic Vitalis. <i>The Ecclesiastical History.</i> 6 vols. Ed. and Trans. by Marjorie Chibnall. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.
<i>The Empress Matilda</i>	Chibnall, Marjorie. <i>The Empress Matilda. Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English.</i> Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993.

Introduction:

Why Hostage- and Captiveship?

My interest in the relationship between hostage- and captive-taking practices and gender originally arose out of the idea for a much grander project about women and warfare. As I repeatedly perused the sources of the eleventh-, twelfth-, and thirteenth-centuries over the course of my graduate studies, I noticed to my surprise that women were much more prevalent in war-time situations than I had been led to expect. Furthermore, they were doing many more and much more interesting things than I had thought possible.¹ Wondering what scholars thought of these portrayals, I searched for scholarship that dealt with these women as anything other than victims, and to my chagrin, found that much of it dismissed such women as marginal, irrelevant, or aberrant.

In general, women have not traditionally been given much consideration in military history historiography. “War is the one human activity,” wrote military historian John Keegan in his 1993 monograph *A History of Warfare*, “from which women, with the most insignificant exceptions, have always and everywhere stood apart. Women look to men to protect them from danger...women, however, do not fight. They rarely fight among themselves and they never, in any military sense, fight men. If warfare is as old as history and as universal as mankind, we must now enter the supremely important limitation that it is an entirely masculine activity.”² While this view is slowly being called into question by historians of all time periods, this idea often reflects the nature of the sources available to historians. This is especially true of the Middle Ages. As scholar Megan McLaughlin remarked in her groundbreaking 1990 article on the medieval female warrior, medieval warfare was

¹ See Chapter Three for further elucidation on this topic and relevant bibliography.

² John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York, 1993), 76.

“generally viewed [by contemporaries] as the quintessential masculine activity... descriptions of warfare in medieval texts were peppered with references to gender, references which equated fighting ability with virility.”³ This gendering of warfare is often carried over into modern medieval historiography, in which references to women concerning matters of warfare are limited at best, made in passing, and very rarely explore the implications of female participation.⁴

Feminist historians, too, until quite recently, ignored discussing women in the context of war. For feminists, “women as nurturers and peacemakers, even as victims,” Linda Grant De Pauw suggests, were simply “more appealing than women who go to war.”⁵ As David Hay notes, “The assumption that war is essentially something male—be it the apotheosis of masculinity or the incarnation of patriarchy—has banished the study of the female combatant to academic purgatory.”⁶ Although there were some shining contrary examples of scholars who tried to capture the importance of these women in the Middle Ages, including Hay himself, I decided at that moment that I had found a gap in the scholarship that needed to be filled, that I

³ Megan McLaughlin, “The woman warrior: gender, warfare, and society in medieval Europe,” *Women’s Studies* 17 (1990), 194.

⁴ In many ways, this can be tied to the fact that the study of women and warfare in the Middle Ages is a young field and the product of recent scholarship; McLaughlin’s article was essentially the first to really address the issue. But even more recent works gloss over the participation of women, acknowledging their presence, but tagging it as limited. Part of this may be this subject’s association with modern feminism. On the one hand, as Jean Truax suggests, some modern feminists have used examples of women fighting from the medieval past as precedents to justify allowing women to fight in combat today, giving the subject modern political overtones. In “Anglo-Norman Women At War: Valiant Soldiers, Prudent Strategists or Charismatic Leaders?” in *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval and Naval History* ed. Donald J. Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon (Woodbridge, UK, 1999), 111. On the other, Helen Nicholson points out that “As popular feminism has tended to regard warfare as a manifestation of patriarchy which women reject, serious scholarly study of women’s participation in warfare in medieval Europe has not received wide publicity. Study has also been hampered by the prohibition in the modern western world on women’s participation in actual warfare; it seems to have been assumed that as women do not fight now, they did not fight in the past. To the casual observer of medieval history, the theoretical limitations placed upon women’s participation in public activity by the law and clerical writers seem to preclude women from participation in warfare.” “Women on the Third Crusade” *Journal of Medieval History* vol. 23, no. 4 (1997): 342.

⁵ Linda Grant De Pauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), xiii.

⁶ David J. Hay, *The Military Leadership of Matilda of Canossa 1046-1115* (New York, 2008), 3.

could pull together these pieces of scholarship with the vast array of primary source material that existed and write a narrative that placed these women in their proper historical context as integral to the conduct of medieval warfare.

I soon realized how utterly overwhelming and ultimately unfeasible this project was if I ever wanted to complete my dissertation in a timely fashion. Women were everywhere in the narratives of medieval warfare, their stories hiding just below the surface. I simply had too much evidence. As a result, this dissertation tells only one tiny part of the larger story. But as I discovered while researching this project, it is a part that needs to be told, for it is a subject that is largely undiscussed in current scholarship. Hostage- and captiveship have only recently received any scholarly attention of note, and much of what is discussed in the following chapters has never been visited at all. The evidence presented here suggests not only that hostage- and captiveship need more study, but that the relationship between these practices and gender is essential for our understanding of them. Women were fundamental to the process and to ignore their place in the custom is to miss a key piece of the puzzle. Even if women themselves did not make up a majority of hostages and captives⁷ or of hostage and captive-takers, medieval men's understanding of the process and of themselves as men was intensely shaped by the fear and reality of what happened to hostage and captive women.

What became immediately clear to me as I began to study the subject more closely is that hostage- and captive-taking practices are more than just military matters. Hostage and captive-taking customs were bound up with some of the most fundamental beliefs and practices of medieval society. They intersect with social hierarchies, family relationships, religious conflicts and agreements, understandings of

⁷ Although in the latter category, they may have constituted one; see Yvonne Friedman's argument as discussed in Chapter 1 and 2.

emotions, power, authority, love, and hate, as well as theories and practices of rulership, among others. Hostage- and captive-taking, then, becomes a lens through which we can examine the tensions at the edges of these conventions, the blurry boundaries between what was expected (theory) and what actually happened (practice). Despite the overwhelming misogyny of much of the source material from the Middle Ages that suggest women were far from empowered, once gleaned, the evidence here helps us paint a more complex picture. Women clearly participated in military and political activities with regularity despite whatever social conventions admonished them otherwise. In order to do so, there must have been other social forces at work more broadly within the family and society that argued women were capable, if not equal, partners to the men who dominated society. Furthermore, not only did they use some of the same tactics as men for engaging in the so-called “public” sphere, they also found avenues for exercising power unique to women like the state of motherhood and women’s special role as protectress of family morality.

At the same time, however, medieval women could not escape completely the patriarchal attitudes of their time. The sources examined here also suggest that as captives and hostages, women’s suffering was negligibly important at best, that men understood the violence done to women only as a stain upon their male honor, often reducing the female victim to mere cipher. Moreover, medieval writers expressed deep fears that because of women’s over-emotional nature women were unable to handle the burdens of dealing with hostages and captives. Women who expressed fear or anxiety when their family was held hostage or taken captive were often depicted as irrational and unable to handle the negotiations well, and women who came into contact with hostages or captives held in their castles were described as unable to control their lust around them. Women who expressed anger or treated hostages and captives with the same violence that men did, like the Empress Matilda, whose case is

explored in Chapter Five, were almost universally condemned as tyrants while their male counterparts could be praised for such action. Thus, the evidence leaves us with a complex and multifaceted picture of what women's experiences were like. Neither outright condemned nor wholly praised, women who were or dealt with hostages and captives negotiated complicated and biased social conventions to make a significant place for themselves within these practices.

As a result, this study has a dual focus. On the one hand, it is an exploratory attempt to document women's participation in hostage- and captive-taking practices both passively, as victims of these processes, and also actively, as hostage and captive takers, holders, givers, and negotiators. As such, in an effort to make clear to the reader just how often women were a part of hostage and captive processes, the amount of evidence provided here may feel overwhelming or like a bombardment. On the other, it is an investigation of the medieval imagination, an examination of how medieval society viewed such women, agonized and fantasized about their actions, fates and motives. As such, this study is a product of what can be called the "war and society" branch of military history—often anachronistically called "new military history," for it is no longer new—in which medieval military historians have been in the vanguard.⁸ One cannot study war in the Middle Ages without looking at its relationship to social classes and the customs and ideologies of those classes that fought and were affected by it.

This study uses as wide a variety of sources as possible from more traditionally "historical" sources like chronicles, Latin histories, letters, and legal documents to more "literary" sources like vernacular histories, *chansons de geste*, and romances. This was deliberately done. First, this is a mostly a study of lay culture, and while

⁸ Robert M. Citino, "Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction." *The American Historical Review* 112:4 (October, 2007): 1070-1090, esp. 1077.

medieval historians have a vast array of ecclesiastically-created, and therefore Latin, sources, many of which are used in this study, secular and vernacular literature is much more rare. As Matthew Strickland has lamented, “one is forced to a disproportionate extent to approach the actions and mentality of a warrior nobility through the distorting lens of clerical writers. Whether secular clergy or religious, such authors belonged to a social group which was itself forbidden the use of arms, which had long harbored grave theological reservations about the value of the *militia saecularis* in the Christian world order, and which all too frequently was the victim of knightly aggression and despoliation.”⁹ In other words, clerical writers, despite familial, political, economic and social connections with the lay world, tended to be highly critical of lay culture and its practices, especially those they deemed violent, a category which included hostage- and captive-taking. To rely solely on ecclesiastical opinion, even those writers, like Orderic Vitalis, who were rather sympathetic to the laity, would skew our understanding of these practices. In this sense using the widest variety of sources makes it possible to get the broadest spectrum of opinions across medieval society as a whole.

Second, it is a naive historian who trusts his or her sources to be objective and report only facts, especially those from the Middle Ages. Authors of all time periods have motives for writing, ideologies to support or refute. As Gabrielle Spiegel notes, “Historical writing is a powerful vehicle for the expression of ideological assertion, for it is able to address the historical issues so crucially at stake and to lend to ideology the authority and prestige of the past, all the while dissimulating its status *as* ideology under the guise of a mere accounting of ‘what was.’”¹⁰ Historical texts here, then,

⁹ *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge, 1996), 7-8.

¹⁰ Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993), 2.

serve a dual function: to glean historical data and to ponder authorial choice and beliefs.

Third, while many historians, especially military historians, tend to question the value of more literary sources in the study of military history, despite the intervening layers of motif and convention, medieval fictional texts reflect medieval societal values and norms, even if they takes the form of an extravagant panegyric, venomous critique, or imagined vision of the past that bordered on fantasy world. In the past, courtly literature and the social values it contains, in particular, have been consigned to the realm of the “ideal,” while more historical or “non-fiction” documents are said to represent some sort of “reality.” But as Stephen Jaeger indicates, this has led scholars to dismiss courtly literature’s value as a source for thinking about and analyzing medieval society. Courtly literature is “banished to a detached aesthetic existence with no ties to the other category, ‘the real.’” Courtly literature, however, for all its “enchantments, wizards, dragons, noble combats, and sublime affairs” was not just “a fanciful overlay of disengaged discourse beneath which reality could go on its dreary way.” It had “an agenda of social change.”¹¹ This, too, is true, of vernacular histories; as Gabrielle Spiegel has suggested for thirteenth-century French versions, they “represent the aspirations and anxieties of the French aristocracy responsible, by its patronage, for their creation.”¹² All texts, she argues, “occupy determinate social spaces, ...with which they entertain often complex and contestatory relations.”¹³ Like Jaeger and Spiegel, then, this study attempts to draw from the largest possible body of documentation as possible with the

¹¹ Stephen Jaeger, “Courtliness and Social Change,” in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (Philadelphia, 1995), 289-90, 308-9.

¹² Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, 6. Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman make a similar argument to Spiegel’s concerning English vernacular chronicles. “The Mont St. Michel Giant: Sexual Violence and Imperialism in the Chronicles of Wace and Layamon” in *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville, FL, 1998), 56-74.

¹³ Gabrielle Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 65 (1990), 77.

understanding that “conflicts of social ideology are borne by any available medium.... [...] Ideas in conflict do not select a particular medium as their bearer, though they may favor one over another.”¹⁴ Medieval authors who expressed concern over hostage- and captive-taking practices or women as hostages and captives did not convey their angst in one medium alone. By looking at a wide variety of sources, scholars can see the issues in a more nuanced way.

This study is not without its limitations, however. The first is geographical. In order to make the material more manageable and to stay within source material I am more familiar with, the boundaries of this study enclose what I call the Anglo-French world: England and its neighbors, France (both the *langue d’oïl* and the *langue d’oc* regions), and the Crusader lands in the Holy Land with some references to parts of Spain. These regions were not only increasingly connected as the Middle Ages progressed, but they shared a cultural interest in the same literary traditions such as the *chansons de geste*. This is not to suggest that Germany and Italy were not also connected in such traditions or that their addition would not bear intellectual fruit, only that such an activity will be a part of the second phase of this project.

The second limitation is chronological. On the one hand, this study has purposefully crossed the boundary between the Early Middle Ages and the High Middle Ages. Scholars, as will be explained in Chapter One, have argued in the past that hostage and captivity fundamentally changed as the Middle Ages progressed, often using the decades bookending 1066 as the watershed moment. This study, therefore, looks at hostage and captive taking practices across this boundary in an attempt to plot not only change in practice, but also continuity: women remained a constant feature of both customs even as the processes themselves changed.

The third limitation is a matter of voice. It is a reality of medieval historical

¹⁴ Stephen Jaeger, 302-3.

studies that the majority of the sources are written by ecclesiastical males, many if not most of them, from the elite. Even those sources that tend to be considered “popular” literature like the *chansons* and the romances reflect the limited viewpoint of the upper class, and we cannot even be sure if this viewpoint reflects both male and female understandings of the events they describe. Although ideally, I would like to have multiple viewpoints from which to understand the hostage and captive situations in question, this is often not possible. Given the nature of the sources, then, which tend to focus on the lives and deeds of aristocratic and royal society, this study will likewise focus on aristocratic and royal ladies. There is another reason that this essay focuses on queens in particular. Queens often shared in the power-structures and royal duties of their husbands, which helps to demonstrate one of the key themes of this dissertation: that the boundaries between masculine and feminine archetypal activities are much more fluid than one would expect, and that this mutability made it possible for women to perform activities like hostage and captive taking. As Louise Olga Fradenburg points out in her essay on “Rethinking Queenship:”

...Sovereignty *depends* on the use of both the “masculine” and the “feminine;” in fact...sovereignty is established not only through the elaboration of these constructs—whereby, for example, the king and queen can be taken as ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ in the register of the absolute or the ideal—but also through the dislocation and fluidity of these constructs. Sovereignty is a site of gender-transgression and crossover, although it does not necessarily follow that sovereignty has revolutionary designs on gender constructs; most often the ultimate effect of plasticity of gender in the field of sovereignty is the celebratory confirmation of difference. ...[M]ost sovereigns... whatever their biological sex, are neither exclusively ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine.’Plasticity of gender in the field of sovereignty... seems to be related to sovereignty’s urge towards totality, inclusiveness, and exemplarity (in order to gain purchase on both sexes and on all cultural functions with which they are severally associated). Such plasticity seems also to be related to the sovereignty’s urge toward exclusivity—its need to mark its difference from the subject, which so often takes the form of an extraordinary body of sexuality such as permissible incest, special blood, the body politic, and, at least in some of its counterparts, that body politic’s promiscuous relations with fictive as well as real entities.

As a result, queens and other royal women have a primacy of place in this study

because the gender plasticity of monarchy made it more acceptable for a queen to be a war leader, a potential fighter, or active participant in military situations than other women.¹⁵ As will be suggested in the following chapters, the evidence indicates that the same principle of plasticity of roles applies to aristocratic women in the context of lordship. While lords of lands tended to be male, just as rulers tended to be male, there were women who took on the role of lord either in their own right or in the stead of their absent male relative. In this sense the role of “lord” can also be seen as a plastic category of gender in much the same way as “sovereign,” and this plasticity allowed aristocratic women to participate in the same sort of “masculine” activities as queens.

An attempt has been made to discuss women from other levels of society when this is possible, although the evidence is much more scarce. Other categories will also be mentioned briefly: nuns and saints, for example. These categories may overlap somewhat, but the point here is to demonstrate some of the ways in which different groups or categories of women may have seen themselves fitting into the larger framework of captive and hostage-taking specifically and warfare more broadly.

Outline of the Dissertation

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, entitled “‘Under the Yoke of Lamentable Captivity:’ Exploring the ‘Rules’ of Hostage- and Captiveship,” focuses on pulling together the existing historiography on hostage- and captive taking practices. Coming from a wide variety of time periods and geographical regions, this scholarship has never before been pieced together to look at hostage and captive-taking practices across the whole of Anglo-French culture. Weaknesses in the scholarship also take a prime place here. Much of the scholarship on hostageship, for

¹⁵ Louise Olga Fradenburg, “Introduction: Rethinking Queenship,” in *Women and Sovereignty* ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh, Scotland: 1992), 1-3. See Chapter Three below.

example, focuses on establishing the so-called “rules of the game,” categorizing types of hostages and the types of arrangements in which hostages were necessary as well as establishing success rates. But none of these studies really examines the issues of perception: how were hostages viewed by medieval society? While scholars have tended to suggest that there were “rules” that were supposed to protect hostages and captives, only moderate attempts have been made to see whether or not those rules were truly seen as “rules” to be followed or if they were more changeable. The scholarship also, for the most part, does not deal with women, and those that do only discuss women as victims. The same is true of studies on captives. Furthermore, much of the literature that discusses captives is focused on establishing that the fate of captives improved as a result of chivalry. But as this chapter demonstrates, this argument should be reevaluated.

Chapter Two, entitled “‘...Nor could anyone report it, / That there were any women so wretchedly tormented:’ Women as Hostages and Captives in the Anglo-French World,” explores female hostages and captives as they have been previously depicted: as passive victims of their families and warfare. At the same time, however, this chapter pushes beyond the traditional approach to consider the role female hostages and captives played in the medieval imagination. Female hostages and captives played symbolic roles, not only in actual events but also within medieval fantasy and depictions of the historical past. Borrowing from excellent studies of violence done to women, such as Kathryn Gravdal’s study of rape, this chapter argues that the anxieties that the sources express over the fate of women has more to do with what women represent than the actual fate of the women themselves and as a result, is really about the abuse of men and their values.

Chapters Three and Four form the heart of this study in that they illuminate areas of female activity during wartime that have yet to be discussed by scholars:

women as hostage- and captive- takers, holders, givers, and ransomers. For the first time, women are seen as active participants in customs in which they are usually painted as the exact opposite. Women appear to have been involved in the processes much more frequently than has been acknowledged in the past. Furthermore, they use such roles to achieve positions of power, prestige, and authority within their families and communities. They also draw upon uniquely feminine ideologies and roles in order to successfully accomplish their hostage- and captive- taking, holding, and ransoming goals. Like previous chapters, this one also investigates medieval attitudes towards these women by looking at literary representations of them. What is found is that, as with female hostages and captives, medieval society was unsure how to approach women in charge of hostages and captives. On the one hand, there was a certain level of acceptance that women would on occasion have to fill active roles associated with hostages and captives. Yet there appears to have also been a deep-seated worry that women were not entirely capable of doing so and that relying on women in these cases could lead to serious trouble.

Chapter Five, entitled “‘Every Trace of a Woman’s Gentleness Removed from her Face.’ Abuse, Gender, and Politics in the Case of the Empress Matilda and the Battle of Lincoln, 1141,” is a case study of one particular hostage situation involving a female hostage-taker and holder, the Empress Matilda of England. It takes many of the lessons of Chapter Three and examines how they played out in the context of Matilda’s bid for the English throne. What becomes apparent is that Matilda’s choice to mistreat her hostage—her rival King Stephen of England—which, although under normal circumstances would have been less problematic, is understood by her contemporaries in predominantly negative ways. Her actions, rather than seen as the justice of an angry, legitimate ruler, are painted as a product of womanly anger and her inability to control her emotions. While not the sole reason for Matilda’s downfall,

her treatment of her hostage becomes part of the reasons that she, as a woman, is deemed incapable of ruling England.

In many ways, this project raises more issues than it answers, but it provides a basic framework for beginning to discuss the complicated, and often problematic, nature of women and their relationship to hostage and captive-taking practices in the Middle Ages. The nature of this project is one that will pull together the diverse and scattered scholarship of recent decades into a concise and accessible format while presenting new research to augment a developing, yet still largely incomplete, picture of women in war. The product will hopefully be a better understanding of the West's cultural assumptions and legacy on these subjects.

Chapter One:

“Under the Yoke of Lamentable Captivity:”¹ Exploring the “Rules” of Hostage- and Captiveship.

Before examining the ways in which women and gender fit into the practice of hostage- and captive taking both as 1) hostages and captives and, 2) active hostage and captive takers, holders, and ransomers, it is necessary to outline the general practices associated with both institutions. In order to do so, this chapter will be divided into two parts that look at the general history and historiography of each custom, beginning with hostageship. Each section will end by examining not only problems with the current historiography, but ways in which this project helps supplement or correct the current scholarship.

Hostageship

Historians have often dismissed the institutional use of hostages as an archaism, a tradition that waned “as various legal cultures developed more sophisticated systems of surety.”² While this may be true concerning hostages used to seal private agreements, hostage-taking appears more frequently in diplomatic and military encounters.³ Yet even those military historians of the Middle Ages who have referenced hostage use as a regular part of military practice usually note the phenomenon without exploring its implications in any depth, choosing to focus their

¹GND, 1:104-5.

² Adam Kosto, “Hostage during the First Century of the Crusades” *Medieval Encounters* 9:1 (2003), 3; Kosto, “Hostages and the Habit of Representation in Thirteenth-Century Occitania” in Robert F. Berkhofer III, Alan Cooper, Adam J. Kosto, eds. *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe, 950-1350*, Burlington, VT, 2005), pg 184-5.

³ As Kosto remarks, “While the chronology of this shift is not entirely clear, it is true that hostages only occasionally feature in private agreements in the medieval West.” “Hostages during the First Century of the Crusades,” 3. It is likely that Kosto is construing “military encounters” here in the broadest ways possible to include what is often called “private” warfare between contumacious lords.

studies more on tactics and logistics or the other standard fare of military history.⁴ But as historian Adam Kosto has noted, hostageship to secure peace and seal agreements “was in fact very common in medieval Europe” well into the fourteenth century, both within Europe and also in the Medieval West’s interactions with Muslims throughout the Middle Ages.⁵

Nor was hostageship unique to the Middle Ages. It has a long history going back well into the Greek and Roman periods and probably much further. The Romans, in particular, developed sophisticated hostage-taking ideas, using hostages as a means to influence foreign states as well as surety for peace. When they took hostages, especially hostages of high standing, the Romans would bring them back to Rome, raise them as Romans, and then send them back to their home country with the hopes that they would influence local politics in Rome’s favor, essentially making these hostages Roman clients. While this tactic was not always successful—several of these hostages lost their lives because those back home feared Roman influence—these cases demonstrate that hostages could serve political purposes outside the immediate reasons they had been taken hostages.⁶

Several historians in the past decade have started to flesh out the practice of hostage-taking in the Middle Ages and the motives behind it. Adam Kosto (2002, 2003, 2005) has written extensively on hostageship and hostage-taking practices and

⁴ A small sampling of military histories demonstrates the trend. Michael Prestwich, for example, in his history of the experience of war in medieval England notes that one of the many ways warriors expected to profit from war was through hostage-taking and suggests that the execution of hostages and captives was an unusual, but not unheard of or unacceptable aspect of medieval warfare, but says little more than that. Helen Nicholson likewise barely mentions hostages. John Beeler’s *Warfare in Feudal Europe, 730-1200*, published in 1972, does not seem to mention hostages at all. Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Age: The English Experience* (New Haven, CT, 1996), 111, 239-40. Helen Nicholson, *Medieval Warfare* (New York, 2004).

⁵ Adam Kosto, “Hostages during the First Century of the Crusades,” 3; Kosto, “Hostages and the Habit of Representation,” 184.

⁶For Roman hostage taking practices, see Joel Allen, *Hostages and Hostage-taking in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2006). Annette Parks, “Living Pledges: A Study of Hostageship in the High Middle Ages, 1050-1300.” (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2000), 6-8. For Greek hostage-taking practices, see Andreas Panagopoulos, *Captives and Hostages in the Peloponnesian War* (Athens, 1978).

their relation to warfare. He argues that unlike contemporary conceptions of hostageship which emphasize the role of force and derive from the modern framework of international terrorism, medieval hostageship centers around “the contractual role of the hostage: a hostage...is a form of surety, a person deprived of liberty by a second person in order to guarantee an undertaking of a third.” In this way, a hostage is different from a captive, who is also deprived of liberty, but is not a surety, and also a guarantor, who is surety, but not deprived of liberty.⁷ He further elaborates upon the distinction between captives and hostages, arguing that whereas captives are *taken*, hostages are “*in principle* given” even if they are not given willingly, “for hostages must be recognized as such by both parties.”⁸ There is a clear power imbalance between the giver and the receiver of the hostage,⁹ but the underlying principle is that the giver always *gives* the hostage and that this process establishes a formal relationship between the two parties bound by a hostage or hostages. He acknowledges, however, that the terminology sometimes slips, not only in the use of the words for hostage (*obses*, *obsidis*) and captive (*captivus*, *captivos*) in the sources, but also in situations where authors do not clearly differentiate their subjects as members of either category, making the process of distinguishing hostages from captives sometimes difficult.¹⁰ Although he refers in this context primarily to the early medieval world of the Carolingians, this problem continued into the later Middle

⁷ Adam Kosto, “Hostages in the Carolingian world (714-840)” *Early Medieval Europe* 11:2 (2002), 128.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 131; Kosto, “Hostages during the First Century of the Crusades,” 7.

⁹ The giver and the receiver need not be singular people. They can, in fact, be cities or towns. In these cases, “the institution of hostageship tended to be like the formation of representative assemblies, a process that linked the ruler and various communities or groups of his subjects through individuals acting in their place.” When these types of hostage exchanges happened, hostage selection often had a geographical element or social status element to it. For example, Kosto notes that in 1013, when Swein invaded England, he received hostages from every shire. Likewise, when Frederick Barbarossa was in Italy in the 1150s and 1160s, he received hostages from Northern Italian towns, and after Milan’s capitulation in 1158, he received hostages from “all three orders of the town: the *capitanei*, the *vavassores*, and the *populares*.” Kosto, “Hostages and the Habit of Representation,” 185.

¹⁰ “Kosto “Hostages in the Carolingian World,” 131-33.

Ages as well.

Kosto also suggests some commonalities concerning hostages for the Carolingian period that apply to the later Medieval period. He notes, for example, that there was “a preference for the use of sons as hostages” and only notes one case where a woman is specifically mentioned as a hostage during the Carolingian Age.¹¹ He proposes two different categories in his analysis of hostage-giving and taking. The first—finite causes—included temporary postponements of a siege in the expectation of surrender, the conditional release of a prisoner, a hostage given for safe passage through a territory who is then returned when the giver has completed his travel through the land in question, and the hostage who is given for the return of land. Whereas the evidence suggests that the first three mentioned causes have a relative high success rate because “these [are] less subject to the pressure of changed circumstances,” the last of the four—a hostage for the return of land— appears to have had a higher rate of reneging on the part of the hostage giver.¹² Most hostage agreements, however, fall into the second category of hostage-taking: indefinite agreements, defined as “grants after a defeat or subjection to guarantee the positive obligation of continued fidelity,” including loyalty oaths.¹³ He argues, however, that hostages not only functioned in a merely legal sense, but also had a real political and social “symbolic value,” serving as public reminders of submission, the relative status of hostage givers and receivers, or even the equality of the two parties when hostages were exchanged rather than unilaterally given.¹⁴ With this in mind, Kosto suggests that grants of hostages often involved parties outside the three immediately privy to agreement (the giver, the receiver, and the hostage him/herself). In the Carolingian

¹¹ The mother of Andrew, duke of Naples.

¹² “Kosto “Hostages in the Carolingian World,” 135-6.

¹³ Ibid. 136-7.

¹⁴ Ibid., 137-8.

age, the Church often manipulated hostage exchanges between two other groups—the Franks and the Lombards, for example—either as means to influence political and military events or as means to convert pagan populations.¹⁵

Kosto's theory of Carolingian hostageship is also applicable to the Crusades. He argues that hostage exchanges, while “seemingly primitive,” are a normal part of medieval diplomatic and military affairs during this time because “different political entities may not share common institutions for the guarantee of agreements and, more importantly, there is no ultimate authority to enforce such guarantees.” Hostage exchanges were therefore particularly useful during the Crusades because all parties involved (the Franks, Byzantines, Arabs, and Turks) came from very dissimilar cultural backgrounds.¹⁶ Because hostage exchange had a history in all four cultures as well as a history between these cultures, “the course of any individual episode [of hostage exchange] was determined more by the personalities involved and the particular political situation than by differential understandings of the institution.”¹⁷ They were particularly useful for facilitating the passage of crusading armies through foreign territories, when leaders on both sides worried about Crusader warriors getting out of hand and harming the local population. For the most part these were successful, with notable exceptions.¹⁸ Hostage exchanges were also used during other short-term situations like guaranteeing a capitulation after a siege. Likewise, they secured longer-

¹⁵ In the case of conversion, young men from important family in pagan tribes would be placed in ecclesiastical household, often those belonging to important Church figures in an attempt convert the young men to Christianity. Once converted, they could be returned to their native lands, and—in the eyes of the Church—hopefully wield influence over the people. Kosto suggests that this was “a wise investment in the long-term success of the endeavor [of conversion].” *Ibid.*, 144-5.

¹⁶ Kosto, “Hostages during the First Century of the Crusades,” 3-4.

¹⁷ The Byzantines, for example, had a tradition of hostage exchange with the Muslims going back as far as 650, and while the tradition was not as strong between Byzantine and Frankish powers, seemingly dying off in the 8th century, there were precedents as late as the 1060s. *Ibid.*, 6, 30.

¹⁸ One of the more glaring cases where hostage exchanged failed was after Frederick Barbarossa's successful siege of Iconium on May 18th, 1190. He received twenty hostages from the Turkish Sultan Kilidj Arslan II so that the crusaders could leave Turkish territory unmolested. When the Turks harassed the German army anyway, Barbarossa threatened to kill the hostages, and after he had left Turkish territory, he refused to return the hostages as he had promised. *Ibid.*, 8-12.

term, open-ended agreements like alliances, treaties, and truces, as well as guarantees of loyalty, although here with less success. Once in the possession of the hostage-taker, hostages could be used as “bargaining chips outside the context of the agreements for which they were originally granted,” changing the dimensions of the situation. This was not always a bad thing, however. On the one hand, the threat of violence against hostages was one way in which leaders could push for greater concessions from the hostage giver. On the other, hostage-takers could release hostages before their time or without payment from the hostage giver, on the condition or implication that this would improve relations between the two parties.¹⁹

Ryan Lavelle (2006), using Kosto’s framework as a starting point, suggests in his work on the Anglo-Saxons that although historians are plagued by “the reluctance of sources to elucidate the nature of Anglo-Saxon hostageship,” the institution of hostageship in the late Anglo-Saxon period shares many similarities with its Carolingian and Crusader counterparts.²⁰ The types of hostages (sons or kin) and the language used to describe hostageship (hostages as given, not taken) are much the same. Further, as with Carolingian hostageship, the value of Anglo-Saxon hostageship “lay in the bonds of lordship, obligation and reciprocity” because hostages were “an important projection of lordship: for both contemporaries and the audience of the sources, the holding of hostages could also be highly symbolic, personifying no less than the submission of one lord to another.” They were one tool among many that Anglo-Saxons kings could use to display their power to and over both their own native populations and foreign ones.²¹

Lavelle, however, adds three new facets for Kosto’s argument. He proposes

¹⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁰ Ryan Lavelle, “The use and abuse of hostages in later Anglo-Saxon England,” *Early Medieval Europe* 14:1 (2006), 269-70.

²¹ Ibid., 270-4; 295.

to “distinguish between those occasions on which the receipt of hostages demonstrated tangible subordination and those which projected power.”²² In other words, the language of the sources may imply that hostage-givers rendered themselves subordinate to the hostage-taker, where the reality of the situation sometimes reflected otherwise. This is especially true of relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings, where peace may have been temporary and enemies were likely to reappear in the near future. Likewise, he cautions that “while the inherent prestige of hostage receipt cannot be dismissed, ... signs of defeat, submission and superiority projected in the sources may have obscured a pragmatic reality.” Hostages could be taken before peace was concluded rather than after, implying that hostages could have served the short-term, limited, and practical goal of providing an extra incentive for parties to come to an agreement. Violence to hostages was never far below the surface, and the implicit threat to important people in the hostage giver’s life was likely to induce results. Finally, taking Kosto’s argument about hostage-taking as a shared institution for arbitrating disputes between foreign entities,²³ Lavelle suggests that hostageship was in fact a type of mutually shared social language between different ethnic groups. It was a way for Anglo-Saxons and their foreign adversaries to communicate their objectives to each other, especially in terms of peace and trade. Hostages were thus

²² Ibid., 274.

²³ Kosto suggests that the Arabs, Turks, and Byzantines all had long-standing traditions of hostage-exchange and that this facilitated relationships with the Christian West. Although Lavelle does not mention this, the Vikings also appear to have had a hostage tradition. Snorri Sturluson’s *Ynglinga Saga* (Ch. 4) tells of the war between the Vanir and the Æsir. “But when each became weary, they agreed between them for a peace meeting and made peace and exchanged hostages. The Vanir gave their best man, Njörð the wealthy and his son Freyr, and the Æsir in return gave Hoenir, who was thought to be well-suited to be a chieftain. He was a great man and handsome. Along with him, the Æsir sent one named Mimír, a very wise man. Then in turn, the Vanir gave one of the wisest from their group. Such was named Kvasir. When Hnir came to the Vanir, he was thence made a chieftain. Mimír taught/gave counsel to him in all/for all things. When Hnir was present for things or meetings and Mimír was not, and some difficult issue came before him, then he answered in the same way and he said, let others decide/counsel. Then the Vanir suspected that the Æsir may have been false in their exchange. They took Mimír and beheaded him and sent the head to the Æsir.” Thanks to Christopher L. Bailey for this reference, and providing the translation above. The original Icelandic can be found in Snorri Sturluson, “Ynglinga Saga,” in *Heimskringla I*, IF 26, ed. Bjarni Aðjarnarson (Reykjaví, 1979).

“mutually recognized personification[s] of a guarantee of behavior, demonstrable of honourable intentions.”²⁴ Even when trade and peace were broken, the exchange or provision of hostages was one way in which both parties indicated that they had understood the rules of the game.

Annette Parks’ (2000) dissertation “Living Pledges: A Study of Hostageship in the High Middle Ages, 1050-1300” was one of the first studies to examine hostageship in-depth and has unfortunately been little noticed by later scholars.²⁵ Like Kosto, she distinguishes between hostages and captives,²⁶ but she takes a different approach to the classification of hostages. She argues that hostageship should be divided into four groupings within two overlapping categories: state²⁷ versus domestic²⁸ hostages, and hostages for security²⁹ versus hostages for submission.^{30,31} State hostages were most frequently mentioned as security for treaties, submissions, and alliances, although they often proved to be ineffective deterrence to breach of agreements. Domestic hostages, on the other hand, were usually security for promises of neutrality, or to ensure loyalty from an individual or group to the monarch, and as such tended to be perceived as

²⁴ Lavelle, 290-2. Guy Halsall has suggested on the other hand that part of the reason that Vikings were so feared in the early Middle Ages is that they did *not* share the same “rules of war” as the Anglo-Saxons, and this is why, despite raiding and captive-taking being normal part of medieval warfare, the Vikings were so loathed. “Not only were the Vikings not generally aware of these rules, they did not consider themselves to be bound by them in any case, because they did not share the cultural norms upon which they were based.” Guy Halsall, “Playing by Whose Rules,” *A Further Look at Viking Atrocity in the Ninth Century* *Medieval History* 2:2 (1992), 7.

²⁵ Neither Kosto nor Lavelle mention her work in their own interpretations. This is understandable, given that the dissertation was not published and that she has not published any articles that I have found detailing her analysis on hostageship, this is perhaps expected.

²⁶ “The term captive describes persons taken as a result of warfare, abduction, and/or ambush who are subsequently held for ransom or destined for the slave markets. Captives might be non-combatants, knights taken in tournaments who must ransom themselves, or prisoners of war whose lives might have been considered forfeit and who might have been held either for ransom or for exchange.” Hostages, on the other hand, “are defined as persons who are demanded or offered by one person or group and given to another person or group for the purpose of securing an agreement (e.g. a peace treaty, truce, alliance, etc.) with the stated or implied understanding that a breach of the agreement on the part of the hostage-giver will result in retaliations against the hostage.” Parks, 21-22.

²⁷ Hostage exchanges between kingdoms; i.e., England and Scotland or Wales.

²⁸ Hostage exchanges between kings and their subjects.

²⁹ Hostages given as a part of surrender terms.

³⁰ Hostages given to guarantee or as a promise of future good behavior, or to avoid conflict.

³¹ Parks, 25.

temporary by the parties involved. Because domestic hostage exchanges passed from the less powerful to the more so and were therefore more clearly an act of submission or subordination, hostages in these arrangements were also more likely to suffer punishment when the agreement that they sealed was breached because the breach could more readily be construed as rebellion and/or treason.³² She acknowledges, however, that these categories can be problematic, especially the state hostage, because state hostages could be construed by the hostage taker as domestic hostages. This is particularly true when speaking of hostage exchanges between the English king and the Welsh. Because English kings saw the Welsh as formally bound to their crown, they felt free to deal with them more harshly.³³

Likewise, Parks highlights, in a way Kosto and Lavelle do not, that a breach of hostage agreements often endangered the hostage. The harming of hostages could be intentional, either because the hostage-giver had not lived up to his or her end of the arrangement or because the hostage taker felt that such a display of power was necessary under the circumstances. But hostage-takers had to be careful not to overstep their bounds. Even though hostage-givers knew that their hostages could be mistreated, given that hostages exchanges had a built-in ideology of proper treatment, mistreatment of hostages was usually frowned upon, and “required an explanation [on the part of the hostage-taker] if the stigma of dishonorable behavior was to be avoided.”³⁴ For example, hostage abuse could stiffen rebellion against the hostage-taker, or be seen a flagrant call for war, especially if the hostage was of a high social status,³⁵ and thus was not something to be considered frivolously. This was particularly true in the case of state hostages, where the hostage was likely to be of

³² Ibid., 26-7.

³³ Ibid., 37.

³⁴ Ibid., 198-9; 201.

³⁵ Ibid., 199-219.

royal blood and the hostage giver was likely to have greater resources available for retaliation. In addition, because state hostage exchanges were done to publicize and display victory and defeat both at home and abroad, “harming [hostages] rarely served a useful purpose since doing so only highlighted a breakdown of hierarchical relationships.” Furthermore, while homage—another visible sign of hierarchy and submission—was often a one-time or at least infrequent event, hostages “could be displayed regularly and at will.” As Parks remarks: “Dead hostages cannot be displayed; maimed or maltreated hostages may not have the desired effect; live and healthy hostages, publically displayed, communicate both dominance and, for lack of a better word, chivalry.”³⁶ In order to maintain both the public image of a dominant and submissive relationship between kingdoms and one’s respectability as a just monarch, hostages must survive intact.

What makes Parks’ argument particularly useful in the present context is the fact that of all the authors discussed so far, she is the only one to elaborate upon the role of women at any length. She agrees with Kosto and Lavelle that most traditional hostages were male kin important to the hostage-giver,³⁷ but suggests that political marriages/betrothals in which women were transferred between two people or groups in conflict with each other in order to end or check hostilities and seal peace can be construed as hostage exchanges, just done under a different guise. Although she acknowledges that these arrangements can be interpreted in different ways, she contends:

women and young girls were routinely sent away from their homes to foreign courts and households in order to establish bonds between political groups; even when their marriages were never solemnized, they might still be detained for years for the purpose of controlling the political activities and policies of their families in ways that would have been ineffective unless they were valued

³⁶ Ibid., 36-7, 43-4.

³⁷ She does state, however, that “this is not to say that women were not used as conventional hostages because they certainly were; however, in a culture which valued honor and nobility, the undistinguished detention of aristocratic women required careful handling.” Ibid., 28-9.

in *different, but no less important ways* than men were. In effect, they were used as hostages.³⁸

Parks asserts that such marriage/betrothals were useful hostage exchanges for two reasons. First, “when important long-term goals such as the permanent transfers of property or the creation of alliances were at stake, the usual form of hostageship, which involved the expectation of the hostages’ eventual return, might not suffice.”³⁹ Because marriages created kinship bonds⁴⁰—and dowries and dowers were needed—they were a perfect way to accomplish a long term, if not permanent, hostage exchange under those circumstances. Second, because such marriages/betrothals did not have the same overt submission/subordination characteristic as traditional hostage exchanges, both parties could maintain their honor. She further suggests that in some cases, these marriages/betrothals were “actually *preferred* ... over males because control of bodies, especially female bodies of heiresses, facilitated control of property and the men who controlled the distribution of those bodies had the power to affect the inheritances, lineages, and political activities of rivals.”⁴¹ The younger the potential bride the better because she could be held and controlled by the hostage-taker longer, and her marriage could be delayed for a greater time, giving the hostage-taker power over her, her property, and her family for much longer.

A major problem with all of these studies (excepting Parks) is their omission of women. While Kosto notes in his argument about the Carolingians that women were infrequent hostages, he does not mention or explain that during the Crusades not only was there an increase in the use of women as hostages, but also a large number of women who served as hostage negotiators. Likewise, Lavelle mentions Thietmar of

³⁸ Ibid., 253-4.

³⁹ Ibid., 28-9.

⁴⁰ Although Parks does not note it, women were often specifically depicted as “peaceweavers” who united together previously warring families. See Paul Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), 13, and the references found there.

⁴¹ Ibid., 30-1, 242.

Merseburg's statement that Queen Emma gave three hundred hostages to the Danish invasion force of 1016, but he never addresses its significance.⁴² Even Parks, with her extensive section on marriage as a form of hostageship, looks minimally at women who served as hostages *outside* of marriage and within the normal structures of the process. Parks' argument about "hostageship marriage," moreover, is problematic and results in more questions than are answered in her discussion. Although she is careful to note that not all marriages and betrothals were hostage situations,⁴³ her definition of marriage as a form of hostageship is so broad as that almost all of them would fit her criteria since so many marriages were made between warring factions in order to make peace and many future wives travelled to their future husband's court and lived there many years before a marriage was solemnized or consummated, two of the most important features in her definition of "hostageship marriages." She discusses some important examples that fit her criteria well, in which the women do look like hostages, and here Parks is on firmer ground, especially in the cases in which the supposed marriages never take place. But she does not examine cases that are more ambiguous. The end result is that it appears that all marriages are hostage situations and all medieval wives were hostages, which is clearly not the case. She also fails to deal with the implications of the lack of a formal status as hostage for these young women and how that shaped their treatment and the possibility of abuse and what its implications might be. As she notes, "hostageship marriages" created kinship bonds between the "hostage" and her husband's family, an element not present in other hostage situations. The power dynamics of medieval marriage themselves are quite different from hostage situations, another point Parks fails to address. She sees women

⁴² What is interesting here is that, according to Thietmar, the Danish also demanded a large sum of money and the death of Emma's step-sons from her marriage to King Æthelred the Unready (978-1013, 1014-16). See Chapter Three for further discussion. Lavelle, 281-2.

⁴³ Parks, 243.

as mere pawns or victims of the institution. But whereas in hostage situations, the hostages are often of lower status or a position of weakness, in marriage, women could come from the more powerful or prestigious family; they, in essence, married beneath themselves, something that often gave these women power within their marriages.⁴⁴

For the most part, these scholars see women as victims of these institutions, not as manipulators of them. But as the following chapters will demonstrate, while women's roles may have been limited by their infrequency as hostages, their problematic status as hostages and medieval society's reluctance to use them as hostages demonstrates their importance to scholars' understanding of the custom. Even as "victims," women could use their status as hostages to present themselves in politically motivated ways and provide justification for the actions of others. Furthermore, understanding the active roles women took and the unique practices they used in hostage-taking and negotiating practices enhances our understanding of the relationships between men and women, women and their families, and women and power.

It is also worth noting that while all of these scholars are careful to create a distinction between hostages and captives that derives from the reasons for and methods by which they were obtained, none of them highlight yet another subtle difference between hostages and captives which may also been important: the formality of the arrangement and its link to the treatment of the victims. Hostage-taking and giving were very ritualized acts and in many ways, very much like legal agreements. They represented the formal, public submission of one party to another, and as a result, hostages often had more official status and protection. Captive-taking, however, was much less regulated. While it, too, was an issue of submission, it was a

⁴⁴ Kimberly LoPrete makes this argument about Adela of Blois, for example, in "Adela of Blois: Familial Alliances and Female Lordship," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999).

much more fluid activity that was done in the heat or aftermath of battle without the same level of formality as hostage-taking. Captive-taking also had a greater amount of implied and overt violence: hostages were given, but captives were taken. It is these distinctions that may account for the varying degrees of treatment between hostages and captives. Hostages, although there were some notable exceptions and violence could be a part of the process, were treated on the whole much more carefully than captives, and there was much more apparent anxiety on the part of the hostage holder over the care of his or her hostage. It may also explain why, as discussed below, despite cultural admonitions to treat captives with care and kindness, medieval captive-takers felt much more able to abuse captives without fear of retribution or social stigma.

Captiveship

Like hostageship, captivity and captive-taking have been almost ubiquitous features of warfare, from ancient to modern times. Biblical references to the horrors of warfare and the fear of captivity abound,⁴⁵ and Roman and Visigothic law both contain provisions concerning the redemption of captives.⁴⁶ In the early Middle Ages raiding, plundering and tribute-taking—all of which regularly featured the taking of captives—were standard practice in warfare in the British Isles and on the Continent.⁴⁷ Captivity was not, however, a common fate for men. For the most part, war among the Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons and Franks resulted in death rather than ransom for its high-ranking male participants. Unlike later warfare in the Anglo-Norman period, both sides appear to have preferred to slaughter the enemy rather than capture them, and ransoming—selling a captured warrior his freedom either through his own

⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 21:1-17, 1 Samuel 30:1-6, Ezekiel 30:18, 2 Kings 8:12, Judith 9:3, Psalms 137:9, Isaiah 13:16, 18; Amos 1:13, and Nahum 3:1-19 all dwell upon the horrors of what happened after a battle was lost, of which captivity was a part.

⁴⁶ James Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain* (Philadelphia, 1986), 6.

⁴⁷ Halsall, 4.

payment or that of his family or friends—does not seem to have been common. There were some exceptions, however, and they tended to follow certain rules. First, those that were most likely to be ransomed were not taken in battle, but in raids or the capture of cities because these activities were done mostly for financial profit rather than for conquest. If captive-takers thought that sufficient money could be made either by enslavement or ransom, or that the captive would serve as an effective bargaining tool, captivity was a possibility. Captivity was usually reserved for women and children, and most would be “destined for the slave markets of Northern Europe or the East.”⁴⁸

The rise of “chivalric knighthood” in the 11th century seems to have lessened the chances of outright slaughter and slavery in the West and increased the potential of captivity for both men and women. Captivity became more monetarily beneficial to the captive-taker. War was an expensive proposition and risky investment in the Middle Ages. Between paying for his entourage, horse, and equipment, a knight or lord could easily become impecunious. Captive-taking was a quick and easy way to get money or goods immediately, while other more traditional methods of earning money took time and were not always as profitable.⁴⁹ The ransoming of captives also became a charitable act for Christians, which increased its prevalence. In fact, due to “increasingly bitter Muslim-Christian conflict engendered by crusader enthusiasm and Berber revivalism,” the twelfth century saw “increasing instances of capture, which in turn led to attempts to organize the means of redemption,” especially in Spain where religious organizations like the Order of Merced were created exclusively for the purpose of ransoming captives. Ransomers came from all walks of life—kings,

⁴⁸ Matthew Strickland, “Slaughter, Slavery, or Ransom: the Impact of the Conquest on Conduct in Warfare,” in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Carol Hicks (Stamford, England: 1992), 51-8, 47-8.

⁴⁹ Jean Dunbabin, *Captivity and Imprisonment in Medieval Europe, 1000-1300* (New York, 2002), 89.

merchants, mendicants, military orders, cities, and other individuals all participated.⁵⁰

One of the many problems with studying captivity and captivity-taking practices, however, is that it is rarely documented in any detail. As James Brodman notes in his study of the Order of Merced, “The threat of capture, whether by pirates or coastal raiders, or during one of [Spain’s] intermittent wars, was ... so persistent and ordinary ... that individual instances of capture rarely elicited much notice beyond illusions in chronicles and wills.”⁵¹ This could easily apply to captivity outside of the Spanish context. Many references to captive-taking practices are brief at best, noting only that captives were taken, perhaps with the detail of the chains by which they were bound, or that they were to be ransomed.

Despite this potential problem in the sources, captivity has received some scholarly attention. In the past, studies of captivity usually approached the concept from a legal or judicial perspective, focusing on the increasing importance of prisons and punitive or custodial imprisonment.⁵² More recent studies still follow this trend. Guy Geltner’s recent monograph, *The Medieval Prison: A Social History*, for example, as the title suggests, focuses on the development of medieval prisons rather than on captivity in any broad sense.⁵³ However, scholars in the 1990s began to revive close examination of other medieval narratives of captivity and captive-takers. These studies have demonstrated the importance of captivity and captive-taking in the prosecution of medieval warfare and have made efforts to understand and analyze it.

John Gillingham has dedicated a large part of his career outlining the

⁵⁰ James Brodman, 6-7, and *passim*.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1. Brodman, despite his excellent study, does not receive as much attention here as perhaps one would expect because he focuses solely on the practice of ransoming captives through religious redemptive orders in Spain, which mostly falls out of the parameters of this study. He does not tend to extrapolate his ideas to the broader practice of captive redemption.

⁵² Ralph Pugh in discussing medieval England, charts the Crown’s increasingly successful attempts at creating a monopoly over justice and incarceration. He speaks very little if at all about captivity or imprisonment in relationship to warfare. Ralph Pugh, *Imprisonment in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1968).

⁵³ Princeton, 2008.

relationship between the English and their Celtic neighbors and the changes in English warfare as a result of the Norman conquest of 1066. As a result, many of his articles (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995)⁵⁴ are relevant since they touch upon captive-taking and life in captivity. He argues that previous social relations between captive and captor played a significant role in determining how the captive was treated in captivity. He suggests two trends helped shape this. First, by the twelfth century, a chivalric code was introduced in England that attempted “to limit the brutality of war by treating the defeated in a more humane fashion,” and that it was assumed by those of the upper strata that this code would be observed, which “enabled enemies to trust each other’s word.” This “compassionate treatment of high-status enemies” was “a defining feature of chivalry.”

In order to prove his argument, Gillingham focuses on the decrease in the reported number of violent deaths during war in the Anglo-Norman realm. He claims that in Normandy after 1025, both blood feuds and rebellions became distinctly less violent than they had been in the past, remarking that only eight men were murdered and one mutilated. Specifically, during “anarchical” rule of Robert Curthose—which chronicler Orderic Vitalis among others always painted as a time of widespread violence and civil war—not a single aristocrat was murdered. In England, the arrival of the Normans saw the treatment of enemies change for the better, a trend epitomized by William the Conqueror, who, rather than eliminate his English enemies, including his rival to the throne, Edgar Atheling, chose clemency instead. Even rebels had little to fear post-1066. While Anglo-Saxon kings and lords had regularly done violence to their enemies and rivals and Celtic society continued to do so, “the clement treatment

⁵⁴ All of these articles have been conveniently assembled in one volume entitled *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity, and Political Values* (Rochester, NY, 2000). For the following footnotes, the name of the original article will be given and the page numbers from this volume will be given.

of rebel traitors became the norm during the chivalrous centuries which started with the reign of William the Bastard.” He suggests that the reason for this decrease in violence may have been the result of two different rulers in England and Normandy and the weight of divided loyalties between the English and French crowns for many English and Norman barons. Barons were forced to choose between competing obligations, and as a result, were less likely to be blamed for choosing one side over the other. Violent deaths for assassination attempts continued to be acceptable, but kings who severely punished rebels—for example, William Rufus’s 1095 hanging of the rebel William de Alderie and Henry I’s blinding of William of Mortain in captivity—were criticized by chroniclers for their cruelty. Thus while, “in England, disputes over succession to high office, or succession to great estates, certainly involved violence, ... it was violence which was controlled so as to spare the lives—and limbs—of the royals and aristocrats engaged in it.”⁵⁵

Second, there was an increasing divide between English and Celtic society in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which resulted in more violent treatment of captives by both cultures when they were in conflict with each other. According to Gillingham, while prior to the arrival of the Normans Anglo-Saxon and Celtic societies had looked alike, by the twelfth century chroniclers in England were regularly referring to the Welsh, Irish, and Scots as barbarians, seeing their culture as backward and looking upon their war-time practices as abhorrent. In particular, the English were horrified by the “slave hunt.” As the practice of slavery disappeared from England, it remained in the Celtic world. During war time, Welsh, Irish, and Scottish warriors took captives specifically for the purpose of selling them into slavery, usually killing all warriors and all others whom they would not be able to sell. While the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle had rarely made judgmental comments about slave

⁵⁵ “1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England,” 209-12, 221-226.

raiding, by the time of the 1136-7 rebellion of the Welsh and the 1138 invasion of the Scots, English chroniclers were writing in what Gillingham calls “hysterical language” and “a deluge of vituperation,”⁵⁶ painting gruesome and savage pictures of Celtic warriors brutalizing women, throwing babies on pikes, dashing brains out, and dragging off captives. This trend to distinguish between the Anglo-Norman world and the Celtic one is seen in Gerald of Wales who, in his *Expugnatio Hibernica*, juxtaposes French-ified English culture and Celtic peoples by remarking that: “In France, knights are held in captivity; here [i.e. Wales and Ireland] they are decapitated. There they are ransomed, here they are butchered.”⁵⁷

Gillingham further suggests that “the conventions of chivalry were appropriate to a certain stage of socio-economic development, one which England had reached by the twelfth century but which Celtic countries had not.” English society had become “a highly monetized society,” which made ransoming a more reasonable and therefore more popular option. It was strategically more viable and more profitable for warriors to capture their enemy alive and treat him well in order to extract large sums of money from him or his family. In Celtic society, which was not as monetized, ransoming was less of an option and death or slavery more common. Furthermore, in Anglo-Norman society, which had developed cities as well as castles and fortified towns, the ransoming of captives for the surrender of these strategic strongholds was common. Celtic society, however, had few of these concentrated population centers or castles, making the ransom of captives for these purposes also unlikely. As a result, neither the English nor the Celts tended to ransom captives taken when they warred against each other. As Gillingham notes, for the English, the only

⁵⁶ “Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Britain and Ireland,” 44; “The Foundations of a Disunited Kingdom,” 102.

⁵⁷ “1006 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England,” 227. The quote is from *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, ed. and trans. A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978), 246-7.

way to defeat the Welsh, Irish, or Scots was to put them “out of action—by killing them or mutilating them.”⁵⁸

The cultural evolution of the Anglo-Normans also had profound effects on both soldiers who did not come from the upper echelons of society and non-combatants within the Anglo-Norman realm. For common soldiers, these effects were not positive. Ironically, the elimination of slavery meant that “ordinary soldiers who could not afford ransoms were no longer a source of potential profit, and in consequence, especially in the closing stages [of a battle], were now more likely to be killed than captured.”⁵⁹ This was especially true for foot soldiers, crossbowmen, and the garrisons of castles. Non-combatants, however, while still subject to the ravaging of their lands and the theft or destruction of their property and goods, were less likely to be subject to bodily harm or capture because selling them into slavery was no longer an option. While those on the periphery of England might still fear the incursions of the Welsh or Scots, for the most part, non-combatants could by the twelfth century expect less violence to themselves.

Matthew Strickland’s article on “Slaughter, Slavery, or Ransom” (1992) and his monograph *War and Chivalry* (1996) were two of the earlier studies to look extensively at the uses of war-related captivity in the Anglo-French realms. In a world built on a foundation of warfare, captivity was an essential feature of society. He, as Gillingham does, draws a sharp line at the Norman Conquest of 1066, arguing that in pre-Conquest England, captivity was much more likely to result in death. By the 1030s, however, the Normans were beginning to adopt the process of ransoming, regularly attempting to capture prisoners as a money-making venture. By the time the Anglo-Normans ruled England, ransom and non-fatal captivity were regular features

⁵⁸ “Conquering the Barbarians,” 53-5.

⁵⁹ “The Introduction of Knight Service into England,” 184.

of warfare. He suggests several reasons for this division. First, he implies that blood-feud might have been one factor in the bloodiness of Anglo-Scandinavian warfare, and that warriors of the time might have been compelled not only to avenge their lords, kin, or fellow brothers-in-arms, but also a greater impetus to die for them in battle rather than be captured afterwards. He also points out that the Anglo-Saxon sources construe these wars as pagan versus Christian, and suggest that Anglo-Saxon warriors may have felt themselves to be defenders of the Christian faith against a hostile, pagan force. Layered on top of this was the Anglo-Saxon sentiment that they were defenders of their homeland against invaders. Because the stakes were higher, the death rates followed suit.

According to Strickland, for the Anglo-Normans, however, warfare was different than it had been for the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings. This resulted from the social and financial burdens on the elite classes beginning in the Anglo-Norman period. Financially, as noted above, war became more expensive, and the chroniclers report that warriors not only captured other warriors for profit, but also horses and military gear such as hauberks and swords.⁶⁰ Keeping captives alive meant that they could either pay their ransoms with money or at least with the armor they carried and the horses they rode. The importance of captivity, however, was located in the nature of medieval warfare at the time, and in many ways served as its foundation. War was typically against neighbors, members of the same social group, and relatives either by blood or marriage, and therefore the impetus to kill was not as strong. War was also on a much smaller scale, and the opposing sides tended to be evenly matched, so battles were never really decisive. Further, Anglo-Norman warfare also lacked a raiding element, which was a staple of Viking warfare, and focused more on land-based maneuvers from the back of a horse. This type of warfare required training and

⁶⁰ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 183-4.

money, and created a “heightened sense of a profession of arms and a milieu in which the aristocracy came increasingly to identify itself with its military function.” In other words, warriors—even on opposing sides—shared the same value and social system, creating a sense of brotherhood among warriors, and they did not want to kill their fellow knights.⁶¹ The increase of captivity and ransom rather than death, then, was a sign for Strickland as well as Gillingham of the growth and growing importance of chivalry. Because elite society was based in war and the warrior ethos, which in turn was built upon the principle of captivity rather than killing, the principle of ransom became a driving force behind the way elites conducted their own lives and their relationships with each other; it “at once both limited the execution of warfare itself by the prevention of wholesale killing among the warrior nobility and yet, as one of the principal *raisons d’être* of war for participants of all ranks, acted as a incentive to the prosecution and further escalation of hostilities.”⁶²

Captivity, however, had military as well as social and financial purposes, and it did not necessarily limit the violence done to captives, even if it did keep them from death.⁶³ Strickland suggests that the conditions for captives themselves could vary drastically, some being held honorably and others in less desirable conditions, and that the reasons for these differences could range from personal hatred of the captive to the strategic military goals. The bitter feuds of the Anglo-Norman families often led to harsh treatment, as did rebellions. In particular, acquiring castles—which under normal circumstances could take a long time with great expense—was one of the main reasons for captive abuse. Because castles were so hard to take the old-fashioned way, captive abuse, if it resulted in a quick and easy surrender of a castle, was acceptable, if

⁶¹ Strickland, “Slaughter, Slavery, or Ransom?” 51-8.

⁶² Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 185.

⁶³ Strickland is also careful to note that battle, when it happened, was also bloody, even if major battles were rare. *Ibid.*, 162-9.

not applauded.⁶⁴ This applied more broadly, as well. If captive-takers were attempting to push their advantage in having a high-profile captive, mistreating that captive could induce the captive's family to quickly provide the required ransom, lands, or goods desired. The refusal to ransom captives, however, was, according to Strickland, "regarded as among the most heinous of atrocities in war, for it negated the crucial assumption that, notwithstanding the price demanded, a captured nobleman could ultimately purchase his freedom." Habitual cruelty on a broad scale, was, however, "the exception, standing in isolation with the outrages of a handful of notorious lords." Moreover, violence was more likely to be the result of the feuds among nobles, rather than war between territorial princes.⁶⁵

Jean Dunbabin's (2002) study of captivity and imprisonment in medieval Europe takes a different approach than Strickland and Gillingham. By covering the year 1000 to the year 1300, she follows not only the older school of captivity studies by discussing captivity in terms of the growing importance of judicial imprisonment, but also analyzes captive-taking during and after war. She suggests that like hostageship, imprisonment throughout the period of her study was mostly coercive rather than punitive or custodial. It was "a means of extorting a ransom or a debt claimed by the captor, an instrument of private revenge, a form of discipline an aristocrat might impose on members of his *familia* (household), or a method of forcibly withdrawing from the political scene an opponent too dangerous to let loose."⁶⁶ But whereas other studies have failed to examine wartime captivity as a relevant and related equivalent to judicial imprisonment, Dunbabin argues that

⁶⁴ "The recourse to such treatment of important captives was an indirect manifestation of the great strength of castles. In siege warfare, the art of defense so outstripped that of offense that to take such strongholds... would have necessitated a prolonged and uncertain investment. To gain... castles at a stroke by the intimidation of an individual, without loss of time, men and money, was an act of expediency that few could ignore if presented with the opportunity." Ibid., 196-9; quote from 199.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 196-203.

⁶⁶ Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 3.

captivity as punishment and wartime captivity are related in that “prisoners of war were often regarded as guilty of crimes” just as their judicially prosecuted counterparts were. While she admits that war-time captivity had “at best an oblique relationship with the processes of law,” the line between war and law was blurred in an age where legal conflicts could be decided by battles and judicial duels and wars were often merely “personal feuds writ large.” She alleges that well into the twelfth century, defeat in battle was often construed as a judgment from God and took on a meaning similar to the verdict of a trial: God always punishes guilty parties.⁶⁷ Wars fought to bring recalcitrant barons to heel or disturbers of the peace to justice assumed not only that the “the guilt of the accused parties [had been] proved through notoriety,” but also that the councils often held prior to wars were essentially trials held with the accused *in absentia*.⁶⁸

As with hostage exchanges, the social status of the prisoner was an important factor in the treatment of captives. As Dunbabin notes, captives “were ... clearly differentiated from other prisoners where their rank required it or when some benefit

⁶⁷ While certainly some medieval authors do claim that victory in battle proves that God was on the side of the just (usually their own side), the Crusades provides a counterpoint to Dunbabin’s argument here. On more than one occasion, medieval authors discussing the failure of various crusading armies have wondered why God was not on the “right” side and was not punishing pagans.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2, 8-9, 86. Orderic Vitalis clearly links war, law, and judicial trial, as well as God as a judge of “war crimes” or war as a crime in his discussion of Robert of Bellême’s imprisonment in 1112. Orderic writes: “At that time Robert of Bellême gave vent to the fierce hatred he had fostered by long brooding, and openly came out against the king whom he had previously placated, hiding his venom. ... Breaking his oath of fidelity [*rupto fidelitatis uinculo*], he openly committed perjury [*periurium palam incurrit*], for he deserted his natural lord Henry at a time when foes beset him on all sides, and gave both counsel and military support to help Fulk of Anjou and other public enemies of his lord. So, on 4 November at Bonneville, King Henry with good cause summoned him to answer the following charges: why he had acted against his lord’s interests, why he had failed to come to his court after having been summoned three times, why he had not rendered account as the king’s vicomte and officer for the royal revenues pertaining to the vicomtés of Argentan and Exmes and Falaise, and also for other misdeeds. By a just judgment of the royal court [*iustoque iudicio regalis curiae*] he was sentenced to close imprisonment in fetters for the many shocking crimes which he was unable to deny he had committed both against God and against the king. After the imprisonment of the tyrant who had disturbed the land and was preparing to add still worse crimes to his many offenses of plundering and burning [*et multiplicibus rapinis ac incendiis adhuc addere peiora parabat*], the people of God, freed from the bandit’s yoke, rejoiced and thanked God their liberator, and wished long and prosperous life to their king.” OV 6:178-9.

to the captor resulted.” But even special treatment according to rank was not guaranteed. Warfare, especially in the earlier period of her study, regularly included pillaging and the taking of captives for ransom and slavery, and economic considerations could trump social convention. Further, as Strickland similarly explains, Dunbabin highlights the way treatment within captivity could vary from minimal restrictions to chains, claustrophobic spaces, and lack of food.⁶⁹ When the captive was considered a criminal—especially if his or her crime was perceived as treason—rank could matter very little, and the imprisonment could be purposefully harsh.

Yvonne Friedman’s monograph and many articles consider captivity and ransom in the Holy Land (1995, 2002, 2002, 2006). Captivity was an integral part of war and peace in the East. She argues that in a frontier society like the Holy Land, where different religious groups lived together in close proximity and control over territory could change quickly, captivity was a fact of life, not only after battles, but also during sieges, raids, and on travel.⁷⁰ In the East, however, the crusaders at first tended not to take hostages or captives, especially those they considered pagan,⁷¹ often choosing to slaughter the survivors of battles and sieges. But by the mid-12th century, captivity and ransom had become more common as crusaders became more influenced by the rules of chivalry and Muslim military practice. But even if one was spared death, the conditions in captivity were often harsh, and the majority of captives died in captivity.⁷² Both men and women in the West often attempted to save their own,

⁶⁹ Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 1, 3, 8.

⁷⁰ Yvonne Friedman, “Women in Captivity and their Ransom during the Crusader Period,” in *Cross Cultural Convergences in the Crusader Period*, ed. Michael Goodich, Sophia Menache, and Sylvia Schein (New York, 1995), 77.

⁷¹ Friedman also suggests that wholesale slaughter may also have been “logical” because there was no slave trade in the West, and therefore no economic reason to keep captives. Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies: Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Leiden, 2002), 71.

⁷² “It seems that the second and third generations of Franks in the Latin Kingdom had ... learned the norms of exchanging captives as a part of the accepted mores of war and peace in the East.” *Ibid.*, 76, 103, 128.

however. The ransoming of captives was seen as a “meritorious deed of charity,” one of the seven good works expected of a good Christian, and was felt to link a person to Jesus. As a result, people would send money eastward to help ransom those in captivity.⁷³

Friedman not only deals with captivity and ransom more generally, but she is also one of the first historians to devote any lengthy space to women in captivity. She suggests that for many medieval writers, the whole mission of the Crusades was conceived as an expedition to free a female “captive”: Jerusalem, the West’s spiritual mother.⁷⁴ More broadly, Friedman argues that, despite the fact that chroniclers often minimally covered women’s roles in the Crusades because crusader narratives were primarily male discourses, captivity was “one part of crusade history in which women seem numerically dominant.... Women were often the first and sometimes the only captives taken on both the Muslim and Christian side.” This happened during the larger crusader expeditions in particular, when large armies included significant numbers of non-combatants and the difference between civilians and soldiers was less clear, especially when the camps were sometimes mere meters from the battlefield. The chronicles of the Crusades clearly present the problem of women in captivity. On the one hand, it was expected that women—because they had economic value either through sale into slavery or ransom for money—would be taken captive. Yet on the other, sometimes these women were abandoned to their fate. In fact, those who were ransomed often faced a difficult life once they had returned home. It was assumed

⁷³ Ibid., 4.; Friedman, “Women in Captivity,” 75-6. James Brodman notes in his work on the Spanish Order of Merced that the religious overtones that the Crusades added to ransoming can be seen in the language used to describe captives. Whereas prior to the twelfth century the word “captive” was used without modifier, writers in the twelfth century began to use religious language to describe captives. Brodman, 10.

⁷⁴ Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies*, 14. Orderic Vitalis, for example, writes that “The Christians invested Jerusalem on 6 June, not as stepsons would a stepmother, but as sons would a mother. As friends and sons they surrounded her....not to deprive her of her freedom, but to free her from captivity.” OV, 5:9, 15.

that women who had been taken captive would be physically abused or tortured and likely raped. Unlike Muslim and Jewish traditions, which absolved women of the guilt of their treatment during captivity, Christian society held women responsible for any violation of their bodies. Even if women claimed not to have been abused, being held captive seems to have always left a taint.⁷⁵

As is suggested above, the historiographical trend in the study of captivity is that the rise of “chivalric knighthood” in the eleventh century changed the nature of captivity by moderating its harshness. John Gillingham, Matthew Strickland and Jean Dunbabin have all argued that standards in care of captives—based on rank, social status, and whether or not people perceived that that captive had committed any wrong—come to be more frequently discussed in the sources. Yet even as the Middle Ages progressed and criticisms of harsh treatment became more prevalent in the sources, they were hardly ever directed against the belief that a person could be seized and held captive by another. As Jean Dunbabin remarks, “... for long periods of the high middle ages and in many parts of western Europe lay aristocrats accepted that, if defeated in a conflict, they might either be killed or find themselves in an enemy’s grasp, bound, perhaps even chained, until they yielded to the victor’s will, either by surrendering some disputed right or property or by paying a ransom.”⁷⁶ The attitudes about treatment may have changed, but the practice of captivity not only persisted, but so too did the potential for harsh treatment.

While much of Strickland and Gillingham’s arguments underpin those made in this thesis, there is room for a more nuanced approach. Both Gillingham and Strickland rely on a variation of Norbert Elias’ “civilizing process” argument to imply that the chivalric code civilized the barbaric warfare practices of the Early Middle

⁷⁵ Ibid., 162-84.

⁷⁶ Jean Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 7, 67.

Ages.⁷⁷ But as much as Gillingham highlights the growing moderation towards peers of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries by suggesting that very few aristocrats died violently during battle or were summarily executed afterwards, an argument that Strickland does not wholeheartedly agree with, the fact remains that these centuries were still bloody and that the fate of captives was often not very pleasant. Because he focuses on death, Gillingham overlooks the issue of treatment in captivity. As will be shown below and in the next chapter, for all their chivalry, kings and lords alike still violently tortured and maimed captives and hostages of all genders, social statuses, and ethnic groups or nationalities despite any strictures to the contrary. While Gillingham and Strickland may consider living under harsh conditions and suffering from brutal treatment a better option than death, making Gillingham's argument that war was more "chivalrous" relatively true, it is unclear if medieval men and women felt the same way.

Perhaps treating elite prisoners "in a relatively humane fashion"⁷⁸ was indeed part of the chivalric code, but nobles did not always adhere strictly to that code. Gillingham and Strickland are right to suggest that there are many cases in the chronicles in which nobles acted with clemency and were praised for it. Furthermore, medieval chroniclers and historians were certainly outraged when men like Robert of Bellême treated prisoners cruelly. Orderic Vitalis consistently railed against Robert in his *Ecclesiastical History* for his barbarity, especially in his treatment of captives.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ In this, they follow historians like C. Stephen Jaeger who, like Elias, were looking for civilizing processes. Unlike Elias, however, who located them in the early modern period, Gillingham, Strickland, and Jaeger locate the "civilizing" processes in the Middle Ages. Gillingham writes, for example, "In my view those who believe in fundamental shifts in European modes of perceptions are more likely to find what they are looking for in the twelfth century than in the sixteenth century." Gillingham, "The English Invasion of Ireland," 150. Stephen C. Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939-1210* (Philadelphia, 1985). See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

⁷⁸ Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England," 209.

⁷⁹ For example, he writes: "Like the dragon of whom John the apostle writes in the Apocalypse, who was cast out of heaven and vented his bestial fury by warring on the dwellers of the earth, the fierce disturber of the peace, driven from Britain, fell in wrath upon the Normans. He pillaged their estates,

Orderic also clearly felt that some rule or custom had been broken when Henry I mutilated Geoffrey of Tourville, Odard of Le Pin, and Luke La Barre for their part in the 1124 rebellion.⁸⁰ But as Henry I's defense of his actions during this episode and the inability of other nobles to counter it implies, kings and nobles did not always feel that the chivalric code applied.⁸¹ In many ways, they followed it when they had to, and took advantage of situations when they could get away with more.⁸² This is perhaps the most fundamental problem for studying hostage and captivity "rules." In many ways, the system is defined in the same way the McCarthy era defined communism. Medieval authors knew violations of the rules of hostage- and captivity when they saw them, but never really defined the rules concretely. For every 'thou shall not,' exceptions were made based on circumstances. Hostage and captive

burning all behind him, and tortured to death or mutilated the knights and other persons whom he was able to capture. He was so cruel that he preferred tormenting his prisoners to growing rich on fat ransoms offered for their release." OV, 6:30-1. Gillingham follows the argument of Kathleen Thompson in suggesting that Orderic exaggerated Robert's actions in an effort to make his hero, Henry I, look better and to justify Henry's own barbaric treatment as "necessary" to curb the violence of out-of-control barons. It is worth noting, however, that Orderic was not the only chronicler to condemn Robert for violence and cruelty. William of Malmesbury states, "he was a man of intolerable looseness of conduct, and pitiless towards others' failings; notorious for his cruelty...." Likewise, Henry of Huntingdon calls him "a Pluto, a Magaera, a Cerberus, or something more fearful to describe. He would not trouble to ransom prisoners, but killed them." GR, 1:724-5. HH, 602-3. See Kathleen Thompson, "Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Bellême," *Journal of Medieval History* 20 (1994); *ibid*, "Robert of Bellême Reconsidered," *Anglo-Norman Studies XIII*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Rochester, NY, 1991).

⁸⁰ He has Charles, count of Flanders, say to Henry: "My lord king, you are doing something contrary to our customs in punishing by mutilation knights captured in war in service of their lord." ["Rem nostris ritibus inusitatem domine rex facis, qui milites bello captos in seruitudomini sui debilitazione membrorum punis."] OV, 6:352-355. Quote is found on 352.

⁸¹ To [Charles] the king replied, 'My lord count, what I do is just, as I will prove conclusively. Geoffrey and Odard with their lords' consent became my liege men, and they broke faith with me when they deliberately committed treason; therefore they deserve the punishment by death or mutilation. [...] Luke on the other hand, never did homage to me, but recently fought against me at the castle of Pont-Audemer. In the end, when peace was made, I pardoned his guilt and allowed him to go away freely.... But he straightaway gave his support to my enemies, united with them to stir up fresh troubles against me, and went from bad to worse. Moreover this jesting songster composed scurrilous songs about me, insulted me by singing them in public, and often raised mocking laughter against me from the enemies who sought my undoing. Now therefore God has delivered him into my hands for punishment.... When he heard this the duke of Flanders made no reply, for he had no reasonable argument to advance against it." *Ibid*.

⁸² This reminds me of Captain Barbossa's comments in the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) concerning the supposed Pirate Code. When the character Elizabeth demands he act according to the code, he replies: "the code is more what you'd call 'guidelines' than actual rules."

takers were *supposed* to do a lot of things: treat their prisoners well, especially if they were elite; ransom their prisoners in a timely fashion; not take women, children, or religious people prisoners, so forth and so on. But time and time again, the sources demonstrate that these things did not happen.

The problem may be that we rely on the descriptions and prescriptions of religious chroniclers who in general abhorred violence and condemned brutality, especially when many of the direct and indirect victims were monastic and religious communities. As Strickland notes, *chansons de geste* regularly present the harsh treatment of prisoners as a normal part of warfare,⁸³ a fact which he dismisses because it comes from less “sober” sources. But the fact that the *chansons* were a literary form prized by lay society may actually give these sources more weight than Strickland is willing to admit, and may be more reflective of lay values about cruelty to captives. It is also possible that religious writers went to such lengths to praise those who acted chivalrously because they were tiny lights of virtue in a sea of brutal violence. Furthermore, because the source material we have focuses almost completely on the deeds of kings and other very important people at the top, the image of a steadily less violent society may be heavily skewed. We possess very little evidence of what was going on in the lower levels of aristocratic society or whether or not those people were interested in any way in chivalric attitudes.

Moreover, the assumption that life in confinement, however long or short, was preferable or more honorable than death is not beyond challenge. Death and captivity are often associated with each other in sources, as if both fates are equally undesirable.⁸⁴ The Anglo-Norman chronicler Geoffrey Gaimar stated that the rebel Morcar and his followers would have been better off dead than captured,

⁸³ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 201.

⁸⁴ For example, Orderic remarks that hostilities between Helias of Maine and Robert of Bellême were “lengthy and caused many to taste the bitterness of death and captivity.” OV, 6:30-1.

suggesting that the treatment they received while incarcerated was worse than death or that death was considered more noble than captivity.⁸⁵ Even if he was exaggerating or elaborating—he wrote several generations after Morcar’s capture—this implies he believed that captivity during the twelfth century was potentially very harsh.

Furthermore, certain cases in the sources imply that even though clerical writers may have felt captivity was better than death, laymen may not. Captivity was not only often physically demeaning and debilitating, but also mentally so, and captives are sometimes depicted as outraged by their treatment even if it was supposedly considered chivalrous. For example, while in prison, Roger of Hereford maliciously burned the clothes of ermine and silk given to him as an Easter gift by William the Conqueror, an act which may have lengthened his stay.⁸⁶ Hugh of Cr  cy was so angry at his lengthy incarceration by King Louis of France that according to Suger, he “was like a dog chained for a long time; it becomes mad and remains so as a result of the drawn-out interval spent in chains. When set free, it rages beyond all bounds; unchained it bites and tears things to pieces.”⁸⁷ Captives may have seen so-called “honorable captivity” as deeply insulting, especially because those of high rank expected to be able to ransom themselves or to be released by virtue of their status. Captivity could also be meant as an insult to others besides the captive. Orderic reports that in 1105 several opponents of Henry I captured Robert Fitz Hamon, a loyal

⁸⁵ Geoffrey Gaimar, *L'estoire Des Engleis*, ed. Alexander Bell. (Oxford, 1960), lns. 5695-5705. For a discussion of Gaimar’s views on chivalry, see Gillingham, “Kingship, Chivalry, and Love. Political and cultural values in the earliest history written in French: Geoffrey Gaimar’s *Estoire des Engleis*,” 233-58.

⁸⁶ “Even in prison he [Roger] continued to abuse the king in many ways, and give him still greater offense by his provocative behavior. For once, whilst the Christian populace was reverently celebrating the Easter feast, the king sent honorable servants with a store of valuable garments to Earl Roger in his prison; whereat he commanded that a huge pyre should be prepared and the royal finery—cloak and silken tunic and mantle of ermine skins from distant parts—burned at once. At the news of this the king exclaimed in wrath, ‘It is a proud man who insults me in this way; but by God’s glory he shall never leave my prison as long as he lives.’ The king’s sentence was so lasting that even after the king’s death nothing but death released him from his fetters.” OV, 2:318-19.

⁸⁷ Suger, *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard Cusimano and John Moorhead (Washington, DC, 1992), 95-104.

follower of Henry, along with several others “and kept them in close imprisonment for a long time, both to extort ransoms and to show their contempt and hatred for their lord [Henry I].”⁸⁸

Moreover, the sources abound with descriptions of cruelty to captives, demonstrating that captive-takers did not always feel a compulsion to treat captives with any care, regardless of whether or not there was anything to gain by their torture. The most violent and outrageous offenders almost always received attention from the chroniclers, who often saw their treatment of captives as acts against God. William of Malmesbury and the author of the *Gesta Stephani* each comment upon the cruelty of Robert Fitz Hubert during the civil war between Matilda and Stephen. William calls Robert “cruel and savage,” as well as “the cruelest man within the recollection our age, and also a blasphemer against God.” Often, the sources complained that not only did the repeat offender torture their captives, but also refused to ransom them. According to William, Robert bragged about burning monks in their church. William also reports:

I have heard with my own ears, if he ever let prisoners go (and it was a very uncommon thing) without a ransom and without torturing them, and they thanked him in God’s name, I have heard him answer, I say, ‘May God never be grateful to me!’ He used to smear prisoners with honey, and expose them naked in the open air in the full blaze of the sun, stirring up flies and similar insects to sting them.⁸⁹

Robert himself was captured by John the Marshal, who “put him in a narrow dungeon to suffer hunger and tortures,” and was later hanged by Robert of Gloucester because Fitz Hubert surrendered Devizes. William rejoices at Robert’s death, remarking, “Wondrously was God’s judgment exercised upon a sacrilegious man, in that he earned so shameful an end not from the king, to whom he was an enemy, but from

⁸⁸ OV, 6:60-1.

⁸⁹ “Hisce auribus audiui, quod si quando captiuos, quod quidem rarissime fuit, immunes absque tortionibus dimittebat, et gratiae ipsi de Dei parte agebantur, audiui, inquam, eum respondisse, ‘Numquam michi Deus grates sciat.’ Captiuos melle litos flagrantissimo sole nudos sub diuo exponebat, muscas et id generis animalia ad eos compungendum irritans.” HN, 74-7.

those whom he seemed to favor. Those who brought about his death must be given the praise they deserve, for ridding the country of such a plague, and so justly punishing an enemy in their midst.”⁹⁰ As noted above, Orderic reported that Robert of Bellême preferred to torture and kill his captives rather than ransom them.⁹¹ Orderic goes so far as to suggest that during Lent in 1098 over 300 prisoners died of starvation and cold in Robert’s prisons, even after ransoms had been offered for them.⁹² While the number is likely an exaggeration, the suggestion that he tortured his prisoners may not have been.

Orderic reports yet another vivid account of torture in his description of Ascelin Goel’s treatment of William of Breteuil, Roger of Glos and others whom he captured in 1091. Ascelin:

cruelly tormented his lord [William of Breteuil] and Roger of Glos and the other prisoners. He kept them for three months in his dungeon in the castle of Bréval, and often, in the most severe cold of winter, he would expose them to the north or north-west wind of his upper hall, clad only in shirts soaked with water, until the whole garment was frozen stiff round the prisoners’ bodies.

By this treatment, Ascelin was able to extort a huge ransom from William, including one thousand *livres* in the money of Dreux, the tower of Ivry, and William’s daughter Isabel in marriage. The fact that William had been Ascelin’s lord also suggests that Ascelin meant the treatment to be deeply insulting to William. Nor was this Ascelin’s only reported experience with torture. When William later sought revenge for his treatment in prison, Ascelin captured ten of William’s knights who then “had bitter experience of Goel’s cruelty in his dungeon,” yet another offensive act.⁹³

Thomas of Marle was also famous for mistreating of prisoners and many chroniclers commented upon his misdeeds. Suger reports that he was “the vilest of men and a plague to God and men alike,” and that “All his neighbors lived in terror of

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ OV, 6:30-1.

⁹² Ibid., 5:234-5.

⁹³ Ibid., 4:202-3, 286-9.

this unbearable madman” who was “like a monstrous wolf.” He was so cruel that even on his deathbed and being held captive himself, Thomas refused to give up captives he had taken, despite threats against him.⁹⁴ Henry of Huntingdon recounts that “anyone in his custody, by force or by trickery, could have said without falsehood, ‘The sorrows of hell encompassed me.’ Human slaughter was his passion and his glory.” According to Henry, he took a countess captive whom he “submitted...to shackles and tortures by day to extract money, and dishonored...by night to make mock of her.”⁹⁵ Guibert of Nogent also remarks upon Thomas’ cruelty to female prisoners in particular, lamenting that a pregnant woman died in his prison.⁹⁶ Although the problem of taking women hostage or captive will be dealt with more thoroughly in the next chapter, it is worth noting here that the gender of his victims made his atrocities all that more vile and sensational to contemporary writers. In all these cases, despite condemnation by contemporary sources and perhaps their peers, none of these men appear to have felt any compulsion to treat prisoners well.

While Strickland argues that outrageous and consistently violent treatment was the exception to the rule, if these cases are considered along with the numerous others in which violence towards captives was not a reported regular activity of the captive-taker, cruelty to captives becomes more common. Individual acts of violence against captives are also found repeatedly in the chronicles, and these provide context to the cases of more spectacular cruelty by repeat offenders, suggesting that mistreatment of

⁹⁴ Suger, 37-9, 143-44.

⁹⁵ “Thomas, princeps magnus iuxta Laudunum in Gallia principans, magnus erat nomine, quia summus erat scelere. [...] Si aliquem ui uel dolo in captione sua tenebat, non falso dicere poterat, ‘Dolores inferni circumdederunt me.’ Cedes humana uoluptas eius et gloria. Comitissam contra solitum in carcere posuit. Cui crudelis et spurcus compedes et supplicia diebus ut pecuniam extorqueret, stuprum noctibus inferebat ut eam derideret. A carcere in lectum Thome crudelissimi quaque nocte ferebatur, a lecto in carcerem quaque die referebatur.” HH, 602-3.

⁹⁶ Guibert of Nogent, *The Deeds of God Through the Franks*, trans. Robert Levine (Rochester, NY, 1997), 201.

captives was not as unusual as assumed.⁹⁷ Numerous sources claim that King Stephen was placed in chains and in harsh confinement, although the exact timeframe is unclear.⁹⁸ Robert of Bellême, the uncle of Mabel of Bellême and distant relative of Orderic Vitalis's notorious Robert of Bellême, was slain with axes while in prison.⁹⁹ William son of William Giroire was mutilated by William Talvas,¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey of Thoars mutilated the knights of Hugh de Lusignan by cutting their hands off, which led Hugh to refuse to ransom forty-three of Geoffrey's knights; Hugh himself was imprisoned in chains in solitary confinement.¹⁰¹ Richard I and Philip Augustus repeatedly mutilated captives in their conflicts with each other in 1194-9, and both King Richard and King John executed prisoners.¹⁰² Henry I appears to have blinded William of Mortain in prison,¹⁰³ the prisoners that John of Marmoutier depicts the Angevin count Geoffrey le Bel ransoming were kept in harsh conditions, William Rufus hanged William de Alderie, and William of Eu was blinded and castrated for their involvement in the 1095 revolt against William Rufus.¹⁰⁴ William le Breton reports that after Renaud de Danmartin's capture at the Battle of Bouvines in 1214, he was so loaded down with chains by Philip Augustus he could barely move.¹⁰⁵ William the Conqueror had thirty-two defenders of Alençon mutilated after they insulted him

⁹⁷ Many, but not all, of the following examples are listed in Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 196-203; or in Gillingham, "1006 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England," 209-31.

⁹⁸ See Chapter Five for more details.

⁹⁹ OV, 6:396-9.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 2:14-15.

¹⁰¹ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 197.

¹⁰² *Gesta Regis Henrici secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1867), 1:293; Rigord, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et Guillaume le Breton, Historiens de Philippe Auguste* ed. H-F. Delaborde (Paris, 1882-5), 1:127.

¹⁰³ HH, 698-99.

¹⁰⁴ OV, 4:282-3; GND, 2:214-5; GR, 1:564-5

¹⁰⁵ "...inde fecit eum Peronam adduci, et ibi in turrim munitissimam includi, et cautissime custodiri ligatum compedibus mira subtilitate perplexis et fere indissolubilibus, conjunctis invicem catena tante brevitatis, quod vix passum efficiat semiplenum. Ejusdem catene medio inserta erat et alia catena longitudinis decem pedum, infixa caput alterum cuidam trunco mobili quod duo homines vix movere poterant, quoties comes iturus erat ad secreta nature." William le Breton, *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et Guillaume le Breton, Historiens de Philippe Auguste*, ed. H-F. Delaborde, 1:292.

by making fun of his illegitimacy.¹⁰⁶ In 1075, William of Warenne and Richard of Bienfait cut off the right foot of those captured in battle “whatever [their] rank.”¹⁰⁷ The Margam Chronicle reported that twenty-two captives died of starvation at the castle of Corfe.¹⁰⁸ Waltheof was beheaded in 1075 according to the English law of treason; while his punishment has often been seen as an exception, when compared to the violence done to others, it is perhaps less isolated than has been presumed in the past.

In some cases, no specific punishment is actually named; rather, the captivity is merely called cruel or harsh, or suffering, often in chains, is noted. Reginald of Grancey “suffered” in his brother’s dungeon, “the punishment he deserved for his evil deeds.”¹⁰⁹ John, the son of Stephen of Meulan, was forced to “endure harsh confinement for four months.”¹¹⁰ Reginald, count Burgogne-outre-Saône, was “kept under close guard with his feet firmly bound together,” and when his captor, Hugh, count of Chalon, refused to release him and “increased the number of his guards and ordered him to be even more closely guarded,” Duke Richard III of Normandy, Reginald’s father-in-law, sent an army to secure his release.¹¹¹ Hugh of Le Puiset “was shackled with horrible chains” by King Louis of France in 1111.¹¹² In 1137, the forces of the Empress Matilda captured Ralph of Esson, and he was “kept in fetters...for a long time.”¹¹³ Robert Poard of Bellême was “harshly” imprisoned by Rotrou, count of Mortagne in order to extort the freedom of Rotrou’s uncle, who had been held in Robert’s prison for six months.¹¹⁴ The *Gesta Stephani* uses the wide-

¹⁰⁶ GND, 2:124-5.

¹⁰⁷ OV, 2:310-11.

¹⁰⁸ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 197.

¹⁰⁹ OV, 6:44-5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 6:46-7.

¹¹¹ GND, 2:38-9.

¹¹² Suger, 84-95.

¹¹³ OV, 6:512-13.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 6:546-9.

spread capture of wealthy men to represent the whole scene of general disorder in England during the “anarchy.” The anonymous author laments that the men of Bristol:

sometimes...dragged them [i.e., the wealthy of England] off by force, sometimes lured them away by cunningly bandaging their eyes, also gagging them either by thrusting a lump of something forcibly into their mouths or by means of a device or by means of a device like a curb-bit with teeth in it that muzzled them, so they took them along blindfold and brought them at length into the middle of Bristol, like Elisha’s brigand that we read about; there they wasted them with hunger or delivered them over to torments and extracted from them all they possessed to the uttermost farthing.¹¹⁵

Likewise, the *Gesta*’s author also says that when William de Mohun rebelled against Stephen, he ravaged far and wide, and put any rich man he captured in chains and tortured him.¹¹⁶ While scholars often overlook these types of descriptions as contemporary exaggerations of the level of violence during the civil war,¹¹⁷ their implications about what medieval authors felt was acceptable behavior should not be overlooked. They indicate that even when details were not available to writers, writers often assumed or imagined that captivity was harsh and violent.

Abusive captivity was not without logic, however, which likely explains why,

¹¹⁵ Ubi uero quae in circuitu, et quasi sub manu eorum erant, in perditionis barathrum redacta uidebantur et adnullata, in omnibus Angliae partibus sicubi pecuniosos uel opulentos audierant, celerrime adesse, nunc uiribus abreptos, nunc fraudibus seductos, oculis fasceatis, ore etiam obdurato, uel cum massa aliqua illic urgender impressa, uel cum machinula ad formam asperi freni capistrata et dentata, caecos secum deducere, tandemque in medio Bristoae, quemadmodum de latrunculis Helisei legimus, inductos, aut ieiuniis macerare, aut suppliciis addictis usque ad nouissimum quadrantem quicquid possederant ad eis exigere.” *GS*, 62-3.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80-1.

¹¹⁷ As Donald Matthew asserts, “The importance all twelfth-century writers attached to what happened in their own localities did not make them indifferent to the affairs of the kingdom as a whole, but their local perspective at least prevented them from concentrating their attention on the dispute about succession of the crown. They continued to take the unity of the kingdom for granted, but the information they received about events further afield cannot have been very objective and the use they made of what they heard bears little resemblance to modern practice. Chroniclers were neither trained as journalists to get to the bottom of atrocity stories, nor as historians to analyse causes and understand motives. Their inclination on occasion to burst metaphorically into tears about the current state of affairs needs to be understood in their own terms, and not interpreted as the kind of conclusion required by the rhetorical conventions of modern historical writing. The belief that life was highly disturbed everywhere throughout Stephen’s reign relies on the assumption that some notable cases of local violence were replicated all over the kingdom.... Instances of violence and private war certainly occurred, for no civil society exists without crime, but such instances as are known hardly add up to the kind of conclusion [that England was in general disarray].” *King Stephen* (London, 2002), 132-33.

despite exhortations to treat captives kindly, the practice remained a strong tradition in medieval society. As Matthew Strickland notes, lords often purposefully abused or threatened to abuse captives in order to press their advantage and gain concessions, especially strategically important castles or cities. William Rufus gained the surrender of Mowbray castle in 1095 by threatening to put Roger Mowbray's eyes out.¹¹⁸ Count Theobald of Blois-Chartres had the city of Tours "violently extorted from him" by Geoffrey Martel in 1044.¹¹⁹ In the 1120s, King Louis of France ordered the captured defenders of the castle of Montferrand to lose a hand, even after they begged to be ransomed. He then sent them back to the castle to convince the remaining defenders to surrender, which they promptly did.¹²⁰ When the Bishop of Bath, a supporter of King Stephen, captured Geoffrey Talbot, a supporter of the Empress Matilda, while he was on a reconnaissance mission, the garrison of Bristol, led by Robert of Gloucester's son "was much angered by this and advanced threateningly to Bath ... [and] sent messengers to the bishop, and threatened him and his followers with hanging if their companion-in-arms, Geoffrey, was not freed as soon as possible." The Bishop of Bath, "fearing...for the lives of himself and his supporters, freed Geoffrey from custody, and handed him over to them as they had asked," much to the king's displeasure.¹²¹ King Stephen also practiced this tactic. He tortured Roger,

¹¹⁸ *ASC*, 231. According to Orderic Vitalis, he was also permanently imprisoned for his crime. "Captus itaque a satellitibus regis Robertus finem belli fecit, et fere XXX annis in uinculis uixit, ibique scelerum suorum penas luens consenuit." *OV*, 4:282.

¹¹⁹ *GND*, 2:122-3.

¹²⁰ Suger, 133-7.

¹²¹ "Gausfriedus autem de Talebot, regem pacis amicum deserens cum suis, ad Glaocestriensis comitis filium, Brycestouense castellum contra regem tenentem, diuertit, illius munimini se dedit. Qui uno dierum, uelut cuilibet spatiatui operam daturus, magis autem ut post claruit Bathoniam exploraturus et postmodum inuasurus, cum duobus strenuis militibus Willemo Hoset et alio quodam, iter illo direxit. Quo cognito, Bathoniensis episcopus Rotbertus quasi de regis aduersario triumphaturus, instructo milite sub quadam cautela obuam procedit. Fugientibus duobus, Gausfridus capitur, custodie mancipatur. Hinc furore succensi Brycestouenses castellani cum domno suo comitis filio Bathoniam hostiliter adeunt, post presulem legant, et ni citius commilito suus Gausfridus reddatur, pontifici et suis suspensionis patibulum minantur. Qua de re presul, uice mercenarii, sibi suis timens, educto de custodia Gausfrido et illis reddito, uoluntati illorum cedit. Quod ubi regiis auribus insonuerat, in episcopum

bishop of Salisbury and threatened to hang Roger's son—Roger le Poer, Stephen's own chancellor—in order to gain the castle of Devizes from the son's mother and the Bishop of Ely, Roger's nephew. He then repeated this strategy with Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, also Roger's nephew.¹²²

In fact, violence or threats of violence against captives and hostages seem to have been a widespread practice during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, for all that Gillingham labels it a “very chivalrous affair.”¹²³ The *Gesta Stephani*, for example, mentions how in 1146, Philip of Gloucester—Robert of Gloucester's son, who had changed sides in 1145 despite his father's status as Matilda's brother and most loyal defender—captured Robert Musard outside his castle. Philip, “lurking in an ambush ... happened to find him when he came out, and by putting a halter around his neck and repeatedly threatening to hang him he gained violent possession of his castle.”¹²⁴ The *Gesta* also remarks that the Earl of Chester captured Earl Alan of Brittany while Alan was attempting to “avenge the dishonourable capture of his king

uelut in fautorum inimicorum suorum exardescit ira; quem, etiamsi magis discordie quam paci rex ipse cederet, illum pastorali baculo fortasse priuaret.” JW, 3:248-9.

¹²² “Rex namque Rogerum episcopum Salesbiriensem et Alexandrum Lincolniensem ipsius nepotem cum pacifice suscepisset, uiolenter in curia sua cepit, nichil iusticie recusantes et iudicii equitatem deuotissime poscentes. Ponens igitur ibidem Alexandrum episcopum in carcere, episcopum Salesbiriensem secum duxit ad castellum eiusdem quod uocatur Diuise, quo non erat aliud splendidius intra fines Europe. Angarians eum igitur ieiunii tormento et filii eius, qui cancellarius fuerat regius, lanqueo collum circumnectens, ut suspenderetur, tali modo castellum sibi extorsit, male recordans bonorum que in introitu regni sui, pre omnibus aliis, ei congresserat. Talem ei deuotionis sue retributionem exhibuit. Similiter cepit Siresburnam quod parum Diuisis decore cedebat. [...] Rex inde rediens, Alexandrum episcopum, quem dimiserat in captione apud Oxinefordam, duxit secum ad Newecam. Ibi quidem construxerat episcopus super flumen Trente in loco amenissimo uernantissimum florida compitione castellum. Quo cum uenisset, indixit rex episcopo ieiunium non legitimum, astruens fide data eum omni cibo cariturum, donec ei redderetur castellum. Vix igitur episcopus lacrimis et precibus a suis optinere potuit, ut castrum suum a iure suo in extraneorum custodiam deponerent. Similiter redditum est aliud castellum eius, quod uocatur Eslaforde, neque forma neque situ a predicto secundum.” HH, 718-23. This incident is also reported in the *GS*, 52-3. John of Worcester states that the king “placed the captured bishops under guard, Roger in the crib of a cowshed, the other [Alexander] in a mean hut, and got ready to hang the third [Roger le Poer] unless the castle was handed over to him.” JW, 3:246-7.

¹²³ Gillingham, “1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England,” 226.

¹²⁴ “Cepit namque Robertum, cognomento Musard, uirum simpliciter, inmo ut uerum fatear, imprudenter de castello suo egressum: cumque Philippus in insidiis delitesceret, progressum eum fortuito inuenit, suspendiumque, collo loro innexo, minitans, castellum illius uiolenter obtinuit.” *GS*, 123.

and lord.” Earl Alan was “put in chains and subjected to torment in a filthy dungeon until he assumed the yoke of forced submission and the most degraded servility, [and] did homage to the Earl of Chester and delivered over his castles to his disposal.”¹²⁵

When Arnulf of Hesdin and others of William fitz Alan’s men were hanged at the castle of Shrewsbury, several castles surrendered in response, including Dover.¹²⁶

Even the fear of violent torture or death during captivity was thought to induce surrender. Suger reports two such occasions in his *Deeds of Louis the Fat*. In 1105, Louis attacked the besiegers of the castle of Montlhéry, who, because “they grew afraid that the sudden arrival of the lord Louis would mean the noose for them,” surrendered. Suger recalls that Louis was actually disappointed at “not finding any seditious men to fix to a gibbet.”¹²⁷ Likewise, in 1108, the rebels in the castle of Sainte-Sévère “knew that the lord Louis and his men were bold knights who would not see fit to withdraw until they had destroyed the castle to the foundations; and they would either fix its noble men to a gibbet or rip out their eyes.” As a result, they chose to hand over the castle.¹²⁸ While Suger’s motives for depicting these events as he did certainly arose out of his desire to paint King Louis as a fierce, effective, and authoritative king, they also demonstrate that such actions were not only believable but could also be seen in a positive light. Suger depicts Louis as relishing the idea of killing captives, and he does so in a way that suggests such violence against enemies of the king is appropriate and deserved, an attitude that contradicts Gillingham’s suggestion that war was less violent and those who killed captives were routinely condemned.

¹²⁵ “Comes namque Alanus, uir, ut dictum est, immensae truculentiae et doli, dum comiti Cestriae inhonoram, quam in regem et dominum commiserate, captionem ulturus insidias tenderet, aduersariis praeualentibus, captus et catenatus, suppliciisque in carcerali squalore fuit addictus; donec coactae humilitatis et uilissimae seruitutis induens ceruicem, et hominum comiti Cestriae faceret, et castella sua illius deliberationi permitteret....” Ibid., 77.

¹²⁶ OV, 6:522-3; HH, 712-3.

¹²⁷ Suger, 42-3.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 60.

What is particularly interesting is that threats of violence towards hostages and captives, and even real harm done against them, were not always successful tactics, indicating that those inside strongholds were not always sympathetic to the fate of hostages or captives. In the eyes of the chroniclers, this was especially true when the fate of family and country were at stake. According to Orderic Vitalis, when William the Conqueror blinded hostages in front of Exeter in an attempt to get the city to surrender, it only strengthened the citizens' resolve: "But neither fear nor pity for the remaining hostages could shake the resolution of the angry citizens; instead their obstinate determination to defend themselves and their homes grew all the stronger."¹²⁹ The same was also true at York.¹³⁰ Both of these incidences occurred during William's conquest of England in the late 1060s, and the added element of invasion meant that overall concern for resisting and defeating William outweighed any concern defenders may have had towards hostages or captives. It may be that Orderic used this description to suggest the heroic nature of the defenders of York and Exeter, willing to sacrifice their families to remain free of Norman rule. It should be noted, however, that the fate of the hostages was not the primary concern here; it seems as if it was understood that violence was a normal part of the process and in such dire circumstances like an invasion, losses were expected.

While not every captive faced bodily cruelty in prison, even if treatment in captivity was mild, the length of time spent incarcerated could be rather long and it should not be underestimated that this within itself was a form of cruelty even if the prisoners were treated graciously. Life-long royal imprisonment of high-profile and problematic captives was not unusual in the Anglo-Norman realm, mostly because it

¹²⁹ "Denique regio iussu exercitus ad urbem admotus est et unus ex obsidibus prope portam oculis priuatus est. Pertinacia furentis populi nullo timore, nec ulla reliquorum obsidum flectitur miseratione sed acuitur ad defensandum se suosque lares tota obstinatione." OV, 2:210-15.

¹³⁰ "Fealty, oaths, and the safety of hostages were forgotten in their anger at the loss of their patrimonies and the deaths of their kinsmen and fellow countrymen." Ibid., 2:222-3.

had all the advantages or value of the captive's death without all the potential disadvantages. Many of these prisoners were either rivals to the throne or contumacious rebels against the king. William the Conqueror had the rebel Morcar imprisoned for life in 1071 for fear he might foment more rebellions. Although he was released at William's death, his son and successor William Rufus re-imprisoned him.¹³¹ William I had also intended that his half-brother Odo of Bayeux be held in prison for the remainder of his life, although according to Orderic, he was released at the insistence of William's nobles.¹³² William had Roger of Hereford placed in perpetual confinement for rebellion in 1075, and at the time Orderic was writing circa 1125-6, in the reign of Henry I, Roger's sons were still hoping for his release.¹³³ Earl Waltheof, mentioned above, was kept in prison for over a year at Winchester before his death.¹³⁴ Henry I had his eldest brother Robert of Curthose, a rival claimant for the English throne and the duchy of Normandy, imprisoned for life after his defeat and capture at the Battle of Tinchebray in 1106 because he presented too much of a threat to Henry's security and complicated his designs to reunite William the Conqueror's Anglo-Norman realm. Henry also imprisoned Robert of Bellême in 1112, after he had ignored summons to court three times.¹³⁵ Yet another Robert, that of Mowbray, was imprisoned by William Rufus after his rebellion in the late 1090s.¹³⁶ Not only were they constant and potential sources of violence and conflict, but their actions had serious political implications, as well. Henry clearly could not release them, as both had proven repeat offenders and were likely to continue to be so, but he also could not kill them—especially in the case of his brother—because their deaths would have likely sparked internal as well as international hostility. Imprisonment, then, was the

¹³¹ Ibid., 2:256-9; JW, 3:46-7.

¹³² OV, 4:98-101.

¹³³ Ibid., 2:318-19; GR, 1:472-3.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 2:20-3; GR, 1: 468-71.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 6:178-9.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 4:282-3; GND, 2:214-5; GR, 1:564-5.

best option. This also seems to be the intended choice of the Empress Matilda and her brother Robert of Gloucester when they decided the fate of King Stephen after his capture during the Battle of Lincoln in 1141.¹³⁷

In fact, Orderic Vitalis goes out of his way to defend long-term imprisonment of rebels against the king as just, indicating that even the views of religious writers were more complicated than has been previously discussed. Orderic twice has William the Conqueror defend a long-term incarceration. The first time, Orderic depicts William telling a council that he is imprisoning his brother Odo of Bayeux because “harmful ambition should always be checked and it is never right to spare one man against the public interest through any partiality.” He then demands Odo be arrested and guarded out of “fear [he will commit] even worse deeds.”¹³⁸ Orderic later inserts a death-bed speech for William in which he gives an extended justification for his choice to imprison several rebels for life. William states that he “condemned many to captivity deservedly for their own disloyalty, and many others for fear of future treachery. Right custom requires, and the divine law of Moses commands, earthly rulers to restrain evil doers so that they cannot injure the innocent.”¹³⁹ For Orderic, and perhaps also William and other English kings, captivity of repeat rebels was part of the job of kings and rulers. Moreover, Biblical law and precedent justified it. Long-term captivity without ransom, then, had a place among the honorable and praiseworthy actions of a king and served as a type of sanctioned cruelty.

Nor was long-term confinement merely a tool of royalty; other princes also incarcerated those they considered dangerous for lengthy periods of time. Geoffrey Martel’s son, Geoffrey, was imprisoned by his brother Fulk le Rechin at Chinon for

¹³⁷ The *Gesta Stephani* reports that he was “to be kept there [in the tower of Bristol] until the last breath of his life.” *GS*, 75.

¹³⁸ *OV*, 4:42-3.

¹³⁹ “Sic multos uinculis inieci ex merito propriae peruersitatis aliosque plures pro metu futurae seditionis. Hoc enim censura rectitudinis exigit, et diuina lex per Moysen rectoribus orbis precipit ut comprimant nocentes ne perimant innocentes.” *Ibid.*, 4:96-99.

thirty years.¹⁴⁰ William the Conqueror, as Duke of Normandy, imprisoned Guy of Pontheiu at Bayeux for two years after the Battle of Mortemer. His grandfather, Richard II of Normandy held his half-brother William of Eu, in prison at Rouen for five years before William escaped.¹⁴¹ The elder Robert of Bellême was captured by the Manceaux in 1033 and kept in prison for two years until he was murdered by the sons of the noble Walter Sor. Robert's men had captured and then murdered Walter after a battle in which they had attempted to rescue Robert.¹⁴² Henry I, as a young man had also been thrown in prison for a time by his brother Robert Curthose in 1088.¹⁴³ Here, again, eliminating rival claimants to lordships or containing potential rebels may have been the point. For example, Orderic states that Robert Curthose imprisoned Henry because advisors close to him wrongly accused Henry of plotting against his brother.

Long-term imprisonment could merely be a lack of one's freedom, cruel within itself, but certainly not as bad as it could have been. Robert Curthose, the younger Robert of Bellême, King Stephen at first, and Ranulf Flambard—William Rufus's notorious henchman—had relatively mild incarcerations, most likely out of fear that others might seek retribution on behalf of these powerful men.¹⁴⁴ But this was

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 2: 104-5; 304-7.

¹⁴¹ GND, 2:8-11.

¹⁴² Ibid., 2:56-7.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2:204-5, OV, 4:148-9.

¹⁴⁴ Orderic Vitalis records that "For fear that dissidents might molest simple and peaceful folk under the pretext of helping his brother, he [Henry] sent him to England and kept him for twenty-seven years in prison, providing him liberally with every comfort." ["Fratrem uero suum ne inquieti sub auxilii eius uelamine simplices et quietos inquietarent in Angliam misit, et xxvii annis in carcere seruauit et omnibus deliciis abundanter pauit."] As the text's editor Marjorie Chibnall suggests in a footnote, evidence from Pipe Roll of 31 Henry I indicates he was in fact treated well and provided with all the comforts he could want, excepting his freedom. William of Malmesbury also suggests that Henry treated his brother well, remarking that, "He was captured and kept in open confinement until the day of his death, having to thank his brother's praiseworthy sense of duty that he had nothing worse to suffer than solitude, if solitude it can be called when he was enjoying the continual attention of his guards, and plenty of amusement and good eating. So he was held in captivity until he survived all the companions of his journey, and was never released until the day of his death." OV, 6:98-99; GR, 706-7. Pipe Roll of 31 Henry I also indicates that Robert of Bellême was treated well, receiving a comfortable living retainer. See C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven, CT., 2001), 149-209 for the details of Henry I's struggle with and capture of his brother Robert.

certainly not always the case. Orderic implies that the rebel Morcar spent his imprisonment during William's reign in fetters.¹⁴⁵ A century later, Richard I of England held Philip, the bishop of Beauvais, for quite a long time and in harsh captivity until the Pope demanded his release.¹⁴⁶ Gerbod, a Fleming whom King William had given the county of Chester, was captured by his enemies; "loaded with fetters and deprived of all earthly happiness, he learned through long wretchedness to compose songs of lamentation."¹⁴⁷ Death could also result from injuries or illnesses that happened while in prison, but after the captive was freed. Helias, son of Fulk V of Anjou, was captured in 1145 after he rebelled against his brother Geoffrey and was imprisoned for many years. Yet John of Marmoutier states that Helias died shortly after he was released from a fever contracted while he was incarcerated.¹⁴⁸ William the Fat, duke of Aquitaine and count of Poitou, was held in captivity by Geoffrey Martel for three years, dying shortly after his release, likely from conditions during his captivity.¹⁴⁹ Ralph the Red de Pont-Echanfray also died two weeks after his release from his wounds and from ill-treatment while imprisoned.¹⁵⁰

In fact, what Gillingham and Strickland fail to emphasize is that rather than simply an overall improvement in the treatment of captives and hostages, there was a growing tension between chivalric tradition that advocated more lenient treatment of

Both Orderic and William of Malmesbury state that Ranulf Flambard was treated well. Orderic writes, "He received ever day by the king's command two shillings sterling for food, and with this and the help of his friends he made merry in prison, and every day ordered a fine feast to be set before him and his guards." OV, 5:310-13; William of Malmesbury, 1: 714-17.

¹⁴⁵ OV, 2:256-9.

¹⁴⁶ *Chronica of Rogeri de Hovedene*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1868-71), 4:16, 21-4.

¹⁴⁷ OV, 2:260-1.

¹⁴⁸ *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise*, ed. L. Halphen & R. Poupardin (Paris, 1913) 170-231; 207.

¹⁴⁹ William of Malmesbury conflates two different events here, the capture of William the Fat in 1033, and the battle of Chef-Boutonne in 1061 in which Guy-Geoffrey-William duke of Aquitaine lost to Fulk le Rechin but was not captured. He reports, however, that William died as a result of "chafing chains and lack of food," which is supported by evidence from the *Gesta* of the counts of Anjou. *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou*, 60-2; GR, 1:430-1.

¹⁵⁰ OV, 4:220-1.

hostages and captives and a competing view that unsympathetic treatment of hostages and captives was acceptable and often necessary. On the one hand, many violent acts against hostages and captives were judged harshly in the sources according to the strictures of the chivalric code and the religious ideals of monastic writers. On the other hand, cruelty to captives and hostages seems to have continued and even been justified and praised, even if it abated to some degree. Gillingham and Strickland chart only one side of competing ideas.

The *Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, a versified and romantic account of the life of its title character, William Marshal, provides several episodes in which this tension is apparent. One such episode comes from William's life as a young bachelor, when he was serving with Earl Patrick of Salisbury as part of an escort for Queen Eleanor as she travelled through Poitou. A group of Poitevins attacked the escort in hopes of capturing the queen, and as she escapes William is wounded and taken captive. His captors treat him horribly, refusing to help him bind his wounds, in hopes that his condition will result in a quicker ransom:

Once they had taken him, they pulled out / the lance, and, once it was out, / the blood ran from his wounds / down his leggings and breaches. / The whole ground [under him] became covered in blood, / ... They mounted him on an ass / and set off at a trot, for they were such wicked people / that they had no care for his comfort; / Why? Well, it is easy to understand: / they wanted to ransom him, / and that is the way that prisoners are dealt with / when in the hands of wicked men. [ll. 1711-24] ¹⁵¹

On the one hand, the author of the *Histoire* acknowledges that the reason for William's mistreatment was "easy to understand," portraying it as a logical, if not wholly acceptable, choice on the part of his captors. This was how men made money from ransoms. Yet on the other, the author also clearly condemns this mistreatment of

¹⁵¹ "Quant pris l'orent, sil deffererent / Del glaive, e quant il li osterent, / Si raia fors li sans des plaies / Ensanglanta la terre tote, / Bien le pout l'om sieure par rote. / Desus une aune le monterent, / Trotant, kar si male gent erent / Qu'unke ne lor chaleit de s'aise, / Enz amoent plus sa mesaise. / Por quei? C'est legier entendre: / C'esteit por lui faire raeindre; / Issi sunt mené li prison / Quant il sunt en male prison." *History of William Marshal*, ed. A.J. Holden, trans. S. Gregory, notes D. Crouch (London, 2002), 1:88-9.

captives. William is later described as having no bandages to staunch the bleeding, and the author repeatedly remarks that no one came to his aid, leaving William to deal with his own wounds as best as possible. He twice refers to the captors as “wicked,” and later calls them “mean-minded,” attributing William’s poor state to the “great viciousness / of the man who held him in his power.” Even though his captors “knew the great pain he was in / ... [they] showed him no pity.”¹⁵² Thus, even though the author may condemn the acts of abuse in true chivalric fashion, he acknowledges that such practices are commonplace.

Descriptions of real events like King Stephen’s mistreatment of the bishops mentioned above also demonstrate the huge discrepancy between the two medieval understandings of acceptable hostage and captive treatment. Even the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, who favored King Stephen and tended to see the best in Stephen’s actions, could not completely remove his disapproval of Stephen’s treatment of the bishops from his narrative.¹⁵³ He reports that the bishops were kept “under close guard,” and “lodged dishonourably, apart from each other and grievously tormented by insufficient diet.” He ordered the Bishop of Salisbury’s son “put in chains,” and that he should “be hung on high right before the castle entrance if the Bishop of Ely did not after all hand over the castle [of Devizes] and admit the king’s forces.” The bishops were “in great distress and agony of mind, it being clear to all that they and theirs were liable to insults of various kinds and even to peril of death,” and they thus

¹⁵² The author’s description of William’s treatment is extensive. “Il n’out de quei bender ses plaies; / Lors prist les tigeus des ses braies / Si s’en benda si com il pout, / Quer nul aider ne li osout. / Por quei? Por la grant felonie / De celui qui l’out en bailie. / Lor porchaça auque estupe, / Ses plaies en tente e estupe; / Quant eles furent totes pleines / Del sanc qui del cors e de veines / De si qu’as plaies decorust, / Nuls de ce ne li securut, / Celes li convint relaver. / Molt furent felon e aver / Cil qui sa grant dolor saveient / E nule pitié n’en aveient.” Ll. 1725-40. Ibid., 1:88-9.

¹⁵³ If the attribution of the *Gesta* to the bishop of Bath, Robert of Lewes, is correct, this may explain his inability to completely forgive Stephen for his actions, given that, despite whatever misdeeds the bishops had done, they were still ecclesiastical men.

resolved to seek “release from the dishonorable arrest.”¹⁵⁴

Yet at the same time, the *Gesta* could depict Stephen’s capture of castles and captives positively, suggesting that it was the context was each case of captivity that determined whether or not it was construed by authors as cruel or just. The *Gesta*’s author describes Stephen’s 1145 capture of the castle of Faringdon by writing:

So by the handing of this castle to the king’s disposal God granted to his aspirations a very great deal of glory, the crown of his good fortune, in that he not only enriched his comrades most bountifully from the capture of the knights who had surrendered to him on terms of being held ransom, or from the quantities of arms and booty that he had found within in the greatest profusion, but also struck no little dread into his opponents through the victory that he had so decisively won.¹⁵⁵

Here the *Gesta* suggests that God was on Stephen’s side. Further, the capture of knights by Stephen and his followers is described as beneficial, not only financially but also in enhancing Stephen’s status as king by instilling fear in his opponents. Stephen’s capture of Henry Calderet and Henry’s brother Ralph is likewise depicted as just. Because the *Gesta*’s authors believes Henry and his brother are ravagers and pillagers, especially of churches, he calls the cruelty that these men suffered at Stephen’s hands “divine judgment” and a “punishment entirely worthy of their crimes.”¹⁵⁶ It is likely that the author, himself a cleric, felt that those who harmed the church deserved to be treated harshly while bishops, regardless of whether or not they had committed any crimes, did not. Context to each description of captivity is

¹⁵⁴ “...duos secum episcopos custodiis adhibitis stricte seruatos adduxit, iussitque ut locis ad inuicem seclusi inhonestis, acerbis macerarentur ieiuniis, summusque illius antigraphus, Salesbiriensis episcopi filius, captus iam et uinculis mancipatus ante ipsum castelli intritum alte suspenderetur, ni episcopus Eliensis, castello demum reddito, regiam uirtutem intus susciperet. Episcopi itaque nimia anxietate afflicti animo maxime torquebantur, dum cunctis palam esset, diuersis se et suos ludibriis sed et vitae periculo exponendos, ni municipia sua, quae summo studio construxerant, summo et amore complectebantur, in regis deliberationem committerent. Amicorum tamen consultu, qui, licet perrari, curiali frequentiae intererant, fuit eis persuasum et fixe iniunctum, quatinus ex inhonesta, qua detinebantur, custodia se subtrahentes, regis uoluntati ex toto satisfacerent....” GS, 52-3.

¹⁵⁵ “Hoc itaque in regis dispositione contradito castello, plurimum gloriae, cumulum fortunae regis, Deus aspirato adiecit, quia non solum ex militum captione, qui se illi sub redimendi conditione commiserant, uel ex armorum et spoliolum copiis, quas intus affluentissime reppererat, suos largissime commilitones ditauit, sed etiam ex ipsa, quam potentissime adeptus fuit, uictoria, non minimum aduersariis suis terrorem incussit.” 182-3.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 188-9.

essential, then, to understanding whether or not captivity was acceptable. This further suggests that, despite any general cultural mores like chivalry that may have influenced nobles' actions, captive-takers may have been justified and even encouraged by other sets of cultural traditions to treat captives cruelly.

Context could determine how the actions of captive-takers were perceived in other cases, as well. The actions of William the Conqueror are illustrative here. As noted above, Orderic Vitalis goes out of his way to justify William the Conqueror's long-term confinement of several rebels by suggesting that it was the duty of a king to protect his realm at the expense of the freedom of those who disturb the peace. As Gillingham argues, William of Poitiers also emphasizes the justness of William's actions, but instead of defending his imprisonment of others, William repeatedly states that William had the right to kill or exile defeated enemies, yet chose instead to treat them with clemency.¹⁵⁷ As writers interested in justifying the conquest of England and the imposition of order in a formerly chaotic Normandy, both William and Orderic chose to see the Conqueror's actions as appropriate and moderate. William of Poitiers was writing under William the Conqueror's patronage, which of course means that he was less likely to criticize his patron's actions. But William the Conqueror was not Orderic's patron, and Orderic writes more as a monk who appreciated the strong actions of a Duke and King that protected his monastery from the depravation by the Norman barons. As such, they both depict William's actions in benevolent and even kind.

The Peterborough Chronicle's 1087 entry, however, suggests that William the Conqueror's actions were much more violent and unjustifiable. As an English source, the Chronicle's author sees William from the perspective of the defeated English and tends to see him in a less positive light. Calling William a "stern and violent man," it

¹⁵⁷ See Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England," *passim* for the evidence.

reports “no one dared do anything contrary to his will” because he put “earls in fetters,” “expelled bishops from their sees,” and “put thegns in prison.”¹⁵⁸ The effect of the words is the same, in that William is depicted as using imprisonment as a means of controlling the actions of his nobles, but here the implication is that his actions are unforgiving and therefore unjust. Whereas confinement in Orderic and William of Poitiers’ depictions is seen as an act of clemency, for the author of the Peterborough Chronicle, it becomes an unwarranted punishment and terror-inducing tactic used against nobles whose only crime was to disagree with the will of the king and defend their freedom.

It is worth re-emphasizing here that what restraints chivalry might have placed on cruelty to nobles were almost never extended to the lower classes, especially if their crimes were seen as particularly egregious. As both Strickland and Gillingham note, the fate of commoners captured in battle or taken for ransom was rarely pleasant, especially if those commoners had dared to act outside their social class. Suger describes in gory detail the fate of the serfs who had murdered Charles the Good in March 1127. He writes:

That wretched Burchard, having gained the consent of his companions, slipped away in flight. He wanted to leave the land but found no way.... Stopped by order of the king while he was returning to the stronghold of a friend and counselor, he was tied to the top of a tall wheel and delivered over to the greedy appetite of ravens and winged creatures, a miserable death of a choice kind. His eyes were pecked out and his whole face torn to shreds by the birds from above, and his body was pierced a thousand times by arrows, lances, and javelins from below. He died a very vile death, and his remains were thrown into a sewer. Berthold, the ringleader in this wicked behavior likewise decided to flee. [...] His own men seized him and delivered him over to the judgment of the king, who condemned him to hang on the gallows next to a dog; and whenever someone struck the dog, the animal turned its anger on the man, eating up his whole face with its biting. Sometimes, horrible to say, it even befouled him with excrement. [...] The king inflicted many hardships on those whom he had confined to the tower and made them surrender. He had them thrown down from its top one after the other in the presence of their

¹⁵⁸ *ASC*, 220.

people, and all their necks were broken. But one of the traitors, named Isaac, whom fear of death had led to a monastery for the tonsure, he had defrocked and fixed to a gibbet.¹⁵⁹

Conan, the merchant “arch-traitor” of Rouen who tried to overthrow Robert Curthose, was also violently murdered when captured by the future Henry I. Although Conan begged for mercy and offered a hefty ransom of gold and silver, Henry mocked his ambitions, told him “there is no ransom for a traitor,” and then promptly threw him from a window in tower of Rouen. He then ordered his body dragged through the streets of the city.¹⁶⁰

The violence done to non-nobles could also be widespread. Ravaging the countryside was a common feature of medieval warfare, and it was the local population that suffered the most. Medieval chroniclers regularly reported wholesale violence done to the masses during the civil war between Matilda and Stephen. While these narratives may represent exaggerations, they do imply that peasants and commoners were often taken captive and expected to ransom themselves for exorbitant sums. John of Worcester reports that in October 1139, when the Empress and Robert of Gloucester arrived in England, a wave of violence swept across the kingdom. Miles of Gloucester, constable of Bristol castle, defected to the empress, and according to John, began to terrorize the local population. He writes:

The disasters which spread from this place, Bristol Castle, cannot be adequately described by anyone with knowledge and eloquence. As many of those who resisted Miles, or supported the king, as could be captured were seized, and all those were chained and horribly tortured. Many cruel punishments were devised, bands of troops hired everywhere to carry out this work of perdition. The husbandmen and inhabitants of villages and townships with all their goods and substance were given or sold to these mercenaries.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Suger, 138-42. Cf. Galbert of Bruges’ version of events. *The Murder of Charles the Good*, trans. and ed. James Bruce Ross (Toronto, 1982), 171ff, 189, 208-12, 249, 251, 255.

¹⁶⁰ OV, 4:224-7; GR, 712-15.

¹⁶¹ “Iam uero exhinc, Bricstowensi scilicet urbe, que mala per totam emergerint Angliam, nullius poterit exprimere scientia uel facundia. Resistentes siquidem sibi, regieue dignitati parentes, quotquot capi poterant capiuntur, uniuersi capti uinculis et tormentis mancipantur horrendis, poenarum diuersitates siue acerbitates exquiruntur, militumque caterue ad hoc opus perditionis exequedum undecunque conducuntur, quibus in stipendium dantur et uenduntur uicorum et uillarum cultores atque habitatores cum rebus suis uniuersis ac substantiis.” JW, 3:270-1.

When Matilda left Bristol in October, the violence followed. She arrived in Gloucester on October 15 looking to “assert her lordship and receive submission” from the local population. Those who did not submit suffered a similar fate as those in Bristol:

Tortures worthy of Decius or Nero, and deaths of various kinds were imposed on those unwilling to submit to her, and firm in their allegiance to the king. The city, which gloried in its past centuries, was filled with screams and dire torments, which were horrendous to its citizens.¹⁶²

He also describes the destruction of his own city, Worcester, at the hands of the citizens of Gloucester who supported the Empress. Many in Worcester were taken prisoner, and were “led away, coupled like dogs, into wretched captivity. Whether they had means or not, they were forced to promise on oath to pay whatever ransom the mouthpiece of their captors cruelly fixed.”¹⁶³ The widespread taking of captives appears like a form of terrorism, a way to control potential local resistance of nobles and cities alike.

Conclusions

Overall, the sources give the impression that hostage- and captiveship were complicated processes influenced by multiple traditions and by the context of events and attitudes of the participants involved. At the most basic level, it is necessary to understand that a hostage is different from a captive. The first distinction is that hostages are given voluntarily and captives are taken against their will. Captives are almost always taken during or after a battle, but this is not always the case with hostages, even though hostages are often exchanged in an attempt to end feuds or wars

¹⁶² “Inde discedens mense Octobri, .xviii. Kal. Nouembr., Gloecestrensem uenit ad urbem, ciuium et circumiacentium hinc inde finium expetens dominium et sumens hominum. Hoc uero agere nolentibus, sed regi potius fidelitatem custodientibus, Deciana siue Neroniana inferuntur tormenta cum diuersis mortibus; fitque urbs, retro anteactis seculis gloriosa, ululatibus dirisque cruciatibus plena, suisque habitatoribus horrenda.” Ibid, 3:270-3.

¹⁶³ “Plurimi per uicos et plateas capiuntur, et uelut in copula canum constringuntur, et miserabiliter abducuntur. Licet habeant, licet non habeant, quantum crudele os illorum censuerit in redemptionem sui iureiurando promittere et reddere compelluntur.” Ibid., 3:274-5.

between two men, families, or factions. What often separates the two practices are the formalities followed in hostage exchanges that are not associated with taking captives. Both captives and hostages, however, often served the same purposes: to make it impossible for the captive or hostage-giver to continue to fight or influence action, to punish or deter certain behaviors, and to promote the good behavior of the captive's or hostage's family members.

Hostageship continued as an important binding and peace-making institution well into the High Middle Ages, and was an important means of cross-cultural communication, especially in the Crusader kingdoms. Captiveship, too, maintained its importance during the same time period, and was regularly practiced against all social classes, and also between various cultures. For French-influenced areas, however, its fundamental features changed as slavery disappeared and was replaced by the importance of ransom. While previous scholars have emphasized a lessening of violence that resulted from the cultural pressures of chivalry, one should, however, not forget that violence was still a well-documented, wide-spread, and accepted part of the process throughout the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Furthermore, such imprisonment, especially long-term incarceration, and even that without the possibility of ransom, could be justified and considered right action, especially if it was done by those in power in an effort to maintain the overall peace of their lands. Furthermore, there is a gap in the scholarship concerning the roles of women as both 1) hostages and captives and 2) hostage and captive takers, holders, and negotiators that this project attempts to fill. As will be discussed in the following chapters, women are an active and vital part of all aspects of hostage and captive-taking. They, too, had to negotiate the conflicting paradigms of chivalric intention and harsh reality as victims and actors. While women faced the same sets of challenges that their male counterparts did, their gender added extra tensions and problems, and

shaped the way in which their actions and the actions of others towards them were perceived.

Chapter Two:

“...Nor could anyone report it, / That there were any women so wretchedly tormented:”¹ Women as Hostages and Captives in the Anglo-French World

As noted in the previous chapter, hostage and captive-taking were ubiquitous features of medieval warfare. This chapter proposes to examine women as hostages and captives in the Anglo-French world as comprehensively as the sources permit.² My focus will be on a.) outlining the situations in which women were taken as hostages and captives b.) the reasons why women were taken as hostages and captives, c.) the special problems raised by women hostages and captives and d.) the use of literature as a means of exploring medieval anxieties about women as hostages and captives. The chapter will again be divided into two parts that address female hostages and captives separately.

Hostages

Annette Parks, the only historian to discuss female hostages at any length, does so mostly in the context of exploring the relationship between marriages and betrothals on the one hand, and hostageship on the other. She does suggest, however, that most hostage-givers preferred to give their male relatives as hostages because holding women hostage was problematic. Despite misogynist traditions that downplay the value of women to medieval society, daughters and wives were not only loved and provided for, they were “indispensable elements in medieval society and politics.”³ Concerns over the injury of women being held hostage speaks to both a

¹ Lawman, *Brut*, trans. Rosamund Allen (New York, 1992), 156.

² I shall restrict myself here to an extremely limited discussion of the Crusades, as Yvonne Friedman’s study has covered this ground thoroughly. See also David Hay, “Gender Bias and Religious Intolerance in Accounts of the ‘Massacres’ of the First Crusade,” and Yaacov Lev, “Prisoners of War During the Fatimid-Ayyubid Wars with the Crusaders,” from *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades*, ed. Michael Gervers and James M. Powell (Syracuse, NY, 2001), both of which discuss the fate of female captives during the Crusades.

³ Parks, 246.

reluctance on the part of hostage-givers, who feared harm done to valuable members of their family, and also hostage-takers, who did not want to suffer the consequences of an angry rival family bent on revenge should anything happen to their hostage womenfolk.

Of particular concern to hostage-givers was sexual violation. Any female given as a hostage was outside of the protection of her family and therefore more vulnerable. The concern over sexual violation was paramount because lineage and legitimacy were transmitted through blood. Mistreatment in captivity “clouded issues of legitimacy on which claims of property depended.” Not only was the woman herself tainted,⁴ but also her family’s honor and the honor of the family that had held her hostage. In fact, as Parks notes, on at least one occasion, a female hostage was refused. In 1210, the English justiciar Geoffrey fitz Peter paid a large fine to avoid housing the king of Scotland’s daughters on behalf of King John of England. Parks suggests that this was most likely because John was well-known for his abuse of hostages, and he did not want to be associated with any dishonorable acts that John might have in mind for the two young women.⁵

Despite the fact that men preferred to give sons or male relatives as hostages and that medieval social conventions discouraged the use of women, the sources demonstrate that women were still given as hostages, most often to seal peace agreements or in exchange for other hostages or captives. In 1198, Maud de Braose was sent to England where she served as a hostage in exchange for her husband Gruffydd ap Rhys. King John appears to have taken the daughter of a Scottish earl hostage. In 1213, he makes reference to her death while in his custody in a letter to

⁴ See Yvonne Friedman’s discussion of the taint captive women suffered in *Encounter Between Enemies*, 162-84.

⁵ Parks, 250-1.

the earl of Winchester.⁶ In 1214, shortly before his death, King William I, the Lion of Scotland, took the Earl of Caithness' daughter hostage.⁷ Joan, King Henry III of England's sister, whose case will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Three, was held hostage by Hugh de Lusignan, her former betrothed, when he married her mother Isabel of Angoulême instead. Joan became Hugh's negotiation tool in securing the release of Isabel's dowry, which Henry refused to give up.⁸ Henry II of England took both male and female hostages from the Welsh in 1163. Henry also held the daughter of Eudo de Porhoët hostage. Gerald of Wales reported the rumor that Henry seduced her while she was in his care.⁹ André de Vitre's daughter was given as a hostage to King Richard I of England in 1196 as part of the peace agreements that allowed Constance of Brittany to be released from captivity. She was eventually returned to her father when he made peace with Richard in 1199.¹⁰ Eleanor of Brittany, who had the miserable luck of being both a hostage and a captive, was held hostage as part of her brother Richard I's ransom, ostensibly to be given to one of the sons of Duke Leopold as a wife.¹¹

Sometimes women were used because there were no male relatives to serve as hostages instead. Reluctant though men may have been to use women, it was more expedient to give a woman as a hostage than no hostage at all. For example, Isaac, the Emperor of Cyprus, who had made the foolish decision to attempt taking King Richard I of England's sister and wife captive, was forced to give his only child, his

⁶ Ibid., 244.

⁷ "In the autumn, moreover, about the Feast of St. Peter, which is called *ad vincula*, in the year 1214, King William set out for Moray, where he made some stay; and having made a treaty of peace with the Earl of Caithness and taken his daughter as hostage, he came back from Moray into Scotland." John of Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. William F. Skene, trans. by Felix J. H. Skene (Edinburgh, 1872), 274.

⁸ See Chapter 3 below.

⁹ W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (Los Angeles, 1973), 119. See also Judith A. Everard, *Brittany and the Angevins: Province and Empire, 1158-1203* (Cambridge, 2000), 46, for the details of these events.

¹⁰ Everard, 160, ft. 51; 166, ft. #79; 173-4.

¹¹ Roger of Howden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1868) 3:232-3.

daughter, over to Richard as a hostage for his good behavior after Richard defeated him.¹² Early attempts at getting Robert the Bruce to submit to English authority repeatedly called for his daughter, his only child, to be given as a hostage.¹³

One of the most detailed hostage exchanges involving women was the mutual release of King Stephen and the Earl of Gloucester from captivity in 1141. King Stephen had been captured at the Battle of Lincoln, and the Earl of Gloucester at the Battle of Stockbridge, and when an exchange of prisoners was finally agreed upon, hostages were needed to guarantee that things went smoothly. As a result, Queen Matilda successfully served as hostage along with her son to guarantee the safe release of the earl. When the king was released, he left Matilda and Eustace in Bristol. When he reached Winchester, the earl of Gloucester was released, and the earl's son was left behind to guarantee the release of the queen. The earl traveled to Bristol, and the queen and her son were then released.¹⁴

The case of Queen Matilda demonstrates that hostageship for women could function like any other hostage exchange. But this was not always so. Brutality towards, or the execution of, hostages was a common feature of medieval warfare, and being female in no way ensured better treatment, even though women were supposed to be protected. In 1165, for example, Henry II mutilated both the male and female Welsh hostages.¹⁵ Orderic Vitalis' tale of Eustace of Breteuil, confirmed by Henry of Huntingdon, also illustrates this point. Eustace, son-in-law to Henry I of England through marriage to his illegitimate daughter Juliana, demanded the castle of Ivry from Henry in 1119. Henry, unwilling to give it up, compensated Eustace with the son of

¹² Roger of Howden, *Gesta Henrici II et Ricardi I*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1887), 2:165.

¹³ G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2005), 444, 458.

¹⁴ HN, 106-9.

¹⁵ "Et Henricus rex Anglie transfretavit, et postquam rediit cum exercitu magno perrexit in Guallias, ibique plures occidit et justitiam fecit de duobus filiis regis Ris, et de filiis ac filiabus nobilium ejus, scilicet oculos puerorum eruit et nares auresque puellarum abscidit." *Chronica de Mailros*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1835), 79.

the custodian of the castle as a hostage. In order to ensure Eustace's good behavior, Henry took Eustace's two daughters, his own grandchildren, as hostages. Eustace, however, following some bad advice, put out the eyes of the young boy whom Henry had given him. As a result, Henry gave his two granddaughters to the boy's father, who put out the young girls' eyes and cut off the tips of their noses. When Eustace and his wife found out about the treatment of their daughters, they rebelled and fortified their castles.¹⁶ As Orderic notes, it is the innocent children who suffer for the sins of their parents, but Orderic's tale is more instructive than he implies.

The example of Eustace's daughters demonstrates how taking women hostage could have the opposite effect to the desired one. Hostage exchanges, in theory, are designed to create positive behavior modification. Yet despite the fact that his own daughters were held hostage, Eustace harmed the hostage placed under his power, indicating that he either calculated that, because his daughters bore Henry's own royal blood they would come through unscathed, or that he did not care about the fate of his own children. In any case, this incident shows that even being a very young female

¹⁶ "In eodem anno Eustachius de Britolio gener regis crebro commonitus fuit a contribulibus et consanguineis ut a rege recederet, nisi ipse turrin Ibrii quae antecessorum eius fuerat ei redderet. Rex autem ad presens in hoc ei adquiescere distulit sed in futuro promisit, et blandis eum uerbis redimendo pacificauit. Et quia discordiam eius habere nolebat, qui de potentioribus Neustriae proceribus erat, et amicis hominibusque stipatus firmissimas munitiones habebat, ut securiorem sibi et fideliorem faceret, filium Radulfi Harenc qui turrin custodiebat ei obsidem tradidit, et ab eo duas filias ipsius neptes uidelicet suas uersa uice obsides accepit. Porro Eustachius susceptum obsidem male tractauit. Nam consilio Amalrici de Monteforti qui augmenta maliciae callide machinabatur, qui Eustachio multa sub fide pollicitus est quae non impleuit pueri oculos eruit, et patri qui probissimus miles erat misit. Vnde pater iratus ad regem uenit, et infortunium filii sui nunciauit. Rex uero uehementer inde doluit, pro qua re duas neptes suas ad uindictam in presenti faciendam ei contradidit. Radulfus autem Harenc Eustachii filias permissu regis irati accepit, et earum oculos in ultionem filii sui crudeliter effodit, nariumque summitates truncauit. Innocens itaque infantia parentum nefas pro dolor miserabiliter luit et utrobique genitorum affectus deformitatem sobolis cum detrimento luxit. Denique Radulfus a rege confortatus, et muneribus honoratus, ad Ibrii turrin conseruandam remeauit, et talionem regia seueritate repensam filiabus eius Eustachio nunciari fecit. Comperta uero filiarum orbitate pater cum matre nimis indoluit, et castella sua...munivit...." OV, 6:210-13. In previous discussion of this episode I have found that many scholars claim it is unsubstantiated by sources other than Orderic, and therefore untrue. Perhaps this is out of admiration of Henry I, despite the fact that he is known to have disfigured others and was known to possess a violent temper. In any case, this story is substantiated by Henry of Huntingdon in his *De Contemptu Mundi*, although the editor claims there is no authority for the story. She may have missed the story in Orderic. HH, 604-5.

did not necessarily protect a hostage from violence.

It also demonstrates that harming female hostages could provoke their relatives into rebellion or to reciprocate with more violence. As Jean Dunbabin, in her study of imprisonment, suggests, “dishonorable treatment of ladies...could cause serious trouble.”¹⁷ Orderic recounts another episode supporting this idea. He writes that in 1118, the people of Alençon rebelled against Henry I due to the harsh treatment of their lord, Stephen, count of Mortain. While Orderic reports that part of the problem was that Stephen “oppressed them with burdens and unaccustomed taxes,” it was when Stephen took the burgesses’ sons as hostages that they became “full of rancour” and “bid their time for vengeance.” It was, however, the taking of one particular hostage and her mistreatment that resulted in the rebellion. Orderic writes that “He [Stephen] put the wife of an honest citizen, who was the daughter of Pain of Chassé, a famous knight, to be guarded in a tower where, to her deep distress, she was in the hands of debauched guards. Her husband Amiotus was outraged by the dishonor, and secretly formed a sworn conspiracy with many others who had suffered a similar wrong.” These men then went to Arnulf of Montgomery and through him asked Fulk of Anjou, Henry I’s enemy, to receive the city from them. This resulted in the capture of the city.¹⁸

¹⁷ Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 119.

¹⁸“In illo tempore burgenses Alencionis contra regem Henricum rebellauerunt, causamque notabo cur regem tanto facinore offenderunt. Stephanus Moritolii comes qui tunc eis dominabatur adolescens erat, et burgenses non ut decuisset diligebat, seu competenti iure honorabat. Adulantium fauori non senum consilio more Roboam adquiescebat, et oppidanos infideles sibi et regi autumabat unde iniuriis eos et insolitis exactionibus opprimebat, minusque quam oporteret quid inde sequeretur preuidebat. Denique omnes conuenit et ab eis ut filios suos sibi obsides darent exegit. Inuiti et coacti imperanti obsecundauerunt, sed maliuolentia pleni ultionis tempus desiderauerunt. Iracundiam quippe suam callide occularunt sed manifestam non multo post uindictam machinati sunt. Comes autem obsides accepit, sed honorifice non tractauit. Vxorem cuiusdam probi hominis filiam Pagani de Caceio famosi equitis in turrin custodiendam posuit, quae lenonibus ibidem commissa uehementer ingemuit. Amiotus autem uir eius nimis iratus erubuit, multosque sibi similis querelae clam fide sociauit. Regem uero iusticiae amatorem imprudentes timuerunt interpellare ne clamorem eorum de nepote suo dedignaretur audire. Vnde Arnulfum de Monte Gomerici fratrem Rodberti Belesmensis adierunt, et per eum Fulconem Andegauis comitem requisierunt, ut Alencionem quem tradere parati erant reciperent, comitisque custodibus de turri exclusis libertatem incolis impetrarent.” OV, 6:204-7.

Outrage to womenfolk, therefore, could produce dangerous results. By violating and/or insulting a man's female relative, a hostage holder was demonstrating to the world that that man could not protect his family; in other words, that he could not perform his basic, minimal male duty. Furthermore, in cases where rape was potentially involved, the hostage holder was also possibly interfering with the man's bloodline or the ability to marry off his female relative, who had essentially become "damaged property." It was the most public and humiliating insult. Thus the move to hurt a man's wife or female relative was a provocation, often done on purpose in order to make a statement about the relative power (or lack thereof) of the men involved. Stephen may have mistreated the women of Alençon because he did not expect their men to be able to act in return, since they more than likely did not have a readily available military force with which to expel him from the city's citadel. Moreover, the townspeople's reaction suggests that mistreatment of women, although perhaps common, could produce a more public backlash. While the mistreatment of the sons of the townspeople made them angry, they did not openly seek to overthrow Stephen. It was not until a threat was made against the wives of the townspeople that they were spurred to action, to the point that they sought out King Henry's enemy, the Duke of Anjou. Further, this was done knowing that, given the importance of their city to Henry, he would be forced to act against them. Apparently, the mistreatment of their women was a sensitive issue for medieval men. Perhaps because they could be more easily painted as innocents and were perceived by society as the weaker sex unable or less able to defend themselves, women provided an emotional rallying point for men. The outrages they suffered or were said to have suffered could provoke men to the point of war and rebellion or at least serve as a legitimate excuse for doing so.

William of Newburgh's depiction of the events surrounding King Stephen's arrest of Geoffrey de Mandeville in 1143 also suggests that this mistreatment of

female hostages and even holding women hostage in general could have unintended and undesired results. The events surrounding Geoffrey's arrest are somewhat puzzling because the sources conflict in their accounts.¹⁹ Henry of Huntingdon and the *Gesta Stephani*, for example, report rumors that Geoffrey was intriguing with the Empress Matilda and that this was the reason for Geoffrey's arrest.²⁰ But Geoffrey was not alone in his flirtation with the Empress when her power seemed in the ascendancy, and, as Jim Bradbury has pointed out,²¹ this was likely not enough to have pushed Stephen to make the arrest. Further, while Geoffrey is often depicted as a selfish, turncoat baron intent on his own personal gain, what seems clear is that in 1143 Geoffrey had not provided any immediate provocation for his own arrest. Given this state of affairs, it appears that William of Newburgh, writing a half-century later, was grasping for an explanation, and since one was not readily available, he picked the one that seemed most logical: the mistreatment of Queen Matilda, Stephen's wife, and the daughter of King Louis of France, Constance, engaged to Stephen's son Eustace, during Stephen's captivity in 1141. Constance and Queen Matilda had been staying in the Tower of London, which was under Geoffrey's control, and it appears that he severely restricted their movements, eventually wresting Constance away from the Queen who was forced "to depart with ignominy." Geoffrey essentially held Constance hostage, probably as a means of securing his own position in uncertain political times. Although the Empress was in the ascendancy Queen Matilda and her supporters were not yet defeated. Controlling the Queen's future daughter-in-law gave Geoffrey leverage and negotiating power in case the Queen was successful and

¹⁹ For the best clarification of events and motives for Geoffrey's actions, see R.H.C Davis and J.O. Prestwich, "The Treason of Geoffrey de Mandeville," *English Historical Review* 103.407 (Apr. 1988): 283-317; J.O. Prestwich, "Geoffrey de Mandeville: A Further Comment," *The English Historical Review* 103.409 (Oct. 1988): 960-66; and R.H.C Davis, "Geoffrey de Mandeville: A Final Comment," *English Historical Review* 103.409 (Oct. 1988): 967-8.

²⁰ HH, 742-3; GS, 162-3.

²¹ Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139-1153* (Stroud, Gloucester, 1996), 128-9.

Stephen was eventually released. If the Empress gained the throne, Geoffrey had a ready-made gift to give her: the daughter of the French king who had supported the ascension of her enemies. His bargaining chip did him no good, however; he was eventually forced to release Constance, only “reluctantly yielding [her] to the king her father-in-law” once Stephen was free.²²

Whether or not Constance’s retention as a hostage was the true reason for Stephen’s actions is debatable; as Jim Bradbury remarks, Geoffrey’s mistreatment of the Queen and Constance was two years prior to his arrest, and it would have been a long time for Stephen to hold a grudge.²³ In reality, even if Stephen did bide his time in taking revenge, it was likely not the sole cause of Geoffrey’s fall from favor, as William indicates it was. But even if the arrest was not exactly as William depicted it, his choice to present the mistreatment of the Queen and Constance as Stephen’s motivation is significant. First, mistreatment of women can be the source of political turmoil and the cause of political action. Such treatment demanded a response from the abused woman’s family, and for William the abuse of a female relative, and in this case also the daughter of a foreign ally, could be the source of anger and revenge years after the fact. Second, medieval authors perceived that the mistreatment of women could lead to harsh political repercussions for the abuser. Most of the sources at the time highlight Stephen’s arrest of Geoffrey as the cause of his downfall.

Thus, as the narrative of Geoffrey’s arrest suggests, seeking revenge for the mistreatment of female hostages was a common enough activity that, even when more “practical” explanations were available, authors still chose to use this as the justification for a person’s motives. Nor is Geoffrey’s case an isolated one. According to the versified romance of his life, Eustace the Monk joined the French against King

²² William of Newburgh, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett (London, 1884), 1:44-5.

²³ Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 129.

John of England, his former lord, because John had “killed, burned and disfigured” Eustace’s daughter.²⁴ Eustace had given his daughter to John as a hostage as a sign of his goodwill, and John had betrayed that trust. While the more historically minded sources attribute Eustace’s betrayal of King John to John’s acceptance of the count of Boulogne, Eustace’s arch-enemy, as an ally,²⁵ the romance paints the betrayal as more personal in nature. Why the author chose this particular reason is unknown, but it seems to suggest that this was a more justified reason for switching sides than the count of Boulogne. The dishonor done to his family and the betrayal of personal trust and lordship not only make the story more of a romance—it is John’s failure to act as a true lord that justifies Eustace’s actions—but also implies that the author’s audience would have also found it a more appealing reason, given that Eustace is the hero of the romance and John in many ways the villain.

Nor was this concern about violence against women an Anglo-Norman or Anglo-French construct or merely the literary topos of romances. As early as the writings of Bede, a woman’s safety was the symbolic measure of the peacefulness of England. In order to depict the lack of violence in King Edwin of Northumbria’s reign (586-632/3), Bede writes that, “It is related that there was so great a peace in Britain, wherever the dominion of King Edwin reached, that, as the proverb still runs, a woman with a new-born child could walk throughout the island from sea to sea and take no harm.”²⁶ While Bede certainly deployed this tidbit as an indication of Edwin’s saintliness, it also suggests that the ability to protect women’s bodies was a barometer

²⁴ *Two Medieval Outlaws: Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess (Rochester, NY, 1997), 73, 77.

²⁵ See Henry Lewis Cannon, “The Battle of Sandwich and Eustace the Monk,” *English Historical Review* 27 (1912): 649-70, for the historical Eustace the Monk.

²⁶ “Tanta autem eo tempore pax in Britannia, quaquauersum imperium Regis Eduini peruenerat, fuisse perhibetur ut, sicut usque hodie in prouerbio dicitur, etiam si mulier una cum recens nato paruulo uellet totam perambulare insulam a mari ad mare, nullo se ledente ualeret.” Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Bertram Colgrave, ed. and intro. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1999), 192.

for measuring the power of men. This is further illustrated by Archbishop Wulfstan II of York's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. In it, he describes the gang rape of women: "And often ten or twelve, one after another, will disgracefully insult the thegn's wife, and sometimes his daughter or near kinswoman, while he who considered himself proud and powerful and brave enough before that happened, looks on."²⁷ Here, Wulfstan depicts sexual violence against women as a tool to humble others. Men who thought themselves powerful are publically and repeatedly humiliated through the desecration of their women.²⁸ Hostages, already a public sign of a man's submission to another, when harmed, only added insult to a process that was already humility-inducing. The violation of female hostages added even further layers of insult. Not only had an agreement between men been broken, but the man whose female relative had been violated lost valuable status in terms of his ability to protect his family and his property, both symbolically represented by the violated woman. This male concern over the implications of rape continued into later centuries and the anxieties surrounding the violation of women's bodies were played out in numerous sources. As Kathryn Gravdal notes, within rape depictions in the French romances "rape is only part of a larger dilemma: that of maintaining order and strength in the chaotic feudal world."²⁹ Women's bodies, both symbolically and legally male property, were inherently linked with male pride, power and prowess. To violate a woman was an attempt to destroy those commodities and demanded a response. The need for a

²⁷ Julie Coleman, "Rape in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Guy Halsall (Rochester, NY, 1998), 194-5. The Old English text of Wulfstan's sermon can be found in Whitelock, Dorothy, ed., *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (London, 1939).

²⁸ Medieval views on rape were rather complicated, but seem have focused mostly on male perspectives. Rape, especially later on, became more and more acceptable: it was legitimized as a way to contract marriage, a means of releasing pent-up male frustrations, depicted as expression of love, and was coded as erotic in romance literature. This is not to say that rape was not depicted as problematic or that women who were raped did not need to be avenged. However, the focus was on male pride and men as victims, rather than the rape victim herself. See below, and Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia, 1991), *passim*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

response, however, was not built upon a desire to revenge a woman's honor, but a man's.³⁰ His loss, not hers, was the focus.

The idea that harming a man's female relative might be a deliberate provocation can also be seen in the events of St. Brice's Day, 1002. These events suggest that just as violence done to one woman can be symbolic of the weakness of her family, especially her male relatives, the violation of a hostage woman can be used to imply or alternately highlight the weakness of an entire community or people. Although he is unclear in his dating, William of Malmesbury reports in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* that on the day that Æthelred ordered the massacre of all the Danes in England, Eadric, ealdorman of Mercia ordered that Gunnhild, the sister of Danish King Swein, be beheaded along with the other Danes.³¹ One of the many reasons that William appears to find this so tragic is because he remarks that she had voluntarily converted to Christianity and offered herself as a hostage for peace with the Danes. Scholars can not be certain of the veracity of this tale, as William is the only one to report it and he does so in a way that highlights Gunnhild's martyr-like actions and the disastrous nature of her death—he has her swearing, among other things, that her blood will cost England dear. But as Judith Jesch remarks, this does not negate the story's importance. It suggests that people found nothing surprising in the fact that a foreign king would invade England merely to avenge the death of his sister and it may reflect one popular explanation for Swein's invasion.³² It suggests that harming a

³⁰ See Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2001), 213-215, for more examples of this idea that honor was usually focused on the men.

³¹ "Swein was a man of blood and needed little persuasion [to invade England]; so he fitted out his ships and came hastening over. The port where he landed is called Sandwich, and his chief purpose was to avenge his sister Gunnhild. Gunnhild, who was a woman of some beauty and much character, had come to England with her husband the powerful jarl Pallig, adopted Christianity, and offered herself as a hostage for peace with the Danes. Eadric in his disastrous fury had ordered her to be beheaded with the other Danes, though she declared plainly that the shedding of her blood would cost all England dear. And for her part, she faced death with presence of mind; she never grew pale at the prospect, nor did she change expression after death, even when her body was drained of blood, though her husband had been killed before her eyes, and her son, a very likely child, pierced by four lances." GR, 1:300-1.

³² Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Rochester, NY, 1991), 102.

female hostage could indeed produce a serious and violent reaction in her male relatives. If a leap of faith is taken and credence is placed in William's story, the quickness of Swein's response may indicate just how wounding an insult it was to kill a female hostage related to an important person. Given that traditionally only the most hated of hostages or captives were usually killed, the murder of Gunnhild stands out as a particularly powerful statement of hatred toward the Danes and also as a blatant provocation for war. Visitors to another country, or in this case, permanent residents in a foreign country, regardless of their status as hostages or not, are in many ways reduced to their "otherness." As such, they embody their home nation. Gunnhild symbolically became, as a peace hostage, a living and breathing manifestation of the peace between England and its Danish community. In her martyrdom, her murder was a direct insult to Denmark.

But even if William made the story up entirely as a juicy tidbit to entice his readers, the story is yet another way in which rape and the violence done to female hostages becomes symbolic of a nation's or people's well-being. Again, Gunnhild and her body become representatives of the Danish people: her violation and death is their violation and death. Here, however, it is the St. Brice's Day Massacre that is mapped onto her body and acted out in her martyrdom. In one sense, this masks the violence done to the Danish in that it focuses solely on Gunnhild. The perfidy of the English becomes only the crime of Eadric, the innocence of the Danish represented by Gunnhild's beauty and presence of mind at death. Yet at the same time by casting the Danish as a woman—for even though her husband and son are mentioned, William focuses on Gunnhild—William seems to be tying into the tradition that harming innocent women makes the crime especially heinous.

It is also interesting here that William portrays Gunnhild offering herself voluntarily as a hostage. While the other cases have mostly been women spoken of as

passive victims of warfare, Gunnhild is represented as actively choosing to be a peacemaker, even though her attempt failed. While scholars should be careful to unpack William's motives for writing the story as he did, it may be possible to infer that he concocted this image of Gunnhild from the actions of women in his lifetime. In other words, it was possible in William's mind, and no great stretch to suppose that it was possible in reality, that women might offer themselves up as hostages in order to end wars or feuds; it demonstrates a facet of women serving as peaceweavers in society beyond marriage and intercession rather different than the usual image.

Captives

While women were less likely to be hostages during the Middle Ages because of the anxieties surrounding their long-term care, this never stopped them being made captive at any stage of the Middle Ages. This was true throughout the entirety of the Middle Ages. While female hostages were often at least protected by the semi-legal conventions of the hostage exchange, female captives almost always suffered through a good deal of violence and brutality because they were taken during or in the aftermath of war. Very little stayed the hand of captive-takers in the Middle Ages, despite conventions designed to restrain the violence done to non-combative populations. While the "Peace" and "Truce" of God at the turn of the millennium attempted to limit lay brutality, these strictures were mostly designed to protect the Church's ecclesiastical members and property. Attempts were made to protect other non-combatants, in particular women: Charles the Bald in 857, for example, decreed that nuns, widows, orphans and the poor were to be protected, and by 1140, Gratian had included protection for these groups in his *Decretum*.³³ Churchmen regularly condemned those who harmed women and children, in particular mercenaries, whom

³³ Christopher Allman, "War and the Non-Combatant in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Warfare: a history*, ed. Maurice Keen (Oxford, 1999), 254-8.

they declared heretics at the Third Lateran Council in 1179.

Despite these royal and ecclesiastical sanctions, however, violence towards non-combatants, females included, continued unabated. It became one of many sins attributed to the knightly class as such, and one of the many reasons that its warrior members would fail to achieve salvation. Bishop Gilbert Foliot of London implied as much when warning his uncle William de Chesney that he would be overwhelmed on Judgment Day by the widows, paupers, and other innocents he had victimized in his life as a knight. The economic features of warfare—that it was wise to destroy an enemy's ability to feed itself—meant that the peasant classes were constant victims of violence and frequent captives. Captivity was such a regular feature of medieval warfare that men and women drew up charters detailing what to do if they were captured. One such charter, written on behalf of a minor knight, Osbert de Wanci, stipulated that if either he or his wife were captured, the monks of St. Mary's at Biddlesden were to send one of the brothers to help negotiate their release.³⁴

During the Early Middle Ages, female captives, especially those abducted by Vikings, were often taken or sold into slavery. The chroniclers of England, the Frankish kingdoms, and Celtic lands all regularly mention that Viking raiding targeted women for capture as slaves.³⁵ Some of these slaves were destined for slave markets as far away as the Arab world; most, however, were kept by the Vikings, either brought back to their homelands or kept as laborers in the lands they settled as the Vikings spread across Northern Europe.³⁶

Most references to captives are generic—the women are part of a nameless many—but when the sources mention specific female captives, it is usually because these women were either ransomed or became the wives or female companions of

³⁴ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 92, 263, 270-5, 297-8, 301-2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 96-108.

³⁶ Patterson, 152-7.

their captors. These may have been the most common fates for high-born female captives, as the sources seem to speak of them in these contexts most often. In 939, for example, the Norse leader Óláfr Gothfrithsson captured and attempted to ransom the Mercian noblewoman Wulfrum after an attack on Tamworth, most likely because her status meant she was worth a significant amount of money.³⁷ Orderic Vitalis mentions that King Magnus III of Norway (1092-1113), not only had children by his “lawful wife,” but also a son, the future King Sigurd, by an “English captive...of noble birth.”³⁸ This practice is also attributed to Rollo, the first duke of Normandy. The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* reports that when Rollo captured the city of Bayeux and destroyed it, he took many prisoners, one of whom was a beautiful girl named Popa, daughter of a distinguished man. Shortly after he captured her, he bound her to him in the “Danish fashion,” and had a son by her—William Longsword, a future duke of Normandy—and a daughter.³⁹ Although we do not know the fate of King Magnus’ “English captive woman,” the *Gesta* does provide a little more information about Popa. Rollo at some point abandoned Popa for his Christian wife, but after his wife died without issue, Rollo resumed his relationship with her. In both discussions of Popa—both when Rollo first captures her and later when he resumes his relationship with her, the same phrase is used—*copulavit sibi*—and she is described as bound to Rollo in the “Danish fashion,” both of which indicate that while the relationship may have had some formal aspects, she was most likely a concubine of some sort, and married in a way that was not recognized as legitimate by Church authorities or the ecclesiastical authors narrating the story. Given that in both of these cases the women bore their captors’ sons, they may have been rather well treated, but

³⁷ Strickland, “Slaughter, Slavery, or Ransom?” 49.

³⁸ “De legali conubio Eustanum et Olauum genuit.... Segurd Anglica captiua sed nobilis ei peperit.... OV, 5:220-1.

³⁹ “Quam captam aliquatenus subuertit habitibus eius interfectis. In qua quamdam nobilissimam puellam nomine Popam, filiam scilicet Berengerii illustris uiri, capiens non multo post more Danico sibi copulauit. Ex qua Guillelmum genuit filiamque nomine Gerloc ualde decoram.” GND, 1:58-9.

as Rollo was quick to abandon Popa, this is unclear. Rollo's abandonment may have been merely out of necessity. Needing to make alliances with the Christian King of France, he converted and married the king's daughter. Given that his marriage to Popa was not recognized as a true marriage in the eyes of the Church, he was free to put her aside in favor of a more expedient match. In the end, he did return to her, however, indicating that despite marriage to another, he retained feelings towards her and that she may have remained a companion throughout his Christian marriage.

How the women felt about their captivity is also unknown, and cases where some sentimentality could be implied should not overshadow the reality. Captivity was a fact of life in the Middle Ages, but being ripped away from their family and homes would have been a violent and intrusive event nonetheless. The fact that some women were not sold into slavery and seem to have been accorded some formal status as a wife or concubine may have made the situation more bearable. It may also be that these women, despite the violence done to them, eventually transferred their cultural allegiance to that of the captor's in the same way modern-day hostages sometimes do when they suffer from hostage identification syndrome (the Stockholm Syndrome). In the short term, because their captors saved them from death or slavery, these women may have seen them as saviors. Over the long term as partners in a vastly unequal power relationship, like Stockholm Syndrome victims, they also may have created two distinct identities, their former identity separate but suppressed under an identity which is submissive to their captor's.⁴⁰

The fate of captive women who become the lovers or wives of their captors is explored in more literary sources, as well, and provides interesting insight into how

⁴⁰ Allen, 30-32. See Allen's footnotes for the relevant studies on Stockholm Syndrome. While Stockholm Syndrome is normally applied to hostage situations, as noted in Chapter One, medieval hostage situations did not mimic modern ones, which tend to be much more like medieval captive situations. Both involve abrupt seizure of the captive and strong elements of violence. Hence, the correlation here.

medieval authors—and potentially more broadly, medieval society—conceptualized and grappled with the fate of female captives. Layamon/Lawman’s *Brut*, the early 13th century Anglo-Saxon adaptation of Wace’s *Roman de Brut* discusses that fate of two women who become the wives of their captors. First, he builds upon Wace’s description of the fate of the German princess Astrild.⁴¹ Astrild, “the loveliest woman in the world then,” was one of three pretty girls King Humber of the Huns captured while in Germany. He took them and they “were stored on shipboard along with Humber’s soldiers, / Who guarded Humber’s best goods while he went off to battle.” But when Humber died while trying to conquer England, the two kings who defeated him went to the ships and found the girls while taking Humber’s treasure. One of these kings, Locrin, saw Astrild and immediately fell in love. He tells her, “I’ll see to your welfare: / You’re a lovely lady, and I’d like to have you / (With highest reverence) as my royal queen; / For as long as I live no other will I have.” Despite Locrin’s promises, however, he was already contracted to marry the Duke of Cornwall’s daughter, and when the Duke heard that Locrin wanted to abandon his daughter, he forced Locrin to keep his promise and marry her. So Locrin married Gwendoline, the duke’s daughter, and hid Astrild in a house he had made for her. Astrild lived in the house for seven years unbeknownst to anyone but Locrin, eventually bearing him a daughter named Abren. When the Duke of Cornwall finally died, Locrin abandoned Gwendoline for Astrild. But Gwendoline was a force to be reckoned with, and she raised an army, defeated and killed Locrin, captured Astrild and her daughter, and had them thrown into a river to drown.⁴²

Layamon’s second story about a captive wife features an unnamed British

⁴¹ The story can be found in Wace, *Wace’s Roman de Brut: a history of the British : text and translation*, trans. and intro. Judith Weiss (Exeter, 1999), 34-7. Wace’s *Brut* is itself an adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and the story can be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. and trans Neil Wright (Cambridge, 1985), 1:15-7.

⁴² Lawman, 29-33.

woman, captured at Porchester by the Roman Emperor Claudius' troops and handed over to him as booty. Clever, wise, and a virgin, she caught Claudius' eye, and he "loved her with very loving care," eventually having a young son by her. When he leaves England to return to Rome, the boy is left behind but the English captive went with him as his queen.⁴³ What is particularly interesting here is that this story of the captive wife is not found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*.⁴⁴ In Monmouth's version, Claudius makes peace by marrying his daughter to British king, but otherwise, no women feature in this story at all. Why Layamon feels the need to insert these romantic details is unclear. Layamon may have felt such details added drama to his story, but his choice of the captive wife suggests that such a motif might have powerful resonance with medieval audiences.

Layamon's wife of Claudius and Astrild are part of a long tradition of imagining and reimagining the fate of captive women, part of many depictions that captured some of the trials they faced. Although Layamon's captive wives have no basis in reality as historical figures, they suggest the anxieties and desires of Layamon's audience. At the most basic level, these women were booty, kept for the sexual use of their captors. But they could catch the eye of their captors, and possibly marry them, especially if they were noblewomen. In this way, Layamon's depictions of these women mask the violence of captivity and rape by overlaying a theme of love and care on the part of the captor. Both Claudius and Locrin are said to have been in love with their captives and to have promised to treat them well. Marriage, which seems to have followed captivity in these portrayals, and love appear to be legitimizing factors; since the captor says he loves his captive, the violence inherent in the act is overlooked. In this, the stories may be referencing medieval ecclesiastical

⁴³ Ibid., 124-5.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1:43-4.

law that often suggested that rapists marry their victims as a means of avoiding war between families.⁴⁵ Moreover, violence and abuse are transformed into a romantic adventure in which true love is found and the voice of the women is lost: never once in these stories is it revealed what the captive women thought of their captors' declaration of love and proposal of marriage.

The captive's marriage, however, was very often not a formal one, and was more akin to concubinage. The case of Astrild in this way shares similarities to that of Popa and King Magnus's English captive woman. All three women were from noble families and were taken in some form of marriage. But when the men they were married to found themselves in positions that required better wives,⁴⁶ Astrild and Popa were quickly abandoned. Their marriages were temporary and expendable, and the women at the mercy of their captors. Yet at the same time these relationships were not without some measure of feeling and protection. Both Popa and Astrild appear to have remained in their former husbands' affections because both men took them back when it was possible to do so. They bore their husbands' children, who seem to have had not only a place in their fathers' affections, but also in the families' succession. Although Astrild's daughter Abren drowns, the author implies Abren posed some sort of threat to Gwendoline because Gwendoline went to the effort of killing Abren although Locrin was already dead. Popa's son became duke of Normandy, and the English captive woman's son became king of Norway.

Although Viking raids for slaves eventually ended and slavery died out as an

⁴⁵ Gravdal, 6-10.

⁴⁶ According to Layamon, Astrild was given up for two reasons. First, the pre-contract that Locrin had with Gwendoline. The Duke of Cornwall threatened to go to war over the insult to himself, his family and his daughter. Second, the Duke suggests that they know nothing of her birth ("You've no idea what land it was she left when she came here, / For which king is her father, nor which queen her mother."). They only know of her fate through her own words; Locrin has no other proof that she comes from a family noble enough to produce a young woman worthy of being queen. The Duke basically suggests to Locrin that it is not worth it for Locrin to go to war over an unknown quantity when his own daughter Gwendoline is available.

institution in England, it continued as a profit making mechanism elsewhere in the British Isles, much to the dismay of English chroniclers.⁴⁷ As Matthew Strickland notes, the “wholesale killing of local inhabitants regardless of whether or not they were combatants appears to have been the hallmark of Scottish raiding,” and only the economic benefit of selling slaves seems to have mitigated this trend.⁴⁸ Richard of Hexham tells of Scottish cruelty and the enslavement of non-combatant Englishmen during the Scottish invasion of 1138. They “slaughtered husbands in view of their wives, then carried the women off together with their spoils. The women, both widows and wives, were stripped, bound and then roped together by cords and thongs, and were driven off at arrow-point, goaded by spears.... These bestial men...when they were tired of abusing their victims, either kept them as slaves or sold them to other barbarians in exchange for cattle.”⁴⁹ Simeon of Durham also reported what he saw as unrepentant cruelty in King Malcolm Canmore of Scotland’s 1070 invasion of northern England. Malcolm “commanded them [his men] no longer to spare any of the English nation, but either to slay them all or drive them away under the yoke of perpetual slavery.” Warriors beheaded both men and women, tossed infants in the air and caught them on pikes, delighting in their violence. They also took many away as slaves: “Young men and girls, all who seemed fit for work, were bound together and driven away into slavery. When some of the girls dropped to the ground exhausted at the pace of the slave-drivers, they were left to die where they fell.” Malcolm, unmoved, “merely ordered his slave-drivers to make haste.”⁵⁰ Even as late as William the Lion’s invasion of England on behalf of Henry the Young King in 1173, chroniclers still report mass killings of men and women alike.⁵¹ While the language

⁴⁷ See Chapter 1 for Gillingham’s discussion of why English chroniclers felt this way.

⁴⁸ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 304-5. He remarks further that “the killing of able-bodied men and the enslaving of women was a time-honored facet of Celtic warfare.” 306.

⁴⁹ *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, 3:152.

⁵⁰ Simeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Thomas Arnold. (London, 1882-85), 2:191-2.

⁵¹ Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, 1:66.

and imagery here is likely exaggerated, as will be discussed below, scholars should not discount that large numbers of men and women were taken captive for the purpose of slavery, or that many of these captives suffered as a result of their capture.

The Welsh regularly, too, took female captives for slavery. John of Worcester mentions that in 1136, in a battle between the English and the Welsh near Cardigan, besides taking men into captivity, the Welsh also captured 10,000 women, whose husbands and children had been killed.⁵² The *Gesta Stephani* also mentions this event, and the author describes the Welsh victory with no little amount of horror, stating that “the young of both sexes they delivered over to chains and captivity; women of any age they shamelessly abandoned to public violation.”⁵³

Disapproval and clear exaggeration of the chroniclers aside, the above-referenced passages indicate that slavery was still an option for women who were unfortunate enough to be captured in border warfare well into the 12th century. And although the references to captivity here are often very brief in these cases, they provide some valuable insights worth discussing. Although the number 10,000 in the Welsh example is likely an exaggeration and just implies a significant number of women, the evidence from all these cases confirms that women were just as likely if not more so to be taken captive as men.

It also indicates that, as with female hostages, captive women were probably often subject to rape by their captors, suggesting that women were probably not treated any better than men during times of warfare or during captivity. Mentions of rape are rather frequent in the sources; John of Worcester is quite explicit about an incident in 1013. The Vikings, led by King Swein of Denmark, killed all the men they

⁵² “Subsecutum est hoc anno, bellum aliud grauissimum apud Karadigan, mense Octobrio, ebdomada secunda, in quo tanta hominum strages facta est ut, exceptis uiris in captiuitatem abductis, de mulieribus captiuitatis decies centum decime remanerent, maritis earum cum paruulis innumeris, partim aqua demersis, partim flamma consumptis, partim gladio trucidatis.” JW, 3:220-1.

⁵³ “...iuuenes utrisque sexus uinculis et captiuitati addixerunt; feminas cuiusuis aetatis publico incestui impudenter dederunt.” GS, 18-19.

captured, and “kept the women for the satisfaction of their lust.”⁵⁴ As Julie Coleman remarks in her discussion of rape in Anglo-Saxon England, rape was a common by-product of warfare, but as with hostageship, it had deep symbolic meaning. Not only could the treatment of women in captivity symbolically represent an individual’s weakness, but also a kingdom’s.⁵⁵ When a woman had the freedom to walk about without fear of violation, a nation was deemed strong, peaceful, and secure.

Conversely, when a woman was captured and violated, the act implied that a nation was weak and defenseless. The body, as Mary Douglas has suggested, “is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can stand for any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.” Like a microcosm, the body reflects the world writ-small; on the body are written “the powers and dangers credited to social structure.”⁵⁶ Thus women may have been targeted to be captives not only for the purposes of slavery, but to make a public and visible statement of the relationship between kingdoms and peoples. Swein’s soldiers’ rape of the English women was a powerful reminder to the local population as well as to the king and his nobles of Viking strength and England’s apparent inability to stop or effectively combat Viking raids and territorial gains of the early tenth century. Likewise, the rape of English women by Scotsmen and Welshmen was a way for these peoples to rebel against English authority, assert their independence, and publically remind the English that they were not as in control of Scotland or Wales as they would like to imagine.

Nor was this merely an early medieval phenomenon. The violation of women continued to be a means of expressing domination over a conquered people throughout the Middle Ages. Richard I, for example, as Count of Poitou before his ascension to

⁵⁴ “...feminas ad suam libidinem explendam reseruarent.” JW, 2:472-3.

⁵⁵ Julie Coleman, 195-6.

⁵⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (New York, 2002), 118.

the English throne, brutally ravaged Aquitaine. Aquitaine had always been a land unlikely to submit to overlordship, and perennially rebellious against the Plantagenets. In response, Richard not only ravaged the land, but he ordered the hands of his captives cut off, their eyes gouged out, and their women violated.⁵⁷ Taking captives in general, but women in particular, then, along with rape and other forms of bodily harm, appear to have served as a form of medieval terrorism. The idea that no man and especially no woman was safe from terrible violence might make the potential victims much more docile and willing to comply with any demands a raider, lord, or king might want to extract or more agreeable to making peace.

Aristocratic ladies, because they often travelled with their husbands on wartime campaigns, also became captives. For example Orderic Vitalis reports that in 1132, Geoffrey of Andria and his wife were captured by Roger of Sicily in a castle near Potenza.⁵⁸ According to John of Worcester, Aethelwald, the son and heir of King Edward the Elder, married a nun of Wimborne while he was rebelling against his father. When he fled to the Danes to avoid being taken into custody, she appears to have been left behind and captured, eventually forced to return her to the convent.⁵⁹ Jordan Fantosme's poetic chronicle of the 1173-4 rebellion of Henry II of England's son, Henry the Young King, describes how Petronilla, the wife of Robert of Leicester, was captured fleeing the battle in such a panic that she almost drowned.⁶⁰

While high status was theoretically supposed to protect those of noble birth, capture after battle might also result in imprisonment, harsh punishment, or even death for aristocratic ladies as well commoners. If a woman supported her husband or male relative in his rebellion against the king, she was likely to be considered an enemy of

⁵⁷ Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge, MA, 1978), 194-5.

⁵⁸ OV, 6:434-5.

⁵⁹ JW, 2:354-7.

⁶⁰ Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. with intro., trans., and notes R. C. Johnston. (Oxford, 1981), 70-9. Her capture is also chronicled in Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, 1:58, 60-2; Ralph of Diceto, *Opera Historica*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1876), 1:367-8.

the king just as much as her husband, and so be treated the same way. When the Danish nobles Morcar and Sigferth were executed for treason in 1015, King Aethelred had Sigferth's wife imprisoned at Malmesbury.⁶¹ The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* indicates that in 991 when Count Odo II of Blois and Chartres rebelled against the French king, Richard, Duke of Normandy, captured Odo and his wife and sent them to be hanged for their crimes.⁶² Matilda of Braose joined her husband's rebellion against King John and fled with her husband to Ireland after refusing to give up their son as a hostage. She was besieged with her son at Meath and captured. Matthew of Paris reports that they were imprisoned in Windsor and later died of starvation, although the veracity of this cannot be confirmed. It therefore may only represent what Matthew assumed or imagined the behavior of King John, already by the time Matthew was writing depicted as a "bad" king, to be like.⁶³ Matthew says that the reason for Matilda's harsh punishment seems to have been that she told the king's emissaries "with the imprudence of a woman" [*procacitate muliebri*] that she would not give up her son to a man who had murdered his nephew.⁶⁴ Not only was she a rebel, but Matthew has her insulting the king, the source of her particularly harsh punishment.

Perhaps the most famous imprisonment of a wife is Henry II's capture and incarceration of his own wife Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1173. She had joined her eldest son Henry the Young King's rebellion against his father and was caught dressed as a man fleeing to join him. As punishment for her betrayal, Henry kept her his prisoner

⁶¹ The fate of Morcar's wife is unknown; Ann Williams supposes that she was already dead at the time. Sigferth's wife was later secretly released from prison by Aethelred's son, Edmund, whom she married. Given this ultimate fate of Sigferth's wife, Paul Hyams' suggestion to me that her imprisonment may have been to protect her or to protect her dead husband's land and assets from being claimed by another man, may be likely. *ASC*, 146. For detailed history of Aethelred's reign, see Ann Williams, *Aethelred the Unready: The Ill-Counselled King* (London, 2003).

⁶² *GND*, 2:32-5.

⁶³ *Flores Historiarum*, ed. R.H Luard (London, 1890) 2:139.

⁶⁴ *CM*, 2:523-4.

for sixteen years until his death, although she seems to have started to reappear in public in 1184.⁶⁵ Captured in the same cause were Marguerite of France, Henry the Young King's bride, and her sister Alais, along with Henry II's daughter Joanna, Constance of Brittany, and Emma of Anjou. They were taken to England as prisoners; Marguerite appears to have been held in the castle of Devizes.⁶⁶ Margaret of Scotland, widow of Duke Conan IV of Brittany, also appears to have joined the rebellion against Henry II and was held as a prisoner.⁶⁷

The level of punishment women suffered often had to do with their relationship to the event in question. As Jean Dunbabin has suggested, the more directly guilty a woman was of her supposed "crime," the harsher her punishment. Philippa, the daughter of Count Guy of Flanders, for example, was imprisoned from 1298 until her death in 1306 in response to her father's attempt to marry her to the future Edward II of England without the permission of his overlord, Phillip IV of France. Since the fault was with her father, Philippa's incarceration appears to have been fairly mild, despite condemnation in the chronicle that reports it.⁶⁸ The fate of Robert the Bruce's female relatives clearly demonstrates the fate of women who were considered meddlers in politics. Robert was defeated by royal forces in 1306 at the Battle of Methven. Robert himself escaped, but many of his adherents, including his wife and sisters, as well as Countess Isabel of Buchan, who had crowned Bruce at Scone, were captured. While the women did not suffer the same fate as many of Robert's male supporters—most of whom were executed in brutal fashions—they were confined.

What is particularly noteworthy here is that the harshness of their captivity

⁶⁵ Gervase of Canterbury, *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1879), 1:242-3; Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, 1:41-3. For her possible motivations for rebelling, see Warren, *Henry II*, 118-21, and 601-2 for her release in 1184.

⁶⁶ Roger of Howden, *Chronica* 2:61; Ralph of Diceto, 1:382. See also Kelly, 183-4.

⁶⁷ K.J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon 1152-1219* (Edinburgh, 1985), 26.

⁶⁸ Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 117.

seems to have reflected Edward I's understanding of their political involvement in Robert's ascendancy. Robert's wife, who at his coronation had wryly commented that they were like children playing at being king and queen, was merely confined in a manor house in Holderness, and was allowed two female attendants. Christian Bruce, Robert's elder sister, was forced to retire to a nunnery in Lincolnshire. Countess Isabel and Mary, Robert's other sister, who made unkind comments about Edward, were both locked up in wicker and iron cages and then confined in the towers of Berkwick and Roxburgh castles respectively. Nor was this a short-term punishment. Isabel remained in her cage until June 1310, when she was transferred elsewhere.⁶⁹ Robert's wife and his sister Christian seem to have been less politically involved in Robert's rebellion against the English. If anything, his wife's comments seem to have been construed by contemporaries as a critique of Robert's actions, and therefore may have gained her some reprieve. But Countess Isabel and Mary inserted themselves into politics, Isabel most obviously by daring to crown Robert, a direct insult to Edward who saw himself as overlord of Scotland. The exception to this rule was Robert's daughter, Marjorie, whom Edward at first ordered to be hung in a similar cage in the Tower of London where he would not allow her to speak with anyone other than the Constable of the Tower. He later revoked this order and sent her to a nunnery at Watton, perhaps due to her relative innocence in the whole affair; at a maximum age of twelve, she was unlikely to have been politically active.⁷⁰

The fate of aristocratic women in captivity was such an anxiety that medieval literary texts explore the issue repeatedly. Images of ladies imprisoned in towers or held captive are found in numerous sources: *chansons de geste* like *Girart de Vienne*⁷¹

⁶⁹ Barrow, 210-11.

⁷⁰ With his victory at Bannockburn and the capture of the Earl of Hereford, Robert was able to negotiate the release of his wife and daughter from prison. Ibid., 302.

⁷¹ Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube, *Girart de Vienne par Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube*, ed. Wolfgang van Emden (Paris, 1977).

and *The Knights of Narbonne*,⁷² all of Chrétien de Troyes' numerous romances,⁷³ the romance of *Daurel et Breton*,⁷⁴ and *Aucassin et Nicolette*.⁷⁵ But again, the anxiety is male-centered, focused on how men understood themselves. "Even when idealized and adored," Richard Kaeuper suggests, "women seem to have been considered property in much chivalric literature, prizes to be won by knightly prowess or to be defended against the prowess of others."⁷⁶ Even rape, with its violence to the female body, becomes matter of male pride and skill. As Gravdal notes, rape is a "set piece to display chivalric prowess," "a contest, a competition between the villain and the hero," and "a test of the hero's character and sense of duty,"⁷⁷ and captivity, which often makes rape possible in the romances, also becomes a mechanism by which the hero's chivalric nature is revealed.

Raoul de Cambrai, the late twelfth/early thirteenth century *chanson de geste*, provides an excellent example. It explores the potential abuse of captive women through the capture of young Bernier's wife, Beatrice. On the way back from the wedding, King Louis, the implacable enemy of Bernier, attacked the wedding party, capturing Bernier's father and Beatrice. When Louis returns to his court with his prize, he confers Beatrice upon Erchambaut of Ponthieu. Although it is not explicitly stated, Beatrice's response that Louis would disgrace Christianity if he did this because she is still a virgin implies that she was to be given to Erchambaut to be raped. Beatrice's rape is supposed to become the mechanism of Louis's revenge upon Bernier because of the shame it will confer upon Bernier. Louis, however, is

⁷² *Les Narbonnais: Chanson de geste*, 2 vols., ed. Herman Suchier (Paris, 1898).

⁷³ For example, in *Cliges*, 103-4; 131; in *The Knight and the Cart*, 170-1, 188-9, 209-17, 318ff. Page numbers refer to Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, trans. and intro. David Staines (Bloomington, IN, 1993).

⁷⁴ *Daurel and Beton: A Twelfth-Century Adventure Story*, trans. Janet Shirley (Felinfach, 1997), 55.

⁷⁵ *Aucassin and Nicolette (Aucassin et Nicolette)*, ed. Anne Elizabeth Cobby, trans. Glyn S. Burgess (New York, 1988), 121-4, 161-2.

⁷⁶ Kaeuper, 226.

⁷⁷ Gravdal, 45-7.

eventually convinced not to follow through with his plan, but only because it would only bring the wrath of Bernier even more on his head, not out of any concern over Beatrice's fate. Beatrice is given over to the care of the queen, but when Louis's lords report that she is dying for her love of Bernier, Louis again contemplates giving her up to rape. Thinking that Beatrice is faking, Louis says, "'By God the righteous, her wiles will certainly not prevent me from handing her over to my squires: they can take her on foot into the ditches and do whatever they like.'" In response, "More than forty of them have leapt to their feet, ribald fellows who were overjoyed at the prospect." Beatrice faints, and the queen intervenes, chastising her husband as wicked and cursing him, and removes Beatrice to her apartments again.⁷⁸

Louis' desire to seek revenge against Bernier, whom he hates "more than any man alive" by having Beatrice repeatedly violated by low born squires, creates an apparent tension between him and Beatrice, the queen, and the lords who desire to protect Beatrice's virtue. Furthermore, Beatrice's argument about the disgrace of Christianity and the queen's curse against Louis that God will punish him with a disaster implies that the rape was considered against the laws of God. But Louis and his knights' laughter in response to the queen suggests that rape of female captives, even those of high birth, was a regular by-product of war and an acceptable form of revenge against one's enemies.

Furthermore, the potential rape of Beatrice becomes a major episode that leads to Bernier's retribution on King Louis, implying the importance of rape as a trope within the genre. As suggested earlier, rape in the romance is a "formulaic challenge: potential assaults are set up at regular narrative intervals so that knights can prove their mettle."⁷⁹ The same seems to be true here in *Raoul de Cambrai*. The capture

⁷⁸ *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. with intro, trans, and notes Sarah Kay (Oxford, 1992), 358-69, laisses cclxvii-xxiv.

⁷⁹ Gravdal, 44.

and potential rape of Beatrice serves two narrative functions: first, to demonstrate that King Louis is not a good king because he advocates the rape of virgins, and second, to set up Bernier's revenge. But in both of these cases, the narrative functions are about men, not women. To modern audiences reading the text for the first time, this is perhaps opposite of what is expected. In the current age, women are understood as the victims of rape and the focus of the crime and violation is placed on them. What the texts indicate here is that the anxieties expressed have little to do with women themselves, but with how their status as captive and/or violated women affects men.

Literary texts can also clearly be judgmental against captive women within the narrative, shifting blame away from the captors and on to the captive. Layamon, for example, writes in his *Brut* that Cordoille, daughter of King Leir and Queen of England after her father's death, was captured by her nephews Morgan and Cunedaigius. She went insane in prison and killed herself, an act that Layamon treats ambiguously. On the one hand, he appears to condemn the nephews because they "drove their aunt demented more than they should have," yet also suggests that committing suicide was an "evil way" for her to die. Wace, in the earlier version of this story, puts more emphasis on the foolishness of committing suicide. "In the end they captured Cordeille and put her in a dungeon. They did not want to take any ransom, but held her so long that she killed herself from sorrow, a foolish deed."⁸⁰ Layamon and especially Wace have little sympathy for Cordeille who chose to take her own life rather than continue to suffer in prison. It matters little that her nephews appear to have tortured her, refused ransom, and drove her insane. It is her choice, not theirs, that bothers the authors.

The focus on the crime or deeds of the women may result from the medieval misogynistic belief that women were desirous of violence against them, even as they

⁸⁰ Lawman, 49-50; Wace, 52-3.

fought against it. In Chretien's *Story of the Grail*, for example, he has the knight Orgueilleux speak extensively on the sexual duplicity of women. He had left his beloved in a tent when Perceval happened upon her and forced her to kiss him. When Orgueilleux returned, his beloved confessed to the kiss, but Orgueilleux refused to believe in her innocence of any other sexual acts. He argues:

Since he kissed her against her will, did he not have all he desired afterwards? Yes. No one will ever believe that he kissed her without doing more. The one act leads to the other. If a man kisses a woman when both are alone together, and does nothing more, then I think the decision is his. A woman who surrenders her mouth easily grants the remainder, if the man earnestly requests it. She may indeed defend herself. Yet it is well known, beyond doubt, that a woman...claws, and bites and struggles, yet wants to be overcome. She defends herself against this, yet longs for it. She has such cowardice about surrendering, yet wants to be taken against her will, never then showing goodwill or thanks.⁸¹

As Gravdal's analysis of this episode suggests, this misogynistic diatribe serves two purposes. First, it evokes pity from the audience because, as the audience is aware, Orgueilleux's beloved did not give in to Perceval, and the fact that Orgueilleux would not believe her makes him the villain. That Perceval ultimately triumphs over and kills him is a sign that Orgueilleux's view is the false one. But it also intertwines the misogynist argument so deeply within the story that the relationship between the poet's moral about Orgueilleux's innocence and his diatribe against women is unclear. One is left wondering if Orgueilleux is the exception or the rule.⁸²

Women who did receive sympathy tended to be those who died naturally and sacrificially as a result of their treatment. An example from Layamon is again illustrative here. Layamon writes about the brutal fate of the English saint Ursula and

⁸¹ Chretien de Troyes, 387.

⁸² Chretien's opinion about women is ambiguous at best, as is that of the larger body of chivalric literature. As Richard Kauper has argued, "Chivalric literature, then, does not establish a single ideological position, some uniform and elaborate code, but rather shows an intense concern with the issues of the relations between males and females. It seems impossible to press all of these views into a single ideology and attach a label such as 'courtly love' or even *fin'amours* in confidence that we have captured the essence of the medieval view. The texts show us not a single view, but a running debate." Kauper, 211.

her 11,000 virgins. Although the origins of their story are unclear, their passion supposedly took place in 238 AD, and the story of their fate was retold again and again throughout the Middle Ages. According to Layamon, the ladies, sent on ships to meet Ursula's future husband, were waylaid by a storm, which caused them to be captured by the Huns. Once captured, they were subject to the worst crimes. Layamon writes: "Since this world was established it has nowhere been published / in song or in story, nor could anyone report it, / That there were any women so wretchedly tormented, / Nor so pitifully upon the sea seduced." Ursula herself was raped by the Hunnish king Melga and then given to the crewmen "to have her as a whore." The Huns either drowned the rest or sold them as slaves.⁸³ As the passive victims of pagan outsiders and as women who died as a result of the violence done to them, these women garner the sympathy of the authors. Cordeille, who, whether insane or not, took matters into her own hands, does not.

The trope of rape and other violence in captivity is also found in more historically minded texts in the imaginative scenes sprinkled into the recounting of events. Here, too, the purpose is less to evoke sympathy for the victims than to point out the nobility of the male participants. Aelred of Rievaulx's narrative of the Battle of the Standard, for example, contains several speeches of the leaders of the English forces, invented as was the convention of the time. Walter Espec, for example, rouses the knights to battle by saying:

But putting aside the king for a while, no one would say that it is not just that we raise an army for our kingdom, that, danger looming, we fight for our wives, our freedom.... [...] Remember what they [The Scots] did when they crossed the Tyne, and do not hope for kinder treatment if the Scots win. [...] spared no age, no rank, no sex. The nobly-born, boys and girls, were led into captivity. Modest matrimony was defiled by unbelievable lust. [...] A pregnant woman was run through, and an impious hand smashed the tender fetus, ripped from her womb, against rocks. [...] Certainly, we must either

⁸³ Lawman, 154-6. *The Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine tells a similar version of events. *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, ed. William Granger Ryan (Princeton, NJ, 1993), 2:256-60. For Wace's version, see Wace, 152-55.

conquer or die. For who would choose to be a survivor of a Scottish victory in order to see his wife subjected to the lusts of the Scots, his children pierced by lances?⁸⁴

Aelred's obsession with the Scots perpetration of violence against women is, as John Gillingham notes, a sign of the hysterical reaction of English chroniclers towards the "barbarian" Scots, but it is even more my present point to note the obsessive fear of so many chroniclers about violence done to women and the duty of men to defend their women from that violence. Moreover, the threat of rape becomes a means for Aelred to build suspense and extend his narrative. He heightens the tension about whether or not the English will successfully defeat the Scots in battle.

Nor is Aelred's account an isolated use of such narrative tactics. There also seems to be a lurid fascination with the rape and enslavement of female captives on the part of medieval chroniclers in general. In the *Flores Historiarum*, Roger of Wendover recounts with a vivid reimagining the Danish sack of the city of Canterbury in 1011. While the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle remarks only that the Danes "seized all ordained people, both men and women, in there" and then searched the city for treasure,⁸⁵ Roger invents details. Not only does he depict violence towards men and monks, but also women. Children were "torn from their mothers' breasts... and

⁸⁴ "Sed, ut interim de rege taceamus, nullus certe justum negabit, quod pro patria arma suscipimus; quod pro uxoribus nostris, pro liberis nostris, pro ecclesiis nostris dimicamus, imminens periculum propulsantes. Urget enim necessitas. Recolite quid in Transitanis partibus egerint, nec mitiora sperate si vicerint Scotti. Taceo caedes, rapinas, incendia, quae humano quodammodo more exercentur ab hostibus: talia dicam, qualia nec fabulae ferunt, nec narrant historiae a crudelissimis acta tyrannis. Dicam, inquam, si non prae nimio horrore sermo defecerit, aut auditor aufugerit. Nulli aetati, nulli ordini, nulli omnino sexui pepercerunt; nobiles, tam pueri quam puellae, ducti sunt in captivitatem; pudica matrimonia incredibili libidine vexata sunt; parvuli jacatai in aera, et aculeis lancearum excepti, delectabile spectaculum Galwensibus praebuerunt; praegnans mulier per medium secabatur, tener foetus, extractus ab utero, impia manu ad saxum allidebatur. [...] Sed quid moror? Certe aut vincendum nobis est, aut moriendum. Quis enim victoriae Scottorum se velit esse superstitem, ut videat uxorem suam Scottorum subiacere libidini, paruulos suos laceis perforari?" *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, 2:187-9.

Aelred partially borrowed his information about the battle from Henry of Huntingdon in his *Historia Anglorum*, who has the motivating speech spoken by Ralph, Bishop of the Orkneys. While Henry suggests that the Scots do not spare children of pregnant women, it is Aelred whose description dwells of violence and captivity. HH, 712-17.

⁸⁵ ASC, 141-2.

mothers were dragged by their legs through the city and cast into flames. ...[A] multitude of men, women and children were divided into ten parts: nine were put to death, the tenth reserved for life....”⁸⁶ Roger’s horror at such events is evident, yet it was he who imagined them that way. The Danes, boogymen of the past, and the Scots, specters of Englishmen who lived in fear of raids from the North, commit disgusting atrocities in his narrative as a means not only of condemning barbarism and the violence of past war, but also a means of exploring taboo issues of violation.

Captive women, however, were more than the bodily toys of their captors and the source of vivid fantasies for medieval writers and audiences. Taking women captive could serve many purposes for the captor, one of which, as previously discussed, was revenge. Gerald of Wales, for example, tells of two wives captured for this purpose. In 1175, Henry, the third son of Milo FitzWalter, earl of Hereford, was murdered by the Welsh. Years later, William de Braose, in revenge for his maternal uncle Henry’s death, captured his uncle’s murderer, Seisyll al Dyfnwal, and captured the murderer’s wife. Not to be outdone, the Welsh bid their time and later captured Earl William and his wife in revenge for Seisyll’s murder.⁸⁷

Women could also often prove particularly useful captives when they were related to or married to the men their captor wished to manipulate. Orderic mentions that when Hugh of Gournay rebelled in Normandy against Henry I of England, he and his compatriots ravaged the countryside and captured many knights and peasants with their wives and children with the intent of extorting huge ransoms from of them.⁸⁸ Thus taking women, just like taking men, could be profitable, even if selling them into slavery was no longer an option. The capture of women could also be used to punish

⁸⁶ CM, 1:482-3.

⁸⁷ Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales/The Description of Wales*, trans. with Intro Lewis Thorpe (New York, 1978), 109-10.

⁸⁸ *Hiemalibus quippe noctibus longe discurrebant, et milites atque pagenses cum uxoribus et infantibus etiam in cunabulis rapiebant et ab eis ingentem in carceribus redemptionem immaniter exigebant.*” OV, 6:192-3.

recalcitrant neighbors, and force the women's menfolk to behave in certain ways. Æthelflaed's 917 siege of the Welsh castle of Breconmere, which resulted in the capture of the Welsh king's wife with thirty-four Welsh soldiers, was likely a combination of these two tactics. On the one hand, he appears to have been seeking revenge for the murder of Abbot Ecgberht, in whose death the Welsh king looked to be complicit. On the other, this punishment may have been an attempt to keep the Welsh king in fear for the safety of his wife, so that he would either make reparations for Ecgberht's death or at least refrain from murdering other Englishmen in the future.

Behavior modification may have also been the purpose of King Alfred of England's capture of the Viking Haesten's wife and sons in 894. Haesten had come to raid England two years previous, and had given up his two sons to Alfred as hostages for peace. Haesten's sons were later returned to him, but he later broke the peace and resumed his raiding, building forts throughout Essex. The men of Essex, however, fought back, destroying these forts and taking captive the women and children found within, including Haesten's wife and two sons. The two sons, who were Alfred's godsons, were left unharmed, as was Haesten's wife, and when peace was made, Alfred returned all three to Haesten.⁸⁹ Although it is unclear exactly what role these two sons and Haesten's wife played in the peace negotiations, John of Worcester depicts Haesten as pleading for their return, indicating that they may have played a significant part in Haesten's willingness to stop raiding England and make peace.

Like their male counterparts, female captives could also be used as bargaining chips. The concessions sought could be the release of other hostages, lands and riches. Gilbert of Mons describes in his *Chronicle of Hainaut* the capture of Richilde of Hainaut and Robert the Frisian. When Count Baldwin VI of Flanders and Hainaut died, he left his young sons Arnoul and Baldwin as his heirs to Flanders and Hainaut

⁸⁹ JW, 2:342-3.

respectively. But Arnoul was challenged by his uncle, Robert the Frisian, who usurped control of Flanders from the boy, whom the Flemish council had put in Robert's care. Arnoul sought help from his mother and brother in Hainaut. In the battle that followed both Richilde and Robert were captured, and then exchanged for each other.⁹⁰ According to a Limousin chronicler, Hugh IX of Lusignan used his capture of Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1199 as a means of extracting the city of Le Marche from her.⁹¹

Women who could potentially play a part in the political machinations of others could also be taken captive as a means of controlling their fate. Men used women for political means—to gain land, power, authority, money, and titles. A woman's importance was often determined by either her status as an heiress or by her blood, be it royal or merely prestigious. Because a woman provided men access to her family, and through her they could gain influence, controlling or isolating a woman's physical body through incarceration was a powerful political tool. King Lothaire of West Francia held the duchess of Upper Lotharingia and her son captive while attempting to extend his authority into their duchy. Hugh Capet captured Charles of Lorraine, along with his wife and his son, in his effort to solidify his hold on the French crown. Charles died in prison and the fate of his wife and child is unknown; presumably they were kept in prison as potential threats to Hugh's power.⁹² King John of England held his niece Eleanor of Brittany captive for the majority of her life, from her capture at Mirebeau in 1203 until her death in 1242. As the daughter of John's deceased elder brother Geoffrey Plantagenet, she represented a threat to his security on the throne: anyone who married her could potentially claim the English throne in her

⁹⁰ Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, trans. with intro. and notes Laura Napran (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2005), 5-6.

⁹¹ Ralph V. Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine in the Government of her Sons Richard and John," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York, 2002), 88.

⁹² Dunbabin, 28-9.

name, arguing that as the descendent of an elder son, Eleanor's claim to the throne was stronger than John's, who was a younger son. As a result, like Robert Curthose before her, she became a political detainee. Like him, she was also well-treated. She had a generous allowance from the Exchequer, and John himself sent her generous gifts of fine cloth and clothes. As W.L. Warren notes, "since [John] also sent her ornamented saddles and reins, her imprisonment cannot have been very close." She is also known to have spent time with the queen and with the daughters of the Scottish king. John also appears to have tried to use her for his own political ambitions rather than merely keeping others from doing so. He took her with him on his disastrous invasion of France in 1214, and Warren suggests that this may have been because John intended to set up a puppet regime in Brittany if he succeeded in taking it.⁹³

The capture of royal women in particular might have been exceptionally useful to the captor. As Jean Dunbabin suggests, the shame of a royal family member in captivity might induce the royal family to pay ransom quickly or surrender the demanded goods or property.⁹⁴ This only worked, however, if the captor could successfully maintain control over his captive. Certainly control was at stake in the capture of Constance, the wife of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI. Constance was sole legitimate heir to King William II of Sicily,⁹⁵ and when he died in November 1189 Henry claimed the Sicilian throne through his wife. In 1191, both Henry and Constance travelled to southern Italy to claim the throne, but when Henry was forced to return to Germany to put down a rebellion there, Constance, who remained in Salerno, was betrayed and handed over to Tancred, her father's cousin and her rival to the throne. Tancred immediately sent her to Palermo on the island of Sicily, likely in an attempt to use her as a bargaining chip with her husband Henry when he returned

⁹³ W.L. Warren, *King John* (Berkeley, 1978), 83; 218-22.

⁹⁴ Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 84.

⁹⁵ She was his aunt.

from Germany. The citizens of Palermo, however, appear to have accepted her as her father's heir, and, unable to keep control over her, Tancred was eventually forced to return her to her husband.⁹⁶ Nor was this the first wife Tancred had attempted to coerce and use as a tool for manipulating others. When William II of Sicily died, Tancred as a part of his usurpation of the throne confined William's wife, Joan, and refused to give up her dower. But Joan was the sister of King Richard I England, who soon arrived in Sicily on his way to the Holy Land. While Tancred agreed to free Joan when Richard sent envoys demanding her release, he refused to abide by his cousin William's will, which had not only granted Joan a substantial dower, but also bequeathed money and goods to Joan's father, the now deceased Henry II. In response, Richard waged war on Tancred, taking Messina, and Tancred was eventually forced to give up what had been promised.⁹⁷

Men incarcerated women outside the context of war in order to control their bodies and their inheritances. Robert of Bellême imprisoned his wife, Agnes of Ponthieu, sole heir to the county of Ponthieu, for a number of years before she escaped to the court of Adela of Blois.⁹⁸ When Agnes, the countess of Oxford, tried to appeal to the pope about her husband Aubrey de Vere's attempt to divorce her, he had her locked up in one of her own castles.⁹⁹ King John kept his first wife, Isabel of Gloucester and Mortain, imprisoned after he divorced her, and kept her inheritance for himself. He only released her in 1214 when Geoffrey de Mandeville III agreed to pay 20,000 marks to marry her.¹⁰⁰ King Philip Augustus of France kept his wife, Ingeborg of Denmark, imprisoned in numerous castles over the course of twenty years in an

⁹⁶ John Julius Norwich, *The Normans in Sicily: The Normans in the South 1016-1130 and the Kingdom in the Sun 1130-1194* (London, 2004), 560ff.

⁹⁷ Roger of Howden, *Gesta*, 2:126-38.

⁹⁸ OV, 4:300-1.

⁹⁹ RáGena DeAragon, "Wife, Widow, Mother: Some Comparisons between Eleanor of Aquitaine and Noblewomen of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin World," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York, 2002), 103-4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.; also *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Richards Luard. (London, 1864-69), 3:45.

attempt to get her to accede to their divorce, but she stubbornly held out, and he was eventually forced in 1213 under threat of excommunication to nominally reinstate her as his wife and queen.¹⁰¹

Just as the brutal mistreatment of female hostages could provoke rebellion among men, likewise captivity could provoke war from the male relatives of female captives. When his mother, Constance of Brittany, was captured by her own husband, Earl Ranulf of Chester, with whom she had bad relations, her son Arthur joined the French king against King Richard of England, whom Arthur saw as responsible for his inability to secure his mother's release.¹⁰² In 1255, Henry III marched an army up to Scotland in response to his daughter's complaints that she was imprisoned in the castle of Damsels, without access to fresh air, attendants, or her husband, the future King Alexander III of Scotland.¹⁰³ King Ua Ruairc of Meath was also stirred to revenge for the capture of his wife and the shame it brought him. In 1152, his wife Derbfogail was abducted by Diarmait Mac Murchada while the king was on an expedition, an act in which Gerald of Wales and the *Song of Dermot* believed the wife was complicit. "Stirred to extreme anger" more over the disgrace than the loss of his wife, he gathered an army against Diarmait and took his wife back in a raid in 1153.¹⁰⁴ Even though it seems, at least in Gerald's mind, that the loss of his wife was not his main concern, revenge for her capture was still necessary.¹⁰⁵ By stealing his wife, Diarmait had suggested that Ua Ruairc was weak and unable to protect his women or keep them loyal. Such an insult demanded a response.

¹⁰¹ J.W. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus* (Berkeley, 1986), 80-6.

¹⁰² Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 4:7. The events surrounding Constance's imprisonment are unclear. For the best reconstruction of the events, see Everard, 159-60; 165-6. For more on the career of Ranulf of Chester, see James W. Alexander, *Ranulf of Chester: A Relic of the Conquest* (Athens, GA, 1983).

¹⁰³ CM, 5:504-6.

¹⁰⁴ Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland*, ed. and trans. A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978), 24-7.

¹⁰⁵ Gerald says, "King Ua Ruairc was stirred to anger on two counts, of which however the disgrace, rather than the loss of his wife, grieved him more deeply, and he vented all the venom of his fury with a view to revenge."

The potential captivity of women could also spark extraordinary acts of bravery from men. Chivalric tradition and the stories of the romances may have been the source of this inspiration: women in towers were meant to be rescued. Real life may have mimicked romance in these cases.¹⁰⁶ For example, in 1136, during the Welsh incursion at the beginning of Stephen's reign, Richard Fitz Gilbert's widow, Adeliza, took refuge in Cardigan Castle. Here, the *Gesta* reports, "she was vexed and tormented by all manner of anxieties because through the loss of a husband's consolation she was prey to womanly despair, [and] was very closely invested, without supplies, by the enemy in great force." Although her neighbors were unable to relieve the castle, Miles of Gloucester, on orders from the king, "hazarded himself and his men to rescue her...on account of the compassionate pity he felt for a noble woman...and advanced boldly to the castle through the midst of the enemy, through the fastness of dark woods, over the high peaks of mountains, and bringing her safely back with her company returned triumphant and with glory." The author's depiction of Miles's advance has elements of a romance tale's rescue of a damsel in distress. Adeliza's widowhood and hopelessness create the perfect female in need of rescue. Miles advanced directly through the enemy with little concern for his own safety after a long journey through several trials: a dark forest and high mountains. Whether or not these parallels in portrayal are deliberate or not is unknown, but the relationship to the trials of Arthurian knights like Lancelot is likely to be at least an unconscious, if not conscious, authorial tactic to make Miles appear all the more heroic for rescuing Adeliza.

The potential capture of his mother Eleanor of Aquitaine at the castle of Mirebeau in 1203 seems to have inspired King John of England to rush to save her.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Kaeuper also argues that the chivalric ideal that women inspire acts of bravery is not entirely theoretical. See *Chivalry and Violence*, 212.

Surrounded by the troops of her nephew, Arthur, Eleanor sent messages to her son at Les Mans, about a hundred miles away. When he got the news, he gathered his troops and immediately left for Mirebeau, reaching there by dawn. His surprise arrival allowed him to take the castle and capture Arthur.¹⁰⁷ While the capture of Arthur, his greatest rival to the throne, was certainly part of the enticement for hastening to Mirebeau, the draw of rescuing his mother should not be underestimated. Eleanor was a powerful and rich woman in her own right, and control over her could have swayed the loyalty of those living in her lands away from John to Arthur and the King of France, with whom Arthur was allied. Furthermore, it is unlikely that John could have left his own mother and political ally—for she had helped him achieve the throne—unransomed. She would have been a powerful bargaining chip in the hands of his enemies.

The sources also indicate, however, that the desire to rescue ladies was not always the prudent choice, as the complicated situation surrounding the Battle of Hattin in 1187 demonstrates. On July 2nd, 1187, Saladin, leader of the Muslim forces, attacked the city of Tiberias. Tiberias, under the lordship of Raymond, count of Tripoli, was at the time under the leadership of Raymond's wife, Eschiva of Galilee. When Saladin took the city, she retreated with the garrison to the citadel and sent notice to King Guy of Lusignan of the city's capture. As a result, the king and his council met to discuss a course of action. Various different accounts of the ensuing events survive,¹⁰⁸ and the French continuation of William of Tyre's history (usually called *L'Estoire de Eracles*) usefully illuminates the problems of rescuing potential female captives. According to the *Eracles*, "when [King Guy and Raymond] had

¹⁰⁷ Guillaume le Breton, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, Historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, ed. H. François Delaborde (Paris, 1882).

¹⁰⁸ See Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 2006), 366-74, for the events leading up to and following the Battle of Hattin.

arrived in Acre, a messenger came hurriedly from Tiberias, from the countess, and informed the king that Saladin had entered the kingdom and had besieged Tiberias with a great force of men. She was very frightened and distressed. The king immediately ordered the knights and barons to be summoned to take counsel concerning the news he had received.” At the meeting, Raymond is depicted as the voice of reason. Against Renald of Chatillon and the Grand Master of the Templars, Gerard of Ridefort, he argued that the king should wait until Balian of Ibelin arrived with more troops, given Saladin’s imposing number of troops. But Raymond is accused of duplicity, and the council decides to go the countess’s rescue. When the army is mustered, the count again argues for caution. According to the *Eracles*, when the king asked Raymond’s advice,

The count answered wisely and said, ‘Sire, you should know that Tiberias is mine, and any damage done there falls on me and no one else. For the lady of Tiberias, my wife, and her children are in the castle, and the last thing I want is for any harm to come to them. I have sent provisions and advised them that, if they find that Saladin’s forces are so great that they cannot resist them, they should take to the sea until we can rescue them. In view of this, Sire, if you intent to fight Saladin, let us go and camp before Acre and let us be near our fortresses. I know Saladin to be so proud and so presumptuous that he will not leave the kingdom until he has attacked you in battle. If he comes to fight you near Acre and it turns out badly for us—may God protect us from this—we can withdraw to Acre and the other cities that are nearby. But if God gives us the victory so that we defeat him and force him back to his own land, we shall have so reduced and shattered him that he will never be able to recover.’

But again Raymond is accused of disloyalty to the king and treachery, and the count gives in to his enemies, asking the king to go and relieve Tiberias. Eschiva again sends to the king asking for help, which seems to inspire the Frankish host. When the army hears its mission, “a cry went up among the knights in the host: ‘Let us go and rescue the ladies and maidens of Tiberias.’”¹⁰⁹

As historian Christopher Tyerman points out, regardless of the various

¹⁰⁹ *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade: Sources in Translation*, trans. Peter W. Edbury (Burlington, VT, 1996), 36-8.

depictions of who said what to King Guy and the general disunity within the king's council, Guy could hardly have avoided marching to meet Saladin in battle since he had been harshly criticized for not doing so in 1183. Eschiva's fate, then, may have had little to do with Guy's decision. But that the *Eracles* indicates that her potential captivity and that of the other women in Tiberias did influence the council's decision is revealing. It is her letter and her distress that inspires the first council meeting. Raymond's assurance that his wife's defense and safety have been provided for resulted in accusations of treason and disloyalty. Her letter and potential captivity inspire the army to rescue the "ladies and maidens" of Tiberias. For the *Eracles'* author, then, Eschiva and the other ladies trapped at Tiberias were an essential part of the catalyst that led to the Crusader army's disastrous defeat at Hattin days later. Rather than listen to good reason, both Guy and the army are depicted as overeager to fight on behalf of women, compelled by chivalric ideas to act rashly rather than judge calmly what is the better option.

The fear alone that wives and female relatives could be manipulated if captured or used to pressure men to act in certain ways seems to have caused some men to send their women away in times of conflict. They also feared what the enemy might do to their women if they were captured, indicating that women were not likely spared any mistreatment, regardless of their status. John of Worcester, writing a century after the events, states that King Æthelred, seeing the destruction that the Vikings created after their arrival in 1013, sent his wife, Emma, to her father in Normandy for her protection, suggesting that he thought this would have been the appropriate behavior.¹¹⁰ He also notes that in 1068 many Northumbrians, along with the atheling Edgar, his mother Margaret, and his sister Christina fled to the court of King Malcolm of Scotland because they were "fearful of being imprisoned like so

¹¹⁰ JW, 2:474-5.

many others.”¹¹¹ By 1183, Henry the Young King had apparently learned his lesson about protecting his wife during his rebellions against his father. Whereas in 1173, Marguerite had been captured by Henry II, this time the younger Henry made sure his wife was safely in Paris.¹¹² Fear that the ladies associated with the royal family would be captured by the baronial party in 1263 led John Mangel to lead them to the safety of King Louis the Pious’s court in France.¹¹³ Medieval literature, too, reflects the concern that men had over the capture of their women. Wace suggests in the *Roman de Brut* that Count Gorlois locked his wife Ygerne in Tintagel because he feared she would be seized or abducted.¹¹⁴

Castles that held women who could be considered potential hostages or captives were often especially well protected against such events. Gilbert of Mons reports that in c.1184 when the Count of Hainaut was at war against the Count of Flanders, the Count of Hainaut “fortified the castle of Mons with 140 knights and crossbowmen necessary for defense...in which lady countess Marguerite, the count of Flanders’ sister [and the Count of Hainaut’s wife], lay weakened by childbirth.”¹¹⁵ In her condition, Marguerite could not easily flee, and thus required extra fortifications against capture. Moreover, as sister to the count of Flanders and wife to the Count of Hainaut, Marguerite was a valuable commodity to the men fighting the war. If she was captured by the Count of Flanders, she could have easily become a tool by which the Count of Hainaut could have been manipulated. But she was also a potential tool for the Count of Hainaut against the Count of Flanders, who could have been persuaded by harm done to his sister.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 3:6-7.

¹¹² Parks, 264. Henry II used this tactic of capturing women multiple times. In 1176-7, the heiress of Ralph de Deaols, lord of Chateauroux, the most powerful lord in the county of Berry, was hidden from Henry II who wanted to capture her in order to control her vast inheritance of land and money. She was eventually captured and her lands given over to Henry. Warren, *Henry II*, 144.

¹¹³ *Flores Historiarum* 2:481; Gervase of Canterbury, 2:222.

¹¹⁴ Wace, 216-7.

¹¹⁵ Gilbert of Mons, 95.

Conclusions

While female captives and hostages have not received much attention in modern historiography, as demonstrated here, they are vital to understanding the processes of hostage- and captiveship in the Middle Ages not just because they served as hostages and captives alongside the men, but also for what they reveal of the customs of hostage- and captiveship. First, and foremost, in contradiction to the medieval social conventions and assumptions in modern secondary sources that women were supposed to be treated with special care when captives or hostages, they most definitely were not. In fact, in many cases women may have purposely been treated worse. Much of a man's status and manliness was tied up in his ability to protect his womenfolk, and likewise much about a nation's well-being was symbolically represented in the relative safety of its women. Consequently, mistreating a woman was a particularly powerful symbolic act of defilement and violation that went beyond the woman herself and often had nothing to do with her at all. Likewise, these cases (and many more like them) demonstrate how women can be the cause of war, how the harming of a female relative could be seen as so humiliating or so politically provocative that the man felt he had to respond with equal or greater violence. Third, understanding what could have happened to women when they were hostages or taken captive could explain more thoroughly why women might have chosen, on occasion, to fight. Although none of the women in these anecdotes picked up a sword to defend themselves, it may explain why others did: potentially being sold into slavery or suffering rape and harsh punishments. Historians may choose to ignore or discount the presence of women warriors, but the evidence is there to show that even if men are the ones who fight wars, they are far from the only ones affected by it.

Chapter Three:

“So Hard was it to Release Princes whom Fortuna had put in her Chains:”¹ Women as Hostage- and Captive-Takers, Givers, and Holders.

While the study of women as captives and hostages has received some serious attention in recent years, as I noted in chapters one and two, only two historians—Friedman and Parks—discuss female hostages and captives at any length. And not even their studies closely examine women in the more active roles of hostage and captive takers, givers, and holders. Instead, they focus on women as passive victims of war; that is, as hostages and captives to be taken, sold or traded. But some women from the highest echelons of medieval society figure in the story as a good deal more than passive victims. Being able to take matters into their own hands, they played the game of politics, ruled their own or their husbands’ lands, and participated in the active taking and holding of hostage and captives. Examining these women is essential not only to our understanding of the more general processes of hostage- and captive-taking, but also to understand how and why women were able (or unable) to navigate these processes. Women could be significantly involved in taking, giving, or holding hostages and captives, and this could in some cases be understood by contemporaries as a normal occurrence. A study such as this one, however, has even broader implications. The sources’ acceptance of women engaged in these roles and their representations of women’s managing of men and the exercise of power must be assessed against contemporary anxieties that such women presented problems, broke social norms and mores, and needed to be contained. As a result, this chapter provides the means to examine women’s participation in warfare, politics, and society in general. Its purpose is therefore two-fold: first, to illuminate examples of women as

¹ HN, 119.

hostage- and captive-takers and holders in order to suggest that women performed such tasks with some regularity; second, to place such instances in their historical and literary contexts so as to better understand women's place in medieval society and in the medieval imagination.

The study of women in these active roles, however, is not without difficulties. Let us recall that, while previous cultures like the Romans had regularly featured hostage and captive-taking customs in their literature and art,² medieval hostage and captive exchanges and negotiations are rarely treated with any detail in the sources, oftentimes mentioned only briefly.³ The rituals through which hostage taking and negotiations took place must be extrapolated from infrequent and often conflicting references. Further, as noted in chapter one, while there may have been certain "rules" that were supposed to be followed, those rules were often fluid. As a result, deciphering where women might or might not have fitted into the social "ritual" of hostage exchange is not always easy.

Second, women's roles in medieval warfare—and more generally in medieval society—are often masked in contemporary chronicle and historical sources written (mostly) by male ecclesiastical authors focused on the deeds of men, kings, and God. As Linda Grant De Pauw notes, "Women have always and everywhere been inextricably involved in war.... During war women are ubiquitous and highly visible; when wars are over and the war songs are sung, women disappear."⁴ That leaves only a few examples in these sources of women in these roles. How to interpret that lack of evidence—as either a sign that this role was indeed a rare one for women or that the

² Allen, 9ff. As Allen remarks, "It would be fair to say that Roman writers—historians and otherwise—were obsessed with hostages."

³ As Yvonne Friedman, writing about captivity in the Latin East, has noted, "The chroniclers, while they sometimes mention the fact that people were taken captive, seldom bother to tell us about their subsequent fate, as if captivity were the end of the story, as it probably was in many cases." Friedman, *Encounters Between Enemies*, 78.

⁴ De Pauw, xiii.

sources depict only the tip of the iceberg—is not an easy decision. Prior to 1985, scholars—and in particular feminist scholars—took the former approach, tending to see medieval women’s lives as limited. Because they relied on limited source material and dealt with sources that presented only impressions of women, rather than investigating what women actually *did*, and further tended not to use feminist theory to read old sources in new ways, scholars prior to 1985 assumed that women’s power drastically declined in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the “Golden Age” of the early Middle Ages, they suggested, when power was decentralized, women had the potential to be much more powerful because clout was “largely derived from rather irregular powers held by the great families of the age.” By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, the rise of monarchy, “the state,” and the return of public and more centralized authority “severely reduced” women’s ability to act as their access to informal channels of power dried up.⁵ This lachrymose assumption about medieval women’s lives was advocated by many notable historians,⁶ most famously Georges Duby.⁷ He repeatedly argued in various contexts that women were precluded from power, primarily because they were denied any role in the lord-vassal relationship. It was this relationship that gave medieval lords control over warriors, land, castles, and therefore power, and without it, scholars argued, women were helpless pawns.

⁵ Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, “The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500-1100,” *Feminist Studies* 1 (1973): 126-41. Reprinted in revised form in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, GA, 1988), 83-101. Quotes here are from pp. 95-6 in the revised edition. For the early history of this idea of an early “golden age” for women with particular emphasis on Anglo-Saxon women, see Pauline Stafford, “Women and the Norman Conquest,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., vol. 4 (1994), 221-225.

⁶ For example: Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, trans. Chaya Galai (London, 1983); Joan Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature* (New York, 1975); James Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987).

⁷ See below, and also: Georges Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century. Volume Two: Remembering the Dead*, trans. Jean Birrell (Chicago, 1997); *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett (Chicago, 1994); *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York, 1983); *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore, 1978).

Further, as power became more centralized around “the state,” power became more concentrated and formal. This left women—whose power tended to be informal and family-based—with less access to channels of influence. As a result of these two trends—the rise of the “state” and exclusion from the lord-vassal relationship—women became victims of their families and a patriarchal society that feared and loathed them. They were dominated and abused by violent male warriors, married off young, given no rights, and too often destined to die painfully in childbirth.

But as feminist scholar Joan Wallach Scott has written, “real men and women do not always literally fulfill the terms either of their society’s prescriptions or of our analytical categories.”⁸ Since 1985, the concept of a “Golden Age” has been eclipsed because it is not nearly complicated enough to reflect the reality of medieval women’s lives.⁹ More recent scholars of medieval women have suggested arguing for a reevaluation of the sources already examined and a search for new sources. Recent close, in-depth scholarly assessments of the sources demonstrate, that while some women do perhaps fit into the bleaker picture of previous historians, others readily engaged in lordship well beyond the eleventh century and were active participants in medieval society.¹⁰ As Eleanor Searle has wisely (and wittily) noted, “In concentrating on the gentlemen in order to understand the ethos of the military ruling class, we are in danger of understanding it incompletely. Men wanted wives, not simply sexual partners and alliances. If they had any sense, they wanted trusted comrades as their wives, and there is evidence that those with any sense got trusted

⁸ Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis,” in *Feminism and History*. Ed. Joan Scott (Oxford, 1996), 169.

⁹ “Women’s history is now too sophisticated for ‘Golden Ages’ or for simple stories of advance or retreat. It is time to restore the lives of tenth-, eleventh- and twelfth-century women to them.” Pauline Stafford, “Women and the Norman Conquest,” 249.

¹⁰ One can doubtlessly find an abundance of victimized women in the early middle ages, as well, or could if the evidence were more abundant, which cautions us to think carefully before generalizing too much.

comrades.”¹¹ While Searle may have overstated her case, her point is relevant. Not all men in the Middle Ages wanted mere sexual partners or dogsbodies to keep house, nor was it necessarily wives that would have fulfilled these roles. Moreover, the sources do not present a clean dichotomy—life was either wonderful or abysmal—but present images of medieval women’s lives that are “diverse, complex, ambiguous, multivocal, [and] contradictory.” Women, like men, experienced life through many lenses—wife, daughter, sister, mother, and heiress. They also functioned within the parameters of social status and various ethnic, national, and religious groupings, all of which shaped and could change their experience. Rather than fitting the evidence to a theory, it is imperative to let the evidence speak for itself, and account for the vicissitudes of women’s lives. In Margaret Howell’s words, it is necessary to work within “the tensions between an empirical and an ideological approach.”¹² Medieval women’s hostage and captive taking practices offer an as yet unopened window through which it can be better seen how they experienced, and functioned, within the world around them.

Further, groundbreaking research has recently revealed that, contrary to prior assumptions, women were actively involved in almost all aspects of medieval warfare, even, on rare occasions, combat.¹³ They were the cause of war and actively instigated

¹¹ Eleanor Searle, “Emma the Conqueror,” in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, Christopher J. Holdsworth, and Janet L. Nelson (Rochester, NY, 1989), 282.

¹² Margaret Howell, “Royal Women of England and France,” 165.

¹³ There is an increasingly large bibliography for medieval women’s relationship to warfare. See: Megan McLaughlin, “The woman warrior: gender, warfare, and society in medieval Europe,” *Women’s Studies* 17 (1990); Keren Caspi-Reisfeld, “Women Warriors during the Crusades, 1095-1254,” in *Gendering the Crusades*, ed. Sarah B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (New York, 2002) as well as all the articles in the *Gendering the Crusades* book, which treat women’s participation from multiple angles; David Hay, “Canon Laws regarding Female Military Commanders up to the Time of Gratian: Some Texts and Their Historical Contexts,” in Mark D. Meyerson, Daniel Thiery, and Oren Falk, eds., *‘A Great Effusion of Blood?’ Interpreting Medieval Violence* (Toronto, 2004); Helen Solterer, “Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France,” *Signs* vol. 16, no. 3 (Spring, 1991): 522-549; Jean A. Traux, “Anglo-Norman Women at War: Valiant Soldiers, Prudent Strategists or Charismatic Leaders?” In *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages. Essays on Medieval and Naval History*, ed. Donald J. Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon (Rochester, NY, 1999); James M. Blythe, “Women in the Military: Scholastic

it,¹⁴ raised money for troops,¹⁵ provided soldiers and supplies,¹⁶ led soldiers to battle,¹⁷ went on campaign with their husbands,¹⁸ gave advice about battles and military tactics,¹⁹ inherited, owned, controlled and built castles for military purposes,²⁰ organized defenses during war,²¹ brought water for troops and provided encouragement during battle,²² negotiated the end of hostilities and urged peace,²³ and

Arguments and Medieval Images of Female Warriors,” *History of Political Thought* vol. 22, no. 2 (Summer, 2001): 242-269; Helen Nicholson, “Women on the Third Crusade,” *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 23:4 (1997); J.F. Verbrüggen “Women in Medieval Armies,” trans. Kelly DeVries, in *Journal of Medieval Military History*, ed. Clifford J. Rogers Kelly DeVries, and John France (Woodbridge, 2006): 119-36.

¹⁴ The following examples and notes are not meant to be comprehensive, but to provide one example of a woman performing that activity. In each case, multiple examples exist. When Henry, the Holy Roman Emperor and king of Sicily, abused the people of Sicily, it was his wife, Constance, formed a conspiracy and raised a rebellion against her husband in 1197, forcing him to flee back to Germany. Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 4:27.

¹⁵ Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III of England, was essential in providing money and supplies for her husband’s invasion of Gascony in the 1250s, even negotiating a loan with Florentine merchants. Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence* (Oxford, 2001), 118-20. During Crusades especially, women were essential as financiers for their husband’s expeditions. See Jonathan Riley-Smith, “Family Traditions and Participation in the Second Crusade,” in *The Second Crusade and the Cistercian*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York, 1992): 101-8; *ibid*, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131* (Cambridge, 1997), *passim*.

¹⁶ Adela of Blois sent 100 knights from her husband’s lands to Louis of France in his campaign against a rebellious lord. OV, 6: 156-8. Even abbesses, who controlled large swaths of land for their houses, were expected to send troops when asked. See Katherine Fisher Drew, “The Carolingian Military Frontier in Italy,” *Traditio* 20 (1964), 437-447.

¹⁷ Countess Richilde of Hainaut led two armies on behalf of her young son’s claim to the County of Flanders in the early 1070s. Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, trans. Laura Napran (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2005), 5-10.

¹⁸ It was not uncommon for women to go on crusade with their husbands. Eleanor of Aquitaine, for example, went with her husband to the Holy Land in 1146, bringing with her many female attendants. Many of Louis’s nobles followed suit, bringing their own wives. The wives of Baldwin of Lorraine and Raymond of Toulouse, two of the main secular commanders for the First Crusade, also went to the Holy Land. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, 1:Chapter 31.

¹⁹ In 1173-4, the Countess of Leicester was her husband’s primary advisor and motivator during his rebellion and battle against the troops of the king. *Jordan Fantosme’s Chronicle*, 70-79.

²⁰ Aubrée, wife of Ralph count of Bayeux, was famous for having built the castle of Ivry, thought to have been impregnable. OV, 4:290-1.

²¹ When in 1193 it was feared the John would rebel against his brother King Richard of England and that an invasion would be launched from France to support John’s rebellion, it was Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine that ordered that the coast of England facing Flanders be fortified. Gervase of Canterbury, 1:515.

²² Peter of Tudebode, chronicler of the First Crusade, reports that at the Battle of Dorylaeum on July 1st, 1097, “the women who accompanied us assisted our forces greatly on this day by bringing drinking water to the warriors and at all times bravely shouting encouragement to those who fought and defended them.” Peter Tudebode, *Historia Hierosolymitano*, trans. John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia, 1974), 34-5.

²³ In 1149, when the bishop of Beauvais and his brother, the King of France, warred against each other, Queen Adelaide was actively involved in urging peace. Matilda of Boulogne was also a noted peace maker, especially between her uncle the king of Scotland and her husband, the king of England. John

served as peace bonds by marrying their family's enemies.²⁴ As Jean Truax has pointed out, "women who acted as feudal overlords, whether in their own right or as the representatives of male relatives, controlled the resources of money and manpower necessary for waging war."²⁵ Women also served as household managers, handling the everyday logistics of running large estates in times of both peace and war, making them particularly suited for pulling together the resources and men needed to wage war. Moreover, women were literally surrounded by the accoutrements of war and grew up with it. Because there were no centrally or rigidly organized and trained armies in the Middle Ages and warriors were associated with the households of their lords, the castles and fortified houses in which women lived were the training grounds for medieval warriors. As a result, "wives and women...had the opportunity to learn the basics of strategy and military planning by cooperating with their husbands, their parents and the streams of soldiers flowing through their increasingly fortified estates. ...[And] when the men died, some of these women simply applied what they had learned, in much the same way that contemporary burgher widows continued to ply their deceased husbands' trade."²⁶ Women's active assistance to their male counterparts in hostage and captive taking, holding, and ransoming must be placed, therefore, within this context, as well.

How far down the social scale such activities may have travelled is also an issue. As Pauline Stafford has noted, it is incorrect to place all women together in one

of Salisbury, *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1986), 69-70; Simeon of Durham, 2:299-300.

²⁴ In 1197 Berenguela of Castile, granddaughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, married Alfonso IX of León because, as the *Chronica Latina* reported, no peace was possible between Castile and León unless they were married. Eleanor of Aquitaine herself had been heavily involved in the marriage between another of her granddaughters, Eleanor of Castile, whose marriage in 1200 sealed the peace between France and England. Miriam Shandis and Constance Berman, "A Taste of the Feast: Reconsidering Eleanor of Aquitaine's Female Descendants" in *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York, 2002), 186; See also Elizabeth Brown's article, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and her Seasons" in the same volume, 17.

²⁵ Truax, 111. She also notes that, in this sense, women were very much like male clerics. Ibid, 124-5.

²⁶ Hay, *Matilda of Canossa*, 7-8.

large group as “woman” as if the potential freedoms and restrictions of the elite were mirrored in the lives of the townswomen and peasant women. Most of the information the sources provide pertains to noble and royal women, and historians can only make the most tentative of arguments about whether or not women further down the social ladder might have also participated in such activities.²⁷ Recent scholarly studies,²⁸ however, have aptly demonstrated that women of the knightly class in both northern France and Occitania were certainly capable of active lordly and military roles. It is not too great an extension of logic to suggest that these same women, whom their husbands trusted as *chatelaines*, regents, and guardians of their children in their absence or after their deaths, might have also been expected to take, retain, and ransom hostages and captives. Given, however, the nature of the sources, this study inevitably focuses almost entirely on the lives of royal and aristocratic women.

To Have and to Hold, from this Day Forth: Women as Hostage and Captive Takers, Givers and Holders

The Battle of Lincoln in 1141—in which King Stephen of England was captured by his cousin the Empress Matilda—and its aftermath during England’s “Anarchy,” provides several useful pieces of evidence that suggest women were more than capable of taking and holding hostages and captives. After her success at the battle, Empress Matilda received the submission of various lords, and she seems to have done so just as any other war-time victor might. First and foremost, she had to decide King Stephen’s future. She and her brother, Robert of Gloucester, settled on life-long imprisonment in Robert’s stronghold of Bristol, a center of support for the

²⁷ Pauline Stafford, “Women and the Norman Conquest,” 228-31.

²⁸ See, for example, the articles in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999). As Amy Livingstone notes there in her article on noblewomen in the Chartrain in this volume, the same acts and powers associated with powerful and royal women like Adela of Blois were also exercised by the wives of knights and lesser nobility: they, too, were called *domina*. (p. 66). See also Frederic Cheyette, *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of the Troubadours*, (Ithaca, NY, 2001).

Empress.²⁹ The king was not the only prominent lord to be captured, and despite her brother's position as military commander and the fact that she had not physically been on the battlefield, it was Matilda who dealt with those who had been captured. According to *The Chronicle of John, Prior of Hexham* she "deprived William Peverel of the castle of Nottingham... [and] [o]ther men of eminence, who were taken with the king, she released, an agreement for their ransom having been made."³⁰ John of Worcester reports that many of Stephen's followers were also captured and thrown into prison.³¹ In the weeks that followed, England's barons, lay and ecclesiastical, seem to have come over to her side, some voluntarily, others not. The *Gesta Stephani* speaks of "some of the king's men...being either captured or forcibly expelled from their possessions." Although it is not entirely clear if these are the same men that John of Hexham refers to, the language suggests that they were not, but men who were captured after the battle of Lincoln, not during it. The implication is that these expulsions were carried out at Matilda's behest, as it was she who received the submission "of the greater part of the kingdom."³² She also seems to have either requested or voluntarily been given hostages, since it was through "receiving hostages and men's homage" that the *Gesta* says she "brought the great part of the kingdom

²⁹ "Comes itaque Glaornensis regem secum adducens, sorori suae comitissae Andegauisae in Glaornia obtulit, communique inde consilio in turri Brisoensi usque ad extremum uitae halitum reseruandum custodiis adhibitis reposuit." William of Malmesbury remarked that the king "as is customary for those who bear the name of captive, was brought before the empress at Gloucester by her brother," and then moved to Bristol. "Rex juxta morem illius generis hominum quos captiuos nominant, imperatrici a fratre presentatus Glocestriae." GS, 75.

³⁰ Although John does not state who the other men she released were, he wrote earlier that "Capti sunt autem Bernardus de Baillel, Rogerus de Mulbrai, Richardus de Curceio, Willielmus Fossart, Willelmus Peverel, Willelmus Clerfeith, et multi alii." It may be that these men are implied since they are here associated with William Peverel. Simeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Thomas Arnold (London, 1885) 2:308-9.

³¹ JW, 3:292-3.

³² "Sed tamen maior regni pars comitissae suisque se fautoribus continuo inclinavit, et alii quidem ex regalibus, subitis circumuenti infortuniis, aut capiebantur, aut ex propriis cum uiolentia detrudebantur: alii mentita citissime, quam regi debuerant, fide, se illi et sua ultronee contradebant." GS, 76-77.

under her sway.”³³

The *Gesta* reports other situations in which the Empress Matilda dealt with hostages and captives, depicting her as using the tactic of threatening violence against a captive, and, when this failed, ratcheting up the harshness of the imprisonment. In 1145, when fortune had again turned against Matilda, her forces captured Walter de Pinkeney, castellan of Malmesbury castle, and she held him hostage in exchange for the castle. According to the *Gesta Stephani*, however, Matilda was unable to convince Walter to turn over the castle, and King Stephen, hearing of Walter’s capture, reinforced the castle as soon as he was able.³⁴ Frustrated, she put him in fetters and threw him in prison.³⁵ Orderic Vitalis also reports her using this approach in Lent of 1138 in Normandy. Her retainers captured Ralph of Esson, a local baron who was fighting against her, and then handed him over to her to be put in chains until he surrendered his castle to her.³⁶

The Chronicle of John of Worcester reports yet more examples of Matilda’s involvement in the taking and treatment of hostages and captives, indicating that she was an active participant in such activities. Miles of Gloucester, constable of Bristol castle and a supporter of the Empress, attacked the area around Bristol in an effort to gain its support for the Empress. Although Matilda was in Bristol at the time, John implies that these actions were done in her name, if not indeed by her personal order, and they could certainly not have been done without her knowledge. Matilda left Bristol in October and arrived in Gloucester on October 15 looking to “assert her lordship and receive submission” of the local population. According to John, those who did not submit suffered a similar fate as those in Bristol.³⁷ He also describes

³³ “Cum igitur illa maiorem sibi regni partem, datis obsidibus sumpto et ab hominibus hominio, tandem inclinasset....” Ibid, 80.

³⁴ Ibid, 118.

³⁵ Ibid., 119.

³⁶ OV, 6:512-15.

³⁷ JW, 3:270-3.

captives taken in his own city, Worcester, by the citizens of Gloucester who supported the Empress. Many in Worcester were taken prisoner, and were “led away, coupled like dogs, into wretched captivity. Whether they had the means or not, they were forced to promise on oath to pay whatever ransom the mouthpiece of their captors cruelly fixed.”³⁸ John does not specify who the “mouthpiece” was; he may have just meant it more generally, or as a specific reference to Matilda. However, it is unlikely that a large scale effort to subdue the areas around Bristol, Worcester, and Gloucester—areas connected with her family and her main power base—would have been made without her knowledge and consent, so it is possible she might have ordered such an action.

Both the *Gesta*’s and John’s accounts are hostile to Matilda,³⁹ however, and must be read with care. Although the implications of her choice to treat Walter and these other unnamed men and women of England as she did will be discussed in Chapter Five, it is important to note that Matilda actively took up the responsibilities of managing hostages herself, seeing them as a means to gain political concessions, speaking with them directly, and choosing their punishments. Nor were her actions during the civil war her only experience with deciding the fate of hostages and captives. At least one other case is known in which she performed this task. According the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, it was she who suggested that Henry I’s brother Robert Curthose (her own uncle), who had been Henry’s captive since the Battle of Tinchebray, be moved to the more secure castle at Cardiff and placed under the care of Robert of Gloucester.⁴⁰ While her treatment of hostages is sometimes

³⁸ “Plurimi per uicos et plateas capiuntur, et uelut in copula canum constringuntur, et miserabiliter abducuntur. Licet habeant, licet non habeant, quantum crudele os illorum censuerit in redemptionem sui iureiurando promittere et reddere compelluntur.” Ibid., 3:274-5.

³⁹ Part of the reason for the *Chronicle*’s hostility towards these events is that he was located in the area. Worcester is less than sixty miles from Bristol, and less than twenty from Gloucester. This makes him an excellent witness for these events, given his proximity. But it also makes him likely to exaggerate the horribleness of events, because they were so close to home.

⁴⁰ *The Empress Matilda*, 53. *ASC*, 256.

construed as cruel, there is no indication in the texts that the authors found Matilda's taking and dealing with hostages and captives unusual activities for women.

In part this may be because Matilda was not the only woman during the Anarchy to exercise the power of dealing with hostages and captives. Queen Matilda of Boulogne, wife to her opponent, King Stephen, made similar choices. When Robert of Gloucester was captured following the rout at Winchester, it was William de Warenne with a force of Flemings who captured him. But they did not keep him and ransom him themselves. He was too politically important a figure to merely ransom and let go, and as a result, they presented him to Queen Matilda. It was Queen Matilda who, after Stephen's capture, had rallied an army in her husband's defense and led them to London and then Winchester. Clearly in charge of the "royalist" party, she determined that Robert should be turned over to William of Ypres, one of her and her husband's major mercenary captains, for incarceration at Rochester.⁴¹ Nor can this be dismissed as merely the fact that, with her husband absent, Matilda served as a figurehead, without real power. Queen Matilda had always been heavily involved in the military campaigns of her husband during the civil war, and their relationship both politically and personally appears to have been a partnership.⁴² It seems reasonable that she would have been perfectly capable of dealing with hostages and captives at any given time, even though there are no other documented instances of her dealing with captives.

⁴¹ *Florentii Wigornensis Monachi Chronicon ex Chronicis*, ed Benjamin Thorpe (London, 1848-9) 2:135. Although as the title suggests, this work was formerly attributed to "Florence of Worcester," it is now known that the author of the *Chronicon ex Chronicis* was John of Worcester. See the "Introduction" to JW, 2:xvii-xviii, and also M. Brett, "John of Worcester and His Contemporaries," in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), 101-26.

⁴² See Heather Tanner, "Queenship: Office, Custom or Ad Hoc? The Case of Matilda III of England (1135-1152)," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York, 2002).

Other women were also hostage and captive-takers in military situations. One of the earliest examples comes from the account in the Abingdon manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* of the deeds of Æthelflæd of Mercia, daughter of Alfred the Great, Lady of the Mercians, and wife of Æthelred of Mercia. This records that in 916 “...before midsummer, on 16 June, Abbot Ecgberht, guiltless, was killed with his companions. [...] And three days later Æthelflæd sent an army into Wales and broke down Brecon Mere, and there took the wife of the king as one of thirty-four [captives].”⁴³ In around 1110 the count of Melgueil and his sister both swore not to capture their lord, William V of Montpellier, and promised to have nothing to do with anyone who did take him captive, indicating that in William’s mind it was possible for him to be captured at the request or command of a woman.⁴⁴ The Earl of Salisbury offered to Nicholaa de la Haye, castellan and sheriff of Lincoln, his own son and nephew as hostages in 1220 in a vain attempt to get her to allow him inside Lincoln castle.⁴⁵ Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III of England, was instrumental in the pursuit and capture of Henry of Almain, an intimate of Simon de Montfort and nephew of her husband Henry III, in 1263, after he had attacked a group of royalist ladies attempting to escape to France. The *Saint Albans Chronicle* reports that his

⁴³ *ASC*, 100. John of Worcester also records this event. *JW*, 2:372-5.

⁴⁴ Dunbabin, 69.

⁴⁵ *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. W.W. Shirley (London, 1862), 1:73, letter #lxi. The reference comes from a letter written by Sir Fawkes de Breauté, a knight in the employ of Henry III, to Hubert de Brugh, Justiciar of England. He writes: “Ceterum sciatis quod comes Sarisberiensis intentus est et sollicitus....purendum ingressum castri Lincolniae....ipsam dominam, offerendo illi multum de suo et obsides, scilicet filium suum et nepotem suum.” Nicholaa de la Haye had an interesting life and career. Married twice, she nevertheless held power independently from her husbands. She served both King John and Henry III’s minority government loyally, defending Lincoln Castle on multiple occasions. See Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century England*, 13-26, and Charles Petit-Dutaillis, “Une Femme de guerre au xiii^e siècle: Nicole de la Haie, gardienne du château de Lincoln,” in *Mélanges Julien Havet: recueil de travaux d’érudition dédiés à la mémoire de Julien Havet, 1853-93* (Paris, 1895), 369-80.

arrest was her doing, and that when the barons asked for his release, they had to consult with her, as well as the king.⁴⁶

Property and lordship disputes could also produce situations in which women took hostages and captives. Matthew of Paris, for example, reports that in 1253 Count William II of Holland and Zeeland was taken captive by Countess Margaret of Flanders when he refused to do homage to her for his counties, and was held in prison for two years until his release by her eldest son, John d'Avesnes.⁴⁷ According to a claim brought in 1341 by two granddaughters of Robert de Camville, Queen Eleanor of Castile, wife of King Edward I of England, allegedly had had him imprisoned in the late 1270s for not giving her the manor of Westerham, which she coveted. The claim stated that the queen, angered at Robert's refusal, conspired with the marshal of the army to make it appear as if he had defaulted on his military obligations during Edward I's war in Wales. Although the claim was false and a reflection of Eleanor's rapacious actions in acquiring property during her lifetime,⁴⁸ it also suggests that it was not unthinkable that a queen would use such a tactic to extort property.

Some women seem to have resorted to hostage and captive taking for gaining and protecting property more frequently than others, suggesting that such a method may have been a more frequent choice rather than an extreme one. After the death of her husband King John of England and her return to her native land, Isabel of Angoulême became involved in several violent disputes over the lordship of land. During these disputes, she took several hostages, including the two sons of Bartholomew de le Puy, in order to protect herself, should he attempt to harm her.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ She was not particularly pleased with the idea of his release, either. *Flores Historiarum*, ed. R.H. Luard (London, 1890) 2:481-2.

⁴⁷ CM, 6.

⁴⁸ John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile* (New York, 1995), 218-19.

⁴⁹ Nicholas Vincent, "Isabella of Angoulême: John's Jezebel," In *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S.D. Church (Woodbridge, UK, 1999), 206-7. A letter from her to Pandulf, the bishop-elect of Norwich, about this matter survives. The relevant passage reads as follows:

She also held her own daughter and several others hostage in exchange for part of her dowry. King John's marriage to Isabel had been a disaster for him. He had essentially stolen her as a bride from Hugh de Lusignan, inciting a rebellion and causing him to side with King Philip Augustus of France, eventually resulting in the loss of most of England's continental possessions. John had tried in 1214 to appease the Lusignans and make peace with them by giving his young daughter Joan to Hugh de Lusignan in marriage. She was sent there to be raised until she was of marriageable age. But after her husband's death, Isabel returned to Angoulême in 1217, and ended up marrying Hugh herself in 1220. Isabel wrote to her son, King Henry III, saying she had married Hugh for Henry's own good because Hugh's advisors would not let him consummate the marriage with Joan, and were trying to get him to marry a French noblewoman. She begged him to turn over her dowry, which included Niort, the castles of Exeter and Rockingham and money left to her by John. Henry congratulated his mother and asked for Joan to be returned, but there were problems. Isabel's dowry was withheld because she had married without Henry's permission, so Isabel and Hugh refused to return Joan. Eventually Pope Honorius III intervened, threatening interdict if Joan was not returned. He also admonished Isabel for holding Henry's steward and others as hostages and asking ransoms for them. Joan was eventually returned in October 1220 when Isabel's dowry was released.⁵⁰

Women could also receive or extort hostages as a part of peace agreements. In 1208, after her husband was recalled to England, William Marshal's wife, another

"You will know that we have offered to restore to Bartholomew de Podio, at the entreaty of our son, the king of England, and of his Council, in entirety of his land, his possessions and the rents he received before we came hither, with the exceptions of our castles, and also all his hostages, save for his two sons, whom we desire to hold in fair and fitting custody until we are without fear that he will seek to do us wrong, as he once did to the son of the count of Augi and the other barons of our land to our detriment. If he refused this offer of ours, we offered him the sure judgment of our court, but he totally rejected all this." *The Letters of the Queens of England, 1100-1547*, ed. Anne Crawford (Dover, NH, 1994), 52-3.

⁵⁰ Harold Snellgrove, *The Lusignans in England, 1247-1258* (Albuquerque, 1950), 10-15.

Isabel, received the submission of Meilyr fitz Henry, King John of England's justiciar in Ireland and William Marshal's tenant, after his rebellion in Leinster, and obtained his son as hostage for his good behavior. She also received the children and younger brothers of several other rebellious men in Leinster.⁵¹ In 1218, Duke Theobald I of Lorraine submitted to the judgment of Blanche of Navarre, the countess of Champagne and regent for her minor son, Theobald IV of Champagne. Duke Theobald had joined in the rebellion of Erard I of Brienne, lord of Ramerupt, who was married to Philippa, daughter of a previous count of Champagne, through whom Erard was claiming the county.⁵² Blanche joined the war against Erard and Duke Theobald with her ally Emperor Frederick II, leading her army against the city of Nancy. When Duke Theobald was captured in the town of Amance, he was turned over to her as a captive, and forced to submit to her. She compelled him to sign a charter in which he agreed to become a vassal of the counts of Champagne. The agreement stipulated that if he broke the treaty he was to surrender himself into the hands of the countess as a hostage within forty days.⁵³

Women left in political control also gave hostages. According to Thietmar of Merseburg, sometime in 1016 Queen Emma of England gave a Viking force besieging

⁵¹ David Crouch, *William Marshal: Court, Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire, 1147-1219* (London, 1990), 104.

⁵² Count Henry II was count of Champagne from 1181 to 1197. When he left Champagne on crusade in 1190, he was unmarried and had his barons swear to recognize his younger brother Theobald (the future Count Theobald III, and father to Theobald IV) as count if he did not return from the Holy Land. But Henry II later married the widowed Queen Isabella of Jerusalem and with her had two daughters, Philippa and Alice. Henry died in 1197, and his brother succeeded to the county as Theobald III, but when he died in 1201 he left behind a posthumously born son and a widow with little governing experience and who was relatively unknown in Champagne. This left room for Henry II's daughters and their husbands to make trouble. For a summary of Blanche's regency, see Theodore Evergates, "Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne," in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999), 81-5.

⁵³ Dmitri Starostine, "Hostage by Agreement and the Language of Dependence in the Eleventh Century: Mutation or Corruption?" in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century*, ed. Michael W. Herren, C.J. McDonough, and Ross G. Arthur (Belgium, 2002), 2:389-91. Starostine misdates the rebellion which did not start until 1216, and Theobald was not captured until 1218.

London led by King Cnut of Denmark (the future King Cnut of England)⁵⁴ three hundred hostages in order to gain peace.⁵⁵ With the death of her husband King Athelred II, and her step-son Edmund Ironside⁵⁶ not yet able to effectively wage war, Emma, who resided in London and appears to have been in charge of its defenses, was left to face the renewed onslaught of Cnut of Denmark's invasion of England, which had begun in 1015.⁵⁷ As effective military leader of the city, she negotiated the peace and surrendered the hostages.

Interestingly enough, the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ostensibly Emma's own account of her life,⁵⁸ does not mention this heroic defense of London, a surprising lacuna if Emma's goal were merely to highlight her own skills as a ruler or military leader against a foreign and formidable foe, which might suggest that such events did not actually take place. However, Emma's hostage exchange should not be automatically discounted for three reasons. First, the *Encomium* was written well after

⁵⁴ Thietmar places Cnut's invasion in July of 1016 and states that he besieged London for six months, which would place Emma's concession of hostages in December. But Cnut actually invaded in April, and Cnut was victorious in November of that year after the death of Edmund Ironside in November and was crowned on Christmas Day. It seems to me more likely that Thietmar got his dates wrong, and that Emma gave the hostages sometime in September, before the Battle of Ashingdon between Cnut and Edmund in October, which Cnut won decisively.

⁵⁵ "Finally the queen was exhausted by the constant fighting and sent messengers to seek peace and carefully inquire what they [the Vikings] wanted from her. The insatiable enemy immediately responded that, if the queen were willing to have her two sons killed, redeem herself for fifteen thousand silver pounds, redeem the bishops for twelve thousand, and all of her armed men for the unbelievable sum of twenty-four thousand pounds and if she would give three hundred hostages as surety for this agreement only then would she obtain peace and life for herself and her companions. Otherwise, so they shouted three times aloud, they would all be put to the sword. The venerable queen and her advisors were greatly disturbed by this message. After long and tumultuous deliberations, however, she agreed to the demands...." Ryan Lavelle, 281-2. *Ottoman Germany: the Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David Warner (New York, 2001), 335.

As Lavelle notes, the distant German Thietmar was not the most reliable of historians for Anglo-Saxon events, but he argues that in his description of Emma's hostage agreement, "the depiction of hostages demanded as surety for a peace agreement imposed by the besieging Vikings, and the similarly high price, tallies with Anglo-Saxon accounts of submission in this period."

⁵⁶ Emma's own eldest son, Edward, was only 12 at the time, and therefore really unable to make a claim for the throne against his elder step-brother Edmund, who was a grown man and had been elected by the thegns.

⁵⁷ Pauline Stafford, *Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 2001), 225.

⁵⁸ The *Encomium Emmae Reginae* was written by an unknown monk at Emma's behest. See the introduction in *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. and trans. Alistair Campbell (Cambridge, 1998).

the events in question, and after Emma's marriage to Cnut (indeed, after his death), and this hindsight may account for the missing episode. It seems that with her marriage to Cnut Emma experienced a revival and enjoyed power and authority that she had not had under her previous husband. She downplays her first husband Aethelred, barely mentioning him at all, and paints Cnut's reign as introducing peace into the English realm. She also describes her marriage to him as one of love and mutual respect. The author writes that "it is hard to credit how vast a magnitude of delight in one another arose in them both."⁵⁹ She seems to have completely shed her former identity as an "English" queen (she never, for example, refers to herself by the name her subjects did: *Ælfgifu*), and the *Encomium* makes it clear that she associated herself almost completely with her Danish family. Given this context, it is probable that Emma wanted to overlook her past resistance to her husband and would therefore neglect to mention such events. Furthermore, Emma spent much of her later life supporting Harthacnut, her son by Cnut, in his bid for the throne, and ignored the claims to the throne of her elder sons by Aethelred.⁶⁰ Such a choice was likely difficult not only for personal reasons but for political ones as well, and would have needed justification, in particular, of Harthacnut's reign. Depicting herself as having resisted Cnut's conquest of England would have delegitimized his rule and painted him as an usurper, and thus calling Harthacnut's right to rule into question.

Second, on at least two other occasions the sources provide examples of women involved in the process of deciding if hostages should be given. Both occasions occur in King John of England's reign. The first took place in 1210 while

⁵⁹ Ibid, 35.

⁶⁰ It is perhaps this choice to back the claims of the younger sons over the elder that led Edward the Confessor to turn against his mother after his ascension to the throne, and force her into retirement. Certainly this was the opinion of William of Malmesbury, who stated that her property was "entirely taken from her" on his instructions because "'long had she mocked her offspring's years of need.' She never contributed anything out of her resources, passing down her hatred of the father to the child." GR, 1: 350-1.

John was on campaign in Ireland. When John made peace with the king of Connacht, he demanded hostages, and the Irish king agreed to hand over his son. But his wife and his followers talked him into changing his mind, much to John's dismay. John was therefore forced to take the king's siblings and royal officers as hostages instead of the royal heir.⁶¹ The second example is Matilda of Braose, whom we have already seen, rudely telling the King John's messengers that she would not hand over her son as a hostage to the man who had murdered his own nephew.⁶² As was noted earlier, Matthew Paris, writing well after the event indeed, may have exaggerated or completely invented many of the details. The story, however, is worth exploring because it tells us about expectations concerning womanly behavior. Matthew tells us that Matilda stole her husband's ability to speak on the matter ["verbum rapines ex oro viri"], and that he rebukes her in response, saying, "You have spoken like a foolish woman against our lord the king. For if I have offended him in some way, I am and will be ready to give satisfaction to my lord certainly without hostages, in accordance with the judgment of his court and of my fellow barons, if he will fix on a time and a place for my so doing."⁶³ While Matthew's language implies that she spoke foolishly and that it was not her place to speak at all, it appears that perhaps the issue was not so much with her refusal to hand over her son, but the manner in which she did it. She steals the words from her husband's mouth, which insinuates that the refusal to give the son over as a hostage was already there. Furthermore, Matthew has Matilda's husband refuse to hand over hostages, saying that he will do the king's will without hostages ["sine obsidibus"], suggesting perhaps that Matilda was entitled to voice her

⁶¹ Séan Duffy, "John and Ireland: The Origins of England's Irish Problem," in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S.D. Church (Woodbridge, UK, 1999), 241.

⁶² CM, 2:523-4.

⁶³ "Quod uerbum cum uir ejus audisset, increpauit eam et dixit, 'Quasi una ex stultis mulieribus contra domnum nostrum regem locuta es. Nam si ipsum in aliquo offendi, paratus sum et ero domno meo etiam sine obsidibus satisfacere, secundum iudicium curiae suae et baronum parium meorum, certo mihi assignato die et loco.'"

opinion about the fate of their son, just not in public and in a way that insults the king in front of his representatives, something that will only cause trouble for the Braose family. Although these events come from a much later time period than Emma's, they do suggest that women were more involved in the process of handing over hostages than scholars have indicated. Given that, as suggested previously, the process of hostageship is so hidden within the sources, it is possible women may have had a greater role in deciding who within their families became hostages than the sources reveal.

Third, such a revision of events is perhaps evidence of the wide-scale change in the representation of the role of the queen in the 11th and 12th centuries. As misogyny and increased attention to gender differences became gradually more important to medieval authors, their perceptions of what prominent women could and more importantly *should* be doing became more stringent. Powerful women were never completely or simply demarcated as "bad" or "evil." In fact, many received ample praise, especially if their public acts were seen as lessening the severity of the king or benefiting the poor or religious. But those women who acted in the public eye came under increasing scrutiny.⁶⁴ The *Encomium* is very careful to present Emma as the ideal wife and queen, certainly active, but within acceptable limits and roles like that of mother, wife, and patron of religious institutions. That she was an active military strategist and leader of England's defenses had less importance within this narrative.

Other women were more captive or hostage holders than takers. It was not

⁶⁴ Men, too, came under increasing scrutiny for their uses and abuses of power. The point here is not to argue that only powerful women suffered from the potential to be labeled as abusers of power or overstepping their bounds, but that women were often more susceptible to such complaints. See Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 2001); Ibid., "Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Rochester, NY, 1997); Idem, "The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York, 1993).

uncommon for a hostage taker to confer a hostage on a third party in order to maintain what Ryan Lavelle calls “reciprocal relationships *beyond* those of the giver and the recipient.”⁶⁵ Placing a hostage in the hands of an outside party made them guarantors and continual witnesses of the submission that had been made. It provided them with an extra incentive for maintaining the peace settlement. The submission became a community event; the more people involved, perhaps the greater chance of success. Women could play this role of the third party. The early example in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* of Ecgfrith, son of King Oswiu of Northumbria being held hostage at the court of Queen Cynewise of Mercia in 655 provides evidence that this may have been a long-standing tradition for women.⁶⁶ Queen Matilda of Boulogne, in taking over the care of Robert of Gloucester, may also have been fulfilling this role, as might Nicholaa de la Haye in early 1217, when she supervised the transfer of hostages between one loyalist castle and another.⁶⁷ Queen Eleanor of Provence was given custody of Adam Gurdon, an important supporter of the baronial cause during Simon de Montfort’s rebellion against Henry III, by her son

⁶⁵Ryan Lavelle, 284.

⁶⁶ The circumstances of how Ecgfrith became a hostage at Queen Cynewise’s court are unclear. According to Bede, Penda invaded Northumbria at the head of a large army, despite Oswiu’s attempt to buy Penda off with “an incalculable and incredible store of royal treasures and gifts.” Ecgfrith’s status as a hostage is mentioned only as an afterthought; Bede writes that, while Oswiu and his son Alhfrith were at war with Penda, Oswiu’s “other son Ecgfrith was at the time a hostage in the Mercian kingdom with Queen Cynewise.” It reads like an explanation to the curious reader as to why the other son was not fighting with his father: “His temporibus rex Osuii, cum aceruas atque intolerabiles pateretur inruptiones saepe dicti regis Merciorum, qui fratrem eius occiderat, ad ultimum necessitate cogente promisit se ei innumera et maiora quam credi potest ornamenta regia uel donaria in pretium pacis largitum, dummodo ille domum rediret et prouincias regni eius usque ad internicionem uastare desineret. Cumque rex perfidus nullatenus precibus illius assensum praeberet, qui totam eius gentem a paruo usque ad magnum delere atque exterminare decreuerat, respexit ille ad diuinae auxilium pietas, quo ab impietate barbarica posset eripi....” [Bede describes Penda’s army], quibus Osuii rex cum Alchfrido filio preparauit, ut dixi, habens exercitum, sed Christo duce confisus occurrit. Nam alius filius eius Ecfrid eo tempore in prouincia Merciorum apud regnum Cynwise obsess tenebatur....” Bede, 288-90.

Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum* also mentions Penda’s invasion of Northumbria at this time, but states that Penda in fact accepted Oswiu’s large gift. D.P. Kirby argues that Oswiu submitted to Penda at a siege near Stirling, and that his son was handed over as a peace hostage. D.P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings* (London, 1991), 90, 94-5.

⁶⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1216-25* (London 1906-), 23-4.

Edward.⁶⁸

Women may have been chosen for this role for two reasons. On the one hand, because—as in the Cynewise case—the queen was closely associated with hostage-taker, the submission achieved through the giving of a hostage remained powerful. The hostage still represented the subordination of the weaker part to the stronger. On the other hand, women could have been perceived as less likely to treat hostages violently, especially in cases where the treatment of a hostage could spark conflict. Hostage taking brought about a perilous balance of interest. A hostage-giver who despaired of the safety of his loved ones might be motivated to do desperate things. There was therefore an incentive to set his mind at rest as to the security of the hostages, which might be achieved by placing them in the care of women. In the case of Queen Cynewise of Mercia, according to Bede, her husband King Penda was already at war with the hostage's father, King Oswiu, so Cynewise's holding of the hostage may have minimized his chances of meeting a violent end at the hands of Penda if the war went badly for him. More practically, Ecgfrith's location at the queen's court may have also guaranteed that he would not die an accidental death at the battle or in Penda's army, causing further strife between the two parties. This may also be another reason that Robert of Gloucester was held in Queen Matilda's care. As noted above, when Robert was captured, he was handed over to the Queen, who placed him under house-arrest at Rochester. But as William of Malmesbury remarks, the Queen was careful to treat Robert with the utmost respect. "The queen," William writes,

though she remembered her husband had been fettered by his [Robert's] orders, never allowed any chains to put on him or ventured anything that would have dishonored his royal rank. Finally, at Rochester, for he was taken there, he was free to go to the churches beneath the castle when he liked, and to talk with whom he liked, at least as long as the queen was there.

⁶⁸ Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven, 1997), 56.

When the queen finally did leave, he was kept “under open arrest,” but was free enough to receive money from his men in order buy “some expensive horses.”⁶⁹ These three cases suggest that the most valuable hostages, particularly those whose death could destabilize an already volatile peace, not only received better treatment, but were kept in the care of women in particular precisely because women were perceived as gentler, even more lax, in their treatment of hostages and captives.

This image of women as hostage and captive holder appears in literary texts as well, which not only implies that this was thought of as a common role for women, but also supports the idea that women were hostage holders because they tended to be less harsh than men. In the thirteenth century *chanson de geste* *The Knights of Narbonne*, Count Aymeri and his men capture a very talented healer named Forrez on a raid against the Saracens. The count tells his men Girart and Gaudin to take the captive straight to his wife, Hermenjart, who is to guard him carefully.⁷⁰ Women of the romances also hold captives, especially Queen Guinevere. When Eric defeats Yder, the son of Nut, in Chrétien de Troyes’ *Erec et Enide*, he sends him to surrender to her.⁷¹ Likewise, when a young man named Alexander joins the court of King Arthur, he becomes one of Guinevere’s favorites and gives his first captured knights to her to hold as a sign of courtesy, a common theme in the romances. He also does so for practical reasons, for “[h]e does not wish anyone else to have possession of them for the king would soon have had them hanged.” This situation is not without problems, however. Guinevere “had them taken and imprisoned, befitting those charged with

⁶⁹ “Itaque regina, quae licet meminisset uirum suum eius iussu fuisse compeditum, nichil ei unquam uinculorum inferri permisit, nec quicquam inhonestum de sua maiestate presumpsit. Denique apud Rofacestram, illuc quippe ductus fuit, libere ad aecclesias infra castellum quo libebat ibat, et quibus libebat loquebatur, ipsa dumtaxat regina presente. Nam post profectionem eius in turrin sub libera custodia ductus est, adeo presenti et securo animo ut ab hominibus suis de Cantia accepta pecunia equos non parui pretii compararet, qui ei post aliquanto tempore et usui et commodo fuere.” HN, 114-17.

⁷⁰ “Baron,” fait il, “je vos coment forré / Droit a Nerbone gardez que soit mené / A Heranjart o grant pales listé / Le me randez sor vostre lealté / Gart le si chier com el a m’amisté.”⁷⁰ *Les Narbonnais: Chanson de geste*, ed. Hermann Suchier (Paris, 1898) 1:153-4, lines 4006-10.

⁷¹ Chrétien de Troyes, 14.

treason,” which displeased Arthur, who wishes to have them killed. She is forced to give them up, and Arthur has them drawn.⁷² This story hints that some men did not always appreciate women’s leniency or gentleness towards captives and hostages because they felt it kept hostages and captives who deserved harsh penalties from receiving the proper punishment.

It is worth noting that all of these hostage and captive takers, literary and historical, were elite women, and most—if not all—were queens or rulers of lands in their own right. This suggests that the care of hostages and captives may be yet another, little discussed role for queens and female rulers, comparable to that of intercessor, wife, mother, sister, daughter, patron of the church, moral guide to one’s family, and manager of the royal or lordly household, all of which have already been illuminated in the scholarship. Overlooking evidence such as that presented here, however, leaves incomplete historians’ growing understanding of how queenship functioned.

Scholars of queenship and kingship themselves have likely ignored this evidence because the tendency has been to associate military endeavors with the public power of kings and male lords, whereas queens and female lords, following the public/private dichotomy, have been associated with the more private aspects of royalty and ruling. First, the care and detention of hostages in the royal or lordly household, often under the care of women, makes their categorization as either a “public” or “private” issue ambiguous at best. In many ways, the living conditions of hostages and captives, especially high-profile ones, resembled those of household guests restricted in their access to the outside world. This seems to have been the case for, example, with the son of William de Braose, who was attached to the household

⁷² But not before others in the court suggest other punishments: burning, flaying, and hanging. Ibid., 103-4.

of Eleanor de Montfort during his hostageship in the spring and summer of 1265.⁷³

Second, the confinement, treatment, and exchange of hostages and captives often had profound public implications for other, less militaristic aspects of the state like the negotiations of a treaty between two kingdoms. Because queens are often perceived as uninvolved in these public aspects of rulership, they have been largely overlooked as participants in such activities.

Third, the importance of elite and royal women as diplomats and mediators between their natal and marital families meant that they often used their “private” status as wife, mother, sister and daughter to negotiate in the “public” realm. The case of Matilda of Canossa, whose military career has been recently outlined by David Hay, is illustrative here and may provide clues for examining the lives of other women like her. As Hay suggests, Matilda, as sole ruler of domains that spread throughout much of northern and central Italy and the “most powerful woman of her time,” exercised power not only politically and militarily, but also in traditionally “female” ways such as intercession. It was she who protected Pope Gregory VII at her fortress of Canossa, and when the Emperor Henry IV came to beg for forgiveness for three days in the snow, it was she who interceded personally with Gregory so that Henry could be forgiven. She was “not limited to a stereotypically masculine or feminine mode: she played the roles of general and intercessor simultaneously, and with equal success.”⁷⁴

As a result, my data supports Theresa Earenfight’s recent suggestion that the separation of the study of monarchy and rulership into two categories—kingship/kings/public and queenship/queens/private—is artificial. As she notes, “queens and kings did not live in isolation.” The public/private dichotomy has

⁷³ J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge, 1994), 326.

⁷⁴ Hay, *Matilda of Canossa*, 70.

inaccurately privileged those who act in the public realm, and “regards those who operate in the private domestic sphere as less legitimate political actors... fail[ing] to account for the multifocal nature of power in its many guises.” Kings as well as queens exercised power in the so-called private realm as patrons, fathers, sons, husbands, intercessors, and all of the other roles normally trumpeted as the domain of women and the source of women’s power. Likewise, women acted in the “public realm” as judges, diplomats, and military commanders. This is not to suggest that women participated in these roles as frequently as men, for they did not. But the fact that they could suggests that the boundaries between “male” and “female” powers or roles are much blurrier than has been argued in the past. Just as such “domestic” roles need to be interwoven into the history of kings and kingship, so the “public” roles of queens need to be reinserted into the narrative of queenship.

More generally, queens need to be reintroduced into the study of monarchy more broadly, for “while we may accept the fact that male rule was always everywhere privileged and that women governed only at the discretion, permission, and ultimately, at the pleasure of a man (or group of men), this does not mean that the subject of monarchy is exclusively a male noun.”⁷⁵ Monarchy and kingship are not synonymous, and as Earenfight suggests, by using the term “rulership,” and eliminating the public/private dichotomy, historians can move towards a new understanding of power at the top that includes those other than the king. As Earenfight notes, the queen is not the only “alternate,” multifocal source of power to be considered here. Recent studies on the “king’s favorite” have done much to elucidate the tangled web of power associated with monarchy, royalty, and rulership, because favorites often operated in both public and private spheres. If we cannot study

⁷⁵ Theresa Earenfight, “Without the Person of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe,” *Gender and History* 19:1 (April 2007): 7-8.

a king without considering his favorites and their influence on the king, we should consider the influence of the queen on the king and her share of his power, given her potential for a relationship just as intimate, if not more so, than that of the favorite.⁷⁶ By doing so, rulership becomes, according to Foucault, “a multiplicity of power relationships which are not separate entities, but elements contained within a network that extends beyond the persons of the king and queen, whose power is not localized individually. It circulates among various people who are simultaneously the subject and object of power.”⁷⁷ Kings and queens shared power, both public and private, and while they shared that power unequally, to ignore the fact that women had a share of, and a stake in, that power is to depict women who did exercise such powers as exceptional, abnormal, or marginalized. But women could and patently did exercise such powers and did so in a way that was considered a part of their everyday capacity as rulers and elites regardless of gender.

In other words, these examples of women taking, giving, and holding hostages weaken the long standing view held Georges Duby and others that women, being incapable of wielding a sword, could not possess *potestas*—what Duby called “the power to command and punish,” a category in which dealing with hostages and captives belonged. Duby held that any woman able to exercise any power was reduced to operating behind the scenes, and then only by batting their eyelashes and begging nicely.⁷⁸ But this analysis has many faults. Duby’s suggestion that the power to command and punish required the ability to use a sword, for example, neglects to

⁷⁶ Ibid. 9-10.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 10. For Foucault’s ideas on the nature of power, see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York, 1980); *ibid*, “The Subject and Power” in *The Essential Foucault: Selections from the Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York, 2003); *ibid*, *Power*, ed. by James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1999); Nancy Hartsock, “Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women,” in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York, 1990).

⁷⁸ He says, “They participated in power, then, but by way of charm.”

take into consideration the medieval distinction between *milites* and *bellatores* on the one hand, and *duces* and *imperatores* on the other. As David Hay has noted, numerous passages exist in medieval texts that suggest a class difference between those who actually fought and those who led warriors: “the uppermost classes were expected to lead, the lower classes to follow and to fight.” William of Malmesbury, for example, describes Henry I of England, a king who fought his share of wars and led his share of armies, as “verif[ying] the saying of Scipio Africanus, ‘My mother bore me to be a general [imperatorem], not a soldier [bellatorem]’” because “as a fighter he was of less repute than others.”⁷⁹ William goes on to praise Henry for being “in political wisdom second to none among the kings of our day, and ... easily first among all his predecessors,” and for preferring “to do battle in the council-chamber rather than with the sword,” and “winning his victories without bloodshed if he could, and with very little if he could not.”⁸⁰ William of Poitiers also makes the distinction between a general [officia imperatoris] and a soldier [officia militis] in his description of William the Conqueror.⁸¹ William argues that unlike Julius Caesar, who only commanded from a distance, William the Conqueror both commanded and fought in the front ranks. While these comments were clearly designed to praise William the Conqueror, Julius Caesar could hardly be called a negative model for the medieval warrior, whether he fought on the front lines or not.

A medieval secular male lord of the uppermost social stratum would certainly have been able to wield a sword, and the sword was undoubtedly an emblem for justice and a symbol of political authority and helpful to possess. But a lord or king’s

⁷⁹ “Minus pugnacis famae, Scipionis Affricani dictum representabat: ‘Imperatorem me mea mater, non bellatorem peperit.’” David Hay, “Canon Laws,” 292-3. See also Hay, *Matilda of Canossa*, 9-11. The quote from GR, 744-5.

⁸⁰ “Quapropter sapientia nulli umquam modernorum regum secundus, et pene dicam omnium antecessorum in Anglia facile primus, libentius bellabat consilio quam gladio; uincebat, si poterat, sanguine nullo, si aliter non poterat, pauco.” Ibid.

⁸¹ William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi/The Deeds of William*, ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1998), 172-3.

ability to exercise justice was based on his ability to command others to do so, something women clearly could and did do.⁸² Nor was his ability to wage war necessarily his most important capability in the exercise of *potestas*. The ability to “command and punish” did not derive from the sword alone, and lords were to avoid battle if possible and settle dispute in other ways if possible, often in the court, where many women were also active. As such, a woman was likely not completely excluded from the exercise of *potestas* simply because she did not pick up a sword. Her exercise of power came through her association with and inclusion in the lordship or monarchy, in which kings and queen and lords and their ladies “formed an integral part of the interlocking political, social, economic and legal institutional structure of each kingdom” and lordship. They were not “paired opposites” in which the king or lord completely dominated the other and wholly suppressed the lady’s ability to act, but “complementary elements.”⁸³

Studies of charter evidence have also indicated that women regularly acted in conjunction with, on behalf of, and independent of their husbands in the Middle Ages, owning, controlling, serving as regent, and selling castles and fiefs.⁸⁴ As Theodore Evergates, writing about women in Champagne, has suggested:

⁸² Ermengarde of Narbonne, Matilda of Tuscany, Adela of Blois, Matilda of Boulogne, the Empress Matilda, Juliana of Breteuil, Richilde of Hainault, Elisabeth of Jaligny, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Nicholaa de la Haye, Theresa of Portugal (Countess of Flanders), Gwenllian of Wales, Countess Marguerite of Hainault, among many others, are all described in the sources as leading troops into battle. There were also famous female commanders in medieval literature: Guendolien, Cordeille, Camille, and Penthesilea are just a few.

⁸³ Earenfight, 14.

⁸⁴ In addition to the wonderful articles in Evergates’ edited volume on France, see Susan Johns, “The Wives and Widows of the Earls of Chester, 1100-1252: the Charter Evidence,” *Haskins Society Journal* vol. 7 (1995): 117-132; *ibid.*, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Mark S. Hagger, *The Fortunes of a Norman Family: The de Verduns in England, Ireland and Wales, 1066-1316* (Dublin, 2001), esp. 72-83; Cheyette, *Ermengarde of Narbonne*; Charlotte A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: The Second Generation* (Philadelphia, 1989); Louise J. Wilkinson, *Women in Thirteenth-Century England* (Rochester, NY, 2007); Rowena A. Archer, “‘How ladies...who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates:’ Women as Landholders and Administrators in the later Middle Ages,” in *Women is a Worth Wight: Women in English Society, c 1200-1500*, ed. P.J.P. Goldberg (Stroud, UK, 1992), 149-81.

The practical records [i.e., charter evidence]...reveal a far different picture of medieval women—at least of noble born women—than the one refracted through misogynist literature, speculative learned treatises, and cautionary tales addressed to monastic male audiences. Moreover, and contrary to what some historians have recently claimed, aristocratic women were neither marginalized by a family obsession with the patriline nor excluded from inheritance by male primogeniture. ...Both secular and ecclesiastical documents record women inheriting, acquiring, disposing, and bequeathing property. Women did homage and received homage for fiefs. They responded to inquests, they sealed letters on a variety of financial and feudal matters, and they contracted marriages for their children.⁸⁵

Nor did these women have to be considered abnormal in order to exercise these powers, as Duby and others have argued they did, performing a sort of gender transubstantiation, shedding their femininity for a new (and supposedly better) masculinity. As Kimberley LoPrete has argued, this interpretation “depends on the uncritical importation to the central middle ages of distinctly modern conceptions of sexuality, love, power, and their interrelations... [and] deflects attention from the dynamic interplay between the life-cycles of aristocratic families and the domestic base of their power that routinely produced a significant number of women who exercised lordly authority within their traditional societal roles.” When women who have power are reduced to abnormalities or masculinized, they are “excluded from the general history of women and the gendering of socio-political domains over the *longue durée*.”

However, as LoPrete argues, there was neither a modern conception of the separate public and private spheres nor of “male” and “female” domains in the Middle Ages; power was domestically rooted. Women exercised power “within the bonds of their traditional women’s roles.” Powerful women were understood as women, not as “men”; their sexuality and feminine nature was understood and stressed in the sources. These women were essentially *viragos*, women who—while generally weaker than

⁸⁵ Theodore Evergates, “Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne,” in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999), 109. See Amy Livingstone’s article in the same volume for similar conclusions about women in the Chartrain.

men—could act with “masculine” strength when necessary. This was made possible by a different medieval conception of human nature, which “posited a single set of gendered physiological properties and psychological traits that would be distributed in varying proportions to individual persons.... In other words, that some women, in anatomical terms, would be born with attributes which enabled them to perform in some capacities as well as, or even better than, some men, was built into the system.”⁸⁶ Powerful women were considered women in terms of both their sex *and* their gender. The Barnwell Annalist, for example, reported that Nicholaa de la Haye “a noble woman ... defended herself manfully.”⁸⁷ Similarly, Queen Matilda of Boulogne was a “woman of subtle courage and manly resolution” [“regina, astuti pectoris uirilisque constantiae femina”].⁸⁸ As the Latin indicates, she was a woman who possessed two qualities, one of which is usually considered “manly.” Furthermore, *virilis* does not always mean “manly.” It can also mean “bold,” “firm,” and “vigorous,” characteristics often associated with men, but not exclusively so, and carried the connotation of “decisive.” Neither woman, then, was a man, or a manly woman; they acted in a manly fashion on a particular occasion. It was the action, characteristic or personality trait, not the person who exhibited the quality, that was masculine. Within this system, women were to deal with captives and hostages when needed. They cannot be dismissed as exceptions to the so-called “rules.” They were not abnormal for taking on these roles and would be expected to do so.

⁸⁶ LoPrete, “The Gender of Lordly Women: The case of Adela of Blois,” in *Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Women. Pawns or Players?* ed. Christine Meek and Catherine Lawless. (Dublin, 2003), 90-110. See also her “Gendering Viragos: Medieval Perceptions of Powerful Women,” in *Victims or Viragos? Studies on Medieval and Early Modern Women*, vol. 4, ed. Christine Meek and Catherine Lawless (Dublin, 2005).

⁸⁷ “...mulier, Nicola nomine, viriliter se defendit.” *Annales Monastici*, 3:49. Richard of Devizes also suggests that Nicholaa’s actions can be manly. He reports that in an 1191 siege, while her husband was absent on crusade, Nicholaa “not thinking of anything feminine, guarded the castle manfully [nichil femineum cogitans, castellum viriliter custodiebat].” Richard of Devizes, *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, ed. John T. Appleby (London, 1963), 31.

⁸⁸ *GS*, 81.

What this indicates is that hostage and captive-taking, giving, and holding were not the sole prerogative of men or warriors, and women who performed these tasks were not abnormal, exceptions, or reconfigured as men because these activities were related to warfare and therefore off-limits to the average medieval female. Such practices were the right of rulers and lords (i.e., important people) regardless of sex or whether or not they participated in battles. Although these women may have not taken physical possession of enemy warriors, they could and did *hold* these warriors captive or hostage, exercise the right to determine their fate, the price of their ransom and freedom, the condition of their captivity, and the political and social implications of their confinement. Because these women were lordly women—women with the power to command, who shared with their husbands the rights and duties of rulership—they were considered capable of dealing with hostages and captives. Just as Adela of Blois in her capacity as countess of Blois could send troops to King Louis⁸⁹ and numerous women could negotiate a peace after a war,⁹⁰ these women, despite the fact that they probably never lifted a sword, were capable *as women* of arranging for the punishments, ransoms, and hostages, without their contemporaries—male or female—taking exception to their actions.

More importantly, the evidence presented here suggests that scholars need to continue in their re-evaluation of past modes of thinking about how women functioned in medieval society. The ruling practices of medieval monarchies and lordships need

⁸⁹ OV, 6:156-9.

⁹⁰ Numerous women in the Middle Ages served as active peacemakers during time of war. To list them all here would take too much space, but examples can be found in John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis*, 69-70 (Queen Adelaide of France); “The Chronicles of John and Richard of Hexham,” 69-70 (Queen Matilda of England); *Brut y Tywysogyon, or The Chronicle of the Princes, Red Book of Hergest Version*, ed. and trans. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1955), 190-3 (Joan, wife of Llywelyn of Wales). Blanche of Castile, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of Provence, and Adela of Blois, among many others, were all well-known peacemakers, as well. See Reginé Pernoud, *Blanche of Castile*, trans. Henry Noel (New York, 1975), 137-8, 140-3, 61; 209-11; Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, 183-4; Jane Martindale, “Eleanor of Aquitaine: The Last Years,” in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S.D. Church. (Woodbridge, UK, 1999), 145-6; Kimberly LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord (c. 1067-1137)* (Dublin, 2007), 175-6, 327-8, 385-6.

to be further re-examined in order to account for the greater movement of men and women across the so-called public/private divide. Hostage and captive-taking practices provide one more set of evidence that suggests scholars can no longer in good conscience argue that women were incapable of regularly exercising power in the medieval world.

Chapter Four:

“Pre Desiderio Delicti Uiri Sui:”¹ Female Hostage and Captive Ransomers and Negotiators

This chapter examines yet another way that women were involved in hostage and captivity that has yet to be explored in the scholarship: as hostage and captive ransomers and negotiators. The evidence presented here demonstrates that women could be involved in these processes in several capacities for variety of motivations. First and foremost, it was their men—often husbands, but also other kin—who were being held hostage or captive. As a result, women’s involvement was often a matter of practicality; the women were simply the only ones left to ransom them. But even in other cases, where a lord’s men or male kinfolk were also available to help with the process, women still played a fundamental part. Women appear to have been expected to take on this role, perhaps because, as noted in the previous chapter, with their husbands absent—away at war or unable to help—they often had to perform all the functions of “lord.” Elite and royal women in particular appear to have taken up these roles as a function of their positions as diplomats and mediators between their families. Furthermore, women’s association with the role of intercessor made the processes of ransoming hostages a natural choice for women. Women may also have been drawn into ransoming as a result of popular religious sentiment and a need to tap into a broader, societal movement revolving around the ransoming of captives taken in the Crusades. But, as will be demonstrated below, despite any general acceptance women may have had as ransomers, women in these positions caused a certain amount of anxiety among medieval chroniclers. Such anxieties—related to a contemporary belief in women’s overemotional nature and a fear of women’s potential sexual promiscuity—resulted in ambiguous representations of them as hostage and captive

¹ HN, 116.

ransomers and negotiators, a trend that spilled over into images of them as hostage caregivers as well.

The Battle of Lincoln and its aftermath again provides a good launching point for discussion. When it came time for Stephen and Robert to be ransomed, it was women who dominated the process. The most detailed account of the hostage negotiations for Stephen and Robert comes from William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella*.² William actually discusses the negotiations twice, adding the details "he was ignorant of" to his narrative later when he had confirmed them.³ Piecing together both narratives, it appears that "the earls"—William does not specify which, but they appear to have been those on Stephen's side—attempted to negotiate an equal exchange, and wrote to Mabel of Gloucester, Robert's wife, asking if this would be possible. She was eager to agree, but her husband cautioned against this. He argued that "a king and an earl were not of equal importance" but "he could consent to it if they would allow for the release of all who had been taken with him or on his account," namely William of Salisbury, Humphrey de Bohun, as well as others. To this, Stephen's earls could not agree because they would lose the ransom money. They tried to persuade Robert to abandon his sister's cause, but he refused, and when they threatened him with life-long imprisonment in Boulogne, he scoffed, "making light of their threats with a calm countenance," saying that if they sent him there, his wife and his men would send to the king of Ireland for help. Eventually, however, the Empress's adherents—and, one would assume, the Empress, although William does not mention her specifically—"urged the earl to do what he could [to free

² In fact, it is the only source to dwell on the negotiations at any length, and this is likely because of William of Malmesbury's closeness to Robert of Gloucester. Henry of Huntingdon the *Gesta Stephani* report the exchange only briefly. HH, 740. GS, 90.

³ William was very conscious of the need for care and accuracy. He apologizes for not putting these details in earlier because "I have always dreaded putting into writing, for transmission to posterity, anything I did not know to be established fact" [Semper quippe horrore habui aliquid ad posteros transmittendum stilo committere, quod nesciam solida ueritate subsistere.] HN, 122-3.

himself]...since he could not do what he would.”⁴ By November 1, an agreement was reached. The king was freed, leaving his wife Matilda and his son Eustace behind as guarantees of Robert’s release. When Robert was set free, he left his own son behind to guarantee the release of the queen and Eustace. Everyone acted according to plan, and the hostage exchange went smoothly.⁵ This narrative is supported by the continuator of John of Worcester’s account. He remarks that “The queen worked hard on the king’s behalf, and the countess of Gloucester on the earl’s, many messengers and reliable friends going to and fro.” According to the continuator, an agreement was reached whereby Robert of Gloucester would become part of Stephen’s government once Stephen was released, but Robert rejected this settlement because the empress would not consent to it.⁶ The narrative breaks off shortly after,⁷ and the chronicler never reports the outcome of the negotiations.

It is curious that Empress Matilda did not play a more significant role in securing the release of her brother, since he was her main military commander and it was on her behalf that he had been captured. She certainly had the most at stake politically in securing his release. Yet she is almost completely absent from all the accounts of the negotiations. One may deduce from William of Malmesbury that she played a minor role, saying that her followers, “after taking counsel,” told Robert to allow himself to be exchanged for Stephen. He does not state with whom they took counsel, but he suggests their concern was that, if Robert did not allow the exchange, the royalist party might besiege the Empress.⁸ It may be simply that William, writing at Robert of Gloucester’s behest, may have wanted to highlight Robert’s importance to the events he chronicles, and therefore purposefully diminishes the Empress’s role

⁴ Ibid., 116-123.

⁵ Ibid., 106-8.

⁶ JW, 3:302-5.

⁷ It does not resume until the year 1152.

⁸ HN, 118-19.

here. William, for example, claims that, although Robert “was first lured by flatteries, and afterwards even assailed by threats, he could not be induced to allow negotiations for his release to proceed behind his sister’s back.”⁹ This implies that the Empress may have been lurking in the background during the negotiations, but that in William’s eyes, all the action belonged to Robert. But William’s later emphasis on Queen Matilda and Mabel as the active agents in Robert and Stephen’s release indicates that it was convention or at least more common that the wife be consulted first in hostage negotiations. Practically speaking, it was the wife who would be most aware of issues like the ability to pay the actual ransom, and would likely have the most invested in seeing to her husband’s release. This could lead to the assumption that all wives wanted their husbands back. While no evidence has been found to suggest that a wife ever refused to pay her husband’s ransom,¹⁰ there is also nothing to suggest that it never happened, and some wives were undoubtedly more active than others in pressing for their husband’s release. Regardless of whether she chose to ransom or not, the implication is that the wife was one of the first people consulted on the issue of what to do.

A comment by Guibert of Nogent in his memoirs supports this point. He states that his mother despaired at Duke William of Normandy’s capture of his father after the Battle of Mortemer in 1054: “When the news was brought to the prisoner’s wife [that is, Guibert’s mother]....she felt a frightful pain and fainted. She then refused either to eat or to drink, and worry brought her to the brink of despair, which made sleeping even more difficult. Her grief was caused not by the enormity of the ransom but by the prospect of an unredeemable captivity.”¹¹ The news of the capture of

⁹ “Quauis enim primo blanditiis inuitatus, post etiam minis lacesseretur, numquam tamen inflexus est ut de liberatione sua preter conscientiam sororis tractaretur.” Ibid., 106-7.

¹⁰ There is, however, at least one example of a mother refusing to ransom her sons. See below.

¹¹ Guibert of Nogent, *A Monk’s Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, trans. Paul J. Archambault (University Park, PA, 1996), 40.

Guibert's father is brought before his wife, and it is she who is distraught over issues of payment and the fear of his perpetual captivity. Guibert's father was apparently eventually ransomed—he was present at Guibert's birth, and died sometime in 1055—but Guibert does not say by whom or under what circumstances. Given that Guibert states that it was his mother who was consulted about the ransom, it may have been she who paid for her husband's ransom.

Queen Matilda's negotiations for her husband's release were not her first experience with captive negotiations. In 1141, Earl Henry of Huntingdon, son of the King of Scotland, travelled with his wife to visit Stephen in England. On his return to Scotland, however, he was captured by the ever-troublesome Earl Ranulf of Chester, who claimed certain Scottish lands—Carlisle and Cumberland—as his by right of inheritance. Matilda intervened on Henry's behalf, and Stephen had him released and returned home.¹² In fact, women of the “Anarchy” era appear to have been able captive negotiations. The Empress Matilda, too, was an experienced with captive negotiator. When her son Henry II took one of Thomas Becket's messengers captive and tortured and imprisoned him, it was the Empress Matilda who wrote Henry and demanded the messenger's release.¹³

Women also had a significant history as hostage and captive ransomers and negotiators outside the context of the Anarchy. This was especially true in the Latin East. There were no public funds from which to get ransom money in the Holy Land, and it was not until the thirteenth century that the vassals of the Latin Kingdom were required to contribute to a king's ransom and vice versa.¹⁴ As a result, the process of

¹² “...reginae precibus commonitus, ab intentato periculo tutatum eum patri et patriae restituit.” Simeon of Durham, *Opera Omnia*, 2:306.

¹³ *The Empress Matilda*, 172.

¹⁴ Vassals without heirs were required to give one percent of their fiefs to the king's ransom, and if necessary, sell land to raise the money. Friedman, *Encounters Between Enemies*, 78.

ransoming was a private one left up to families.¹⁵ Because men were often at war, the women left behind not only had to manage estates in their male kin's absence, but also were often the only ones available to ransom captives and hostages after battle, as well. This duty often fell to the wife in particular. King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, taken captive in 1123 while patrolling the borders of Edessa, was ransomed through the efforts of his wife, Queen Morphia, with the help of Count Joscelin I of Edessa. Not only did she have to promise a very large amount of money, but she gave up her own daughter, Iveta, as a hostage to guarantee the agreement.¹⁶ Orderic Vitalis also gave her credit for attempting and nearly pulling off a daring rescue of her husband, although no Eastern sources mention her involvement in the plan.¹⁷

The Battle of Hattin on July 4th, 1187, in which most of the Latin Kingdom's army was either killed or captured, made many women ransomers. An Old French continuation of William of Tyre reports that although King Guy de Lusignan of Jerusalem negotiated the terms of his own release from captivity, it was Queen Sybilla, who wrote to Saladin to remind him that he needed to release her husband as he had promised after the surrender of Ascalon.¹⁸ Some wives appear to have gone to

¹⁵ This meant that captivities could often last a long time. See below for Reynald de Chatillon's lengthy imprisonment. Ibid., 85.

¹⁶ Joscelin's son and fifteen other people were also given as hostages to secure the bargain. William of Tyre reports that when Baldwin paid all the money, his daughter was returned to him. For Morphia's role in the negotiations, see Matthew of Edessa, *Armenia and the Crusades, Tenth to Twelfth Centuries: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*, trans. and intro. Ara Edmond Dostourian (Maryland, 1993), 232-3; William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. Emily Atwater Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York, 1943) 2:21.

¹⁷ "About this time the queen of Jerusalem, who was an Armenian by birth, sent a hundred trustworthy Armenians in Turkish clothes with Turkish weapons to help her husband. When they reached Kharput [where he was being held with others also captured] they entered the tower and were of great help to the Franks because of their knowledge of the language and the cunning ways of the Turks." OV, 6: 114-15. The rescue attempt was initially successful, but when Balik learned of the escape he chased Baldwin down and recaptured him, although Count Joscelin, who had been in captivity with Baldwin, escaped. William of Tyre, Fulcher of Chartres, and Matthew of Edessa all mention the Armenian rescue attempt, but all of them imply that this adventure was spontaneously conceived by the Armenians themselves. William of Tyre, 1:541-44; Matthew of Edessa, 229-30.

¹⁸ "...Queen Sybilla, the wife of King Guy, who was in Tripoli, wrote to Saladin to say that he should abide by the agreements that he had made with her husband when he had surrendered Ascalon to him, and that it was high time he released him. Saladin wrote back saying that he would gladly do so. He sent word to Damascus with instructions that they should send him the king and ten captive knights that

extreme lengths to find their missing husbands. Ida, wife of Count Baldwin of Hainaut, unsure of her husband's fate, travelled to the Holy Land in search of him, facing numerous difficulties along the way. According to Gilbert of Mons:

Therefore, it also ought not be passed by in silence that Countess Ida heard about the death of her lord and, as she was uncertain if he had been killed or was being held captive, esteeming God and her husband, she unhesitatingly went to those regions with great effort and heavy expenses. Because of this, she, previously unsure about her husband, returned even more uncertain. This pious wife went often to Rome for the sake of prayer. Accordingly, when she was returning through the Ardennes from a pilgrimage, where we had allods near the church of Saint-Hubert, the count of Chiny attacked her violently, wishing to capture her. She fled to the church of Saint-Hubert where she remained for some time until she could cross safely from there into Hainaut.¹⁹

Ida's willingness to travel all the way to the Latin East to find her husband demonstrates not only the hardships women might endure to find captured husbands, but also the dedication some wives felt towards them. Aristocratic marriages did not have to remain loveless just because they started as arranged unions.

Mothers and sisters, too, bore the brunt of ransoming. Stephanie of Milly, Humphrey IV of Toron's mother—herself a ransomed captive of the siege of Jerusalem—negotiated with Saladin for her son's release from captivity. Stephanie promised Saladin the important crusader castles of Kerak and Montreal in exchange for her son, but the castle garrisons refused to surrender, and Stephanie sent her son back to Saladin. Saladin apparently took pity on her and released him once more.²⁰ When Louis IX was captured in Egypt in 1250, he empowered his wife to negotiate on his behalf, and she surrendered the city of Damietta to secure his release and the peaceful evacuation of Christian forces. She also undertook the preparations for their departure.²¹ When Joscelin III de Courtenay, count of Edessa, was captured and

he would chose." *The Conquest of Jerusalem and the Third Crusade: Sources in Translation*, trans. Peter W. Edbury (Burlington, VT, 1996), 77.

¹⁹ Gilbert of Mons, *Chronicle of Hainaut*, trans. Laura Napran (Rochester, NY, 2005), 30.

²⁰ Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1987), 468-9.

²¹ Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusade*, trans. M.R.B. Shaw (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1963), 249-50.

imprisoned after Nur ad-Din took Edessa in 1164, his ransom was 50,000 *dinars*. His sister, Agnes, paid his ransom, although she likely had help from the royal treasury, given the large sum.²² In one particular case, a mother not only negotiated the release of her sons, helping to raise the money for their ransoms, but also served as a hostage in their stead when they went to gather the remaining money.²³

Women's ransoming efforts were by no means limited to family members, however. Many had political reasons for redeeming others. Maria of Antioch—daughter of Constance of Antioch, ruler of Antioch from 1130 onward, and wife to Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus—helped Baldwin IV pay his ransom to Saladin. Her husband Manuel had recently died, and she was serving as regent for her son, Alexius II, so it may be that as a Westerner in a foreign and often hostile court, she was looking for support from the Kingdom of Jerusalem.²⁴ Maria also appears to have previously helped in the ransom of Reynald de Chatillon. The ever troublesome Reynald was captured during a raid in 1160 by Muslim forces and was confined at Aleppo. He was finally ransomed by Manuel in 1176 for 120,000 gold dinars—an

²² He was released from captivity in 1176. He was unmarried at the time of his capture, so this likely explains his sister's role in ransoming him. William of Tyre, Bk. 21, Ch. 11, pg. 414. Agnes de Courtenay had an interesting life, and her connections to the royal family likely made accessing the royal treasury for her brother possible. Nor was she the only one in her family to have dealt with the imprisonment of a close family member. In 1150, her father, Count Joscelin II of Edessa was captured, blinded, and imprisoned in Aleppo. On hearing of his capture, Agnes's mother, the Countess of Edessa, sold their domains to the Byzantine Empire because she was unable to defend them, and then moved to Antioch. See Bernard Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem (1100-1190)" in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford, 1978), 143-74.

²³ Walter of Beirut and two of his brothers (Guy and Bernard) were captured in the 1160s. Walter's mother, however, was not immediately released, and her captivity was used as leverage against Walter. Yvonne Friedman reports as follows: "[Walter's] mother, Maria, administered the lordship in his absences and organized the negotiations for her sons' ransoms. She paid part of the money and freed her sons but had to render herself hostage for the balance. After his return Walter tried to raise the money to liberate his mother. To his chagrin he found not only did the king [Amalric] not contribute to the sum, he actually put pressure in Walter to sell his fief, Beirut, to him, and saw to it that nobody dared to lend the ransomed captive money to pay for his ransom." The brothers eventually sold the lordship to King Amalric, and he paid the remainder of the ransom. She died a month later. Friedman, *Encounters Between Enemies*, 82-3. Bernard Hamilton, *The Leper King and His Heirs* (Cambridge 2002), 91. For more on the lords of Beirut, and on this episode, see also Hans Meyer, "The Wheel of Fortune: Seignorial Vicissitudes under Kings Fulk and Baldwin III of Jerusalem," *Speculum* 65.4 (1990): 860-877.

²⁴ Hamilton, *The Leper King and His Heirs*, pg. 160.

extraordinary sum—due to Reynald’s relationship to Maria of Antioch (he was her step-father).²⁵

Women in the West also sent money East to help ransom captives in the Holy Land, sometimes as a charitable act, other times for more specific causes such as the ransom of a friend or family member. This often happened through donations to organizations like the Hospitallers, a charitable and military order in the Holy Land known for its ransoming activities.²⁶ When Christiana, daughter of Robert of Haifa, became a *consoror* of the Hospitallers in 1201, she gave them a charter in which she donated money that was to be used in part to ransom captives. The amounts pledged could vary, as could the terms under which the money was given. In 1212, Ferrand de Portugal and his wife Jeanne, count and countess of Flanders and Hainault, gave the Hospitallers 700 *livres* for the redemption of Gerard of Mons, as long as it was done by Christmas. Rosceline de la Ferté, on the other hand, gave less stipulation, promising rents worth ten *livres* per annum if they freed her son Gerard.²⁷ The Spanish Order of Merced also received many donations from women, often—but not always—in conjunction with their husbands. In fact, significant portions of the early success of the Order can be attributed to women and their families’ donations. In 1232, Maria, the widow of Guillem Rubió of Barcelona, gave 30 s. in her will to the redemption of captives. Often, land was given to redemptive organizations, which—while not used directly for the ransom of captives—demonstrates that women supported their activities. In 1234, the widow of a butcher in Majorca donated two residences for the use of the Mercedarian community there. That same year in

²⁵ Ibid, 111-2. William of Tyre reports only that Reynald was released “when a large ransom was paid by his friends,” but neglects to mention who the friends are. William of Tyre, 2: 414.

²⁶ For a general history of the Hospitallers from the Crusades to the present, see Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St. John* (London, 1999). For the role of women in the Hospitallers, see *Hospitaller Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anthony Luttrell and Helen J. Nicholson. (Burlington, VT, 2006).

²⁷ Friedman, *Encounters Between Enemies*, 200-204.

Gerona, Ferrer de Portell and his wife Escalona created a charter in which they gave all of their houses and vineyards to the Merced community after their deaths. The nobleman Peregrino de Artosilla and his wife donated plowland, a vineyard and several houses to Sarrión in 1242; two years later, Maria of Guissona gave the Order's foundation at Lérida 12 d. The Merced foundation at Santa Maria de Olivar was a family effort. Two charters from 1260 and 1266 name Gil de Artosilla (brother of the above-mentioned Peregrino), his wife, and their two sons as the donors.²⁸ Such donations continued after the order was firmly established. Women also joined the Mercedarian Order to receive spiritual benefits, an activity that was also often family based. Ferrar de Portell and his wife; Domingo of Teruel, his wife and his mother; and Bonifaci Escribà and his wife are just a few of the many who sought comfort from and association with redemptive orders.²⁹ While not an activity linked exclusively to women, women desired a connection with ransoming activities and orders in a multiplicity of ways, indicating that these activities held real social and spiritual value for them, a way to express religious belief and piety. As James Brodman has noted, activities like donating money and land for ransoming purposes "preface the foundation of the medieval caritative movement. The impulse to succor the needy...was a manifestation of popular religion." Removed from the church not only because of their status as a part of the laity but also as members of the weaker sex held in suspicion by an largely antagonistic clergy, women may have turned to the redemptive and military orders because they were primarily founded by laymen, despite these orders' often hostile aversion to female associates. The crusading and ransoming Orders themselves seem to have acknowledged a special connection between women and ransoming by their selection of patron saints. Although many

²⁸ Brodman, 16, 17, 20, 21, 27.

²⁹ Ibid 87-8.

saints of both genders were linked to the orders, the Templars chose the Virgin Mary as their patroness, as did the Teutonic Knights who also had Saint Elisabeth of Thuringia as a major patroness, and the Order of Merced's patrons were Saints Eulàlia and Mary.

Women's efforts to release hostages and captives were not, however, directed only eastward or related to the Crusades. There seems to have been a similar long-standing tradition in the West, as well, a parallel tradition that has previously been unexplored. Family relationships seem to be important to this process. Mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives are all depicted negotiating on their male kinfolk's behalf. It was again at times of crisis, when husbands, sons, or other male relatives were incapacitated, dead, or unavailable to help, that women most often had to step in to negotiate the release of a hostage or captive. After the defeat and death of Earl Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, at the Battle of Evesham on August 4th, 1265, his wife, Eleanor—sister of the victorious Henry III of England—was thrust into a negotiating role of extreme importance.³⁰ While her eldest son, like her husband, had died in battle, her youngest son Guy was alive, injured and in captivity. He was held in Windsor Castle until 1266, but Eleanor seems to have interceded and arranged for his safe passage out of the country and into exile in Bigorre.³¹ Queen Gerberga of France

³⁰ This was not the first time Eleanor had been at the forefront of politics and war. During her husband's prominence in England, she courted important burgesses of the towns of the Cinque Ports in efforts to gain their support for the baronial cause. Her correspondence, too, was used to help her husband's efforts: in 1265, she frequently wrote, among others, to Richard Gravesend, bishop of Lincoln, a known support of the baronial cause, and Thomas Cantilupe, the baronial chancellor. She was also placed in charge of Dover Castle, one of the most important strategic military castles in England. Margaret Wade Labarge, *Mistress, Maids and Men, Baronial Life in the Thirteenth Century* (London, 2003), 50-1.

³¹ As Labarge notes, "the responsibility for salvaging any fragment of the Montfort fortunes was hers alone." She also was instrumental in the negotiations that returned the members of her and her husband's household to the good graces of king. Ibid. For Simon de Montfort's life and that of his wife, as well as analysis of their relationship, see J.R. Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge, 1995). Of Eleanor, he writes: "If Montfort's energy, ambition and lack of inherited advantages drove him to make his own way forwards, never less than his own man, Eleanor remained very much her own woman, capable, for example, of running a great household, pursuing her family interests in

balanced the fate of both her husband and her sons. In 945, her husband King Louis IV was captured by the Normans. Unable to gain his release on her own, she solicited the help of Duke Hugh the Great, who negotiated Louis's release in exchange for one of Louis's and Gerboga's sons. According to Flodoard, she refused to give up her eldest son Lothair, but sent her younger son Charles along with Guy bishop of Soissons, the son of the count of Anjou.³² When her husband, the notorious Thomas of Marle, refused to release some merchants he had captured even on his deathbed, it was Milesende and her sons who were left to face the pressure of King Louis the Fat to free them and give up a large part of their wealth.³³

Perhaps the most famous case involves Eleanor of Aquitaine's efforts to release her son King Richard of England from his captivity in Germany. On his journey home from the Holy Land, he had been taken prisoner around Christmas 1192 near Vienna, by Leopold V of Austria, who accused Richard of arranging the murder of his cousin Conrad of Montferrat.³⁴ Leopold then gave Richard to Emperor, Henry VI, who eventually imprisoned him in Trifels Castle. Eleanor personally worked hard to raise the 150,000 mark ransom, going so far as to write the Pope three times to beg for his assistance in releasing her son,³⁵ and she eventually travelled to Germany herself to help negotiate his release.³⁶ The Empress Matilda's close relationship with

Angoulême, and bargaining with the king for her rights after her second husband's death. She was King John's daughter to the last." 39.

³² Flodoard, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*, ed. and trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and Steven Fanning (Buffalo, NY, 2004); 42; Richer, *Histoire de France (888-995)*, ed. and trans. [into French] Robert Latouche (Paris, 1930-7), 1:202-5. This event is also discussed at length in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, which will be discussed below. GND, 1:112-15.

³³ Suger, 144.

³⁴ One Richard I, one may start, with John Gillingham's extensive writings with good bibliographies, *Richard the Lionheart* (New York, 1978); *Richard Coeur de Lion: Kingship, Chivalry and War in the Twelfth Century*, (London, 1994); *Richard I* (New Haven, 1999).

³⁵ *Foedera, Conventiones, Literae...et Acta Publica*, ed. by Thomas Rymer (London, 1704-35) 1:72-8. For English translations, see *The Letters of the Queens of England, 1100-1547*, ed. Anne Crawford (Dover, NH, 1994), 36-43.

³⁶ Ralph V. Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine in the Government of her Sons Richard and John," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York, 2002),

her son Henry allowed her to advocate with him for the liberation of his brother, Geoffrey, after his capture by Theobald of Blois sometime in the early 1150s. According to the *Deeds of the Lords of Amboise*, Theobald required the destruction of the castle of Chaumont-sur-Loire in order to release Geoffrey and the other captives. Henry was originally reluctant to concede because he and his brother had been at odds, but she convinced him otherwise.³⁷ Queen Eleanor of Provence was instrumental in convincing her husband, King Henry III of England, to release Gaston de Béarn, the leader of the Gascon rebels, whom Simon de Montfort had captured in December 1249.³⁸ Likewise in 1256, she along with her husband provided the money necessary (14,500 marks) to release her brother Thomas of Savoy from prison in Turin.³⁹ These activities were not limited to queens, either. Beatrice of Roucy, mother of Rotrou II/III of Nogent, who often acted as regent for her son when he was absent, organized the negotiations for his release after his capture in the conflicts between Henry I and Louis VI in 1111-12.⁴⁰ Likewise, Roger le Poer's mother, Matilda of Ramsbury,⁴¹

85. Jane Martindale, "Eleanor of Aquitaine: The Last Years," in *King John: New Interpretations*. ed. S.D. Church (Woodbridge, UK, 1999), 145-7.

³⁷ *Chroniques des Comtes d'Anjou*, 127-31; Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York, 1996)

³⁸ He was apparently Eleanor's relative. CM, 5:103-4. Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, 62.

³⁹ CM, 5:568; translation found in Matthew Paris, *English History, 1235-1237*, 3:165. Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, 143-4.

⁴⁰ Kimberly A. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois*, 437.

⁴¹ As Marjorie Chibnall notes, the name "Matilda of Ramsbury" appears to be a later interpolation, and it is not clear that the name was provided by Orderic. She does suggest, though, that this does not mean the identification is incorrect. Also, even in the manuscripts that do not give her name, Roger le Poer's mother is mentioned, clearly indicating Orderic's belief in her presence there. The problem, however, is that none of the sources in England mention her presence; only Orderic, in Normandy, places her at the siege, which makes her actual presence there highly suspect. Even if she was there, clearly his report of her speech is fabricated; he would have had no way of knowing what she had said in surrendering the castle. But even if Orderic's placement of Matilda there is tenuous at best, the fact that he chooses to insert her into the narrative is worth noting for several reasons. First, Orderic does not find it unusual that Matilda would be at a siege defending a castle along with her male peers. Second, he also does not seem to bat an eyelash at the fact that Matilda is the one who decides to save/ransom her son through the surrender of the castle. Third, despite Orderic's lack of shock at Matilda's intervention, he does indicate that her efforts to save her son were unappreciated by her male companions, and this speaks to my argument below concerning the "weakness" of women in negotiating ransoms. OV, 6:533, nt. 2.

negotiated the surrender of Devizes in exchange for the ransom of her son.⁴²

Though wives seem to have borne the bulk of the responsibility to negotiate their husband's release from imprisonment, indicating their previously unexplored importance to the process, their task was far from easy. One of the earliest examples, that of the unnamed wife⁴³ of Rainer duke of Lorraine⁴⁴ comes from the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, where it is told twice.⁴⁵ Although the occurrence of this event is debatable,⁴⁶ it does suggest that medieval women were responsible for ransoming and negotiating the release of captives. The first version is told by William of Jumièges, who summarizes many of the details provided by the more nearly contemporary Dudo of Saint-Quentin. Rainer, William reports, attacked some Danes and attempted to drive them out of his lands. But he ended up being captured instead and was "thrown into a ship with his feet bound together." Luckily for Rainer, his soldiers had captured twelve Danes in the fight, and they presented these to Rainer's wife, "with the intention that they should be exchanged for their lord." The outcome was successful: "Rainer's wife sent messengers to the Danes and obtained her husband in exchange for a great weight of gold; the Danes whom she held captive were set free."⁴⁷ The second, expanded version, written by Robert of Torigni,

⁴² Ibid., 6:532-5.

⁴³ Rainer had two wives during his lifetime: Hersende and Alberada.

⁴⁴ William actually calls him "Rainer Longneck, Duke of Hainault and Hesbaye," but this is incorrect. His grandson, Rainer III was called Longneck, and Rainer I was likely never duke of Hainault. His existence, however, is attested in the *Annales Fuldenses*.

⁴⁵ The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* is often repetitive because it is a composite. It was originally written in c. 1070 by William of Jumièges, who based the work on an even earlier source, Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Libri III de moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, written in the late 10th century. The story of Rainer is first told there. The *Gesta* was then added to by Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni in the 12th century.

⁴⁶ As Eric Christiansen notes in his translation of Dudo's text, the story seems partially to adapt a story of Danish captivity told elsewhere and parodies events in the life of one of Rainer's descendants. This does not mean the story is untrue, however, or devalued as an indicator of acceptable female behavior is any less. Dudo of St. Quentin, *History of the Normans*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, UK, 1998), 190, nt.152.

⁴⁷ "...Rainerius Longi Colli, Hainoensis siue Hasbaniensis dux, cum multitudine graui bellum inferens et eos a terra exturbare cupiens, extinctis suorum quampluribus, ipse uictus capitur compedibusque mancipatus in naui captiuus detruditur. In illa uero pugna a Rainerii militibus .xii. Danorum bellatores capiuntur, quos uxori eius representantes decreuerunt pro eis reciproce suum dominum recipere. Qua

essentially reinserts Dudo's original details,⁴⁸ and better indicates the difficulties wives faced. The anonymous Danish attackers are really men of Rollo, the founder of the Norman dynasty. When Rainer's wife, now depicted as extremely distraught at her husband's imprisonment, sends messengers to Rollo begging for her husband's return in exchange for the captured Danes, Rollo at first refuses and threatens violence, saying "I shall not return Rainer to you, but I intend to cut off his head, unless you first return my men and also swear an oath on your Christian faith to give me all the gold and silver of his duchy and in addition the tribute due from your province." Rainer's wife, "distressed by the menacing words," immediately sent the captured men back with all the gold and silver she could find, even "hand[ing] over the precious metal dedicated to sacred altars...." In the end, Rollo, "moved by pity and the humble requests of the suppliants," frees Rainer and makes peace with him, returning to his wife half the goods she had sent.⁴⁹ Although the story still has a happy ending—Rainer is set free and Rollo shows generosity—Rainer's wife is forced to scramble to save her husband.

Nor was Rainer's wife the only one to work hard for her captive husband's

denique spe ex toto non sunt frustrati. Nam uxor eius legatos ad Danos mittens et ipsa suum uirum dato pro eo magno auri pondere recepit et Dani qui ab ipsa tenebantur dimittuntur liberi." GND, 1:32-5.

⁴⁸ Dudo, 33-4.

⁴⁹ "Quadam igitur die, Rainerio loco insidiarum clam commorante super Dacos cupiente irruere, Daci eum hinc inde congesti uallauerunt, eumque nimium debellantem manciparunt, uinctumque ad Rollonem duxerunt. Ipsa namque die Raineride, Dacorum ut caperent aliquos, latebris commorantes inuaserunt duodecim milites precipuos Rollonis et constanti uirtute ceperunt. Tunc uxor Rainerii, flens et eiulans super eo, conuocatis principibus suis, misit ad Rollonem, ut pro .xii. comitibus captis redderet sibi suum seniore. Ilico Rollo, suscepta legatione, remisit ad eam dicens: 'Non reddetur tibi Rainerius, sed decollabitur, nisi reddideris prius meos comites, mihi insuper dederis quicquid auri est et argenti sui ducaminis, cum iuramento Christiane religionis, quin etiam tributum istius regionis.' Mox coniunx Rainerii, lugibri legatione afflicta, comites captos Rolloni remisit, aurumque et argentum quod usquam inuenire potuit. Quin etiam illud quod erat sacris altaribus concessum, pariterque uectigal illius ducaminis, cum iureiurando, quod plus metalli non haberet nec exigere posset; supplicibus ueris et deprecatiuis misit ad Rollonem, ut redderet sibi suum uirem. Ipse autem motus pietate uocibusque pacificis affatur eum: '...Uxor tua et principes tui quicquid auri et argenti recuperare potuerunt pro te, miserent mihi. Dimidium exaggerati muneris reddam tibi, teque tue remittam uxori. Hinc mansuescens requiesce, et nullatenus sit discordia sed sempiterna inter me et te pax et amicitia.' His dictis, Rainerii crura soluuntur compedibus. Statimque Rollo sibi federatum, muneribusque et donis premaximis ditatum, quin etiam reddita medietate legatorum munerum, ad uxorem suam remisit Rainerium." GND, 1:48-51.

release. William of Jumièges reports that Queen Gerberga first asked for help releasing her husband from her father,⁵⁰ who refused because he was too involved with his own affairs; she was forced to seek help from Duke Hugh the Great, who freed Louis from the Normans, but kept him imprisoned for another year himself.⁵¹ Orderic Vitalis writes that in 1136 when Frederick of Étampes was “languishing in prison,” his pregnant wife, whom he does not name, travelled all the way to Paris to see King Louis and, suffering an injury while riding, “died in a difficult childbirth” shortly thereafter.⁵² Jeanne of Flanders, co-ruler of Flanders along with her husband, Ferrand of Portugal, spent nearly thirteen years attempting to negotiate the release of her husband after his capture by King Philip Augustus of France at the Battle of Bouvines in 1214. In 1220, she took out a loan of 34,000 *livres* from Italian financiers, and even sought the help of Pope Honorius III. But neither Philip nor his son Louis would agree to release Ferrand, and it was not until 6 January 1227 that Louis, now Louis VIII of France, at the request of his wife Blanche of Castile liberated Ferrand.⁵³ The wife of Gruffydd, son of Llywelyn the Great, was forced to travel to London to negotiate his release from captivity.⁵⁴ Milesende, Thomas of Marle’s wife, was forced after his death to give up “the greatest part of Thomas’s treasures” when she released the merchants he had held captive. The release of the hostages, the giving of the large sum of money, and her husband’s death while he was the king’s captive all imply that she was in position of weakness and forced to make peace with the king at her own and her son’s loss. According to a rare surviving hostage exchange agreement,

⁵⁰ William is actually wrong here; her father, Henry the Fowler had died in 936, well before these events took place. Flodoard, however, mentions an embassy from Gerberga to her brother Otto in 946, and it could be that this is to what William refers. Flodoard, 44.

⁵¹ Richer, 1:206-7. He was held by Count Theobald, the Trickster, of Tours.

⁵² OV, 6:476-7.

⁵³ Karen Nicholas, “Countesses as Rulers in Flanders,” in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia, 1999), 129.

⁵⁴ Gruffydd had been captured by his brother Dafydd in the dispute that had followed the death of their father. When King Henry III of England successfully invaded Wales in 1241, Dafydd was forced to hand over Gruffydd to Henry, who took him back to London and imprisoned in the Tower of London.

Gruffydd's wife, Senena, agreed to pay King Henry III six hundred marks for the release of her husband and their eldest son, Owain, so that Henry could hear their land dispute case in court. She handed over her two youngest sons, Dafydd and Rhodri, to the king as hostages in an effort to ensure her part of the bargain, and further promised to maintain the peace between Gruffydd and his brother Dafydd, with whom he had the dispute, once the matter was settled. In the end, however, the negotiations were unsuccessful.⁵⁵

Some women, like Joan, wife of Llywelyn the Great of Wales and illegitimate daughter of King John of England, were well-known for their intercessions on the behalf of hostages and captives and had more success than those mentioned above. Joan was instrumental in the relationship between her father and her husband, which was rocky at best. John was alarmed by Llywelyn's growing power and consolidation of Wales, and they were constantly at war from roughly 1210-11 onward. In 1212, John began an invasion of Wales by hanging Welsh hostages given to him the previous year. He was initially successful, but by 1214 was losing the ground he had gained. At some point during this year, Joan was sent to her father to negotiate, and was able to gain some concessions for the Welsh. In December 1214 at Monmouth, John released four Welsh hostages at her behest, and in January 1215 he surrendered another hostage to her.⁵⁶

But family was not the only reason for women to help in the ransom of captives and the evidence indicates that women may have had a general attraction to involvement in such processes. Lordly obligation, personal sentiment, women's status

⁵⁵ Henry appears not to have kept his part of the bargain and refused to give the two men up. Gruffydd later attempted to escape the tower, but died in the process. Matthew Paris included the entire treaty between Senena and Henry as well as a charter of surety by Roger de Montalt in CM, 4:316-9.

⁵⁶ Louise J. Wilkinson, "Joan, Wife of Llywelyn the Great," in *Thirteenth Century England X*, ed. Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell, and Robin Frame (Woodbridge, 2005), 86, note 35. For a more general background on Llywelyn the Great, see R.R. Davies, *Conquest, Coexistence and Change: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford, 1987).

as diplomats on the national and international scene, and religious motivation all played a role in women's choices to ransom. Because male warriors served in the retinues of female lords and important ladies, when these warriors were captured, the women might make efforts to release their followers. William Marshal, who was ransomed from the harsh captivity was discussed in chapter one, was ransomed by Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, in whose retinue he had been travelling and whose safety he had helped guarantee. Impressed by his bravery and chivalry, she retained him in her household until 1170, and then transferred him to her son Henry's household, where he began his remarkable rise to fame.⁵⁷ Eleanor, who had herself been held prisoner by her own husband for sixteen years,⁵⁸ perhaps felt an affinity with other noble captives. Roger of Howden reports that after the death of her husband, she traveled around the kingdom, ordering the release of prisoners, for "she had learned from her own experience that captivity is troublesome to mankind, and that it is most joyous to the minds to be freed from it."⁵⁹ This act, however, was for more than personal reasons; it also seems to have been for political purposes. Roger of Howden

⁵⁷ David Crouch, *William Marshal*, 35-7.

⁵⁸ She had joined and probably instigated the rebellion of her sons against her husband.

⁵⁹ "Interim Alienor regina ... reginalem curiam circumducens, de civitate in civitatem et de castello in castellum, sicut ei placuit, profecta est; et missis legatis per universos comitatus Angliae, praecepit captivos omnes a carceribus et captionibus liberos reddi pro anima Henrici domini sui: ut a propria persona sua argumentum eliceret, captiones molestas esse hominibus, et jocundissimam animae refocillationem ab ipsis emergere. Praeterea praecepit, ex mandato ducis filii sui, quod omnes qui capti fuerant pro foresta liberarentur quieti, et ut omnes uthlegati pro foresta ad pacem redirent de praecedentibus forisfactis forestae quieti; et ut omnes alii qui capti fuerant, et retenti per commune volluntatem regus, vel justitiae ejus, qui non errant retenti per commune rectum comitatus vel hundredi, vel per appellationem, essent quieti; et illi qui per commune rectum sunt retenti, si plegios invenire possunt standi ad rectum, si quis adversus eos loqui voluerit, liberentur; sin autem juramentum praestant standi ad rectum si quis adversus eos loqui voluerit, per tantum liberentur: et illi qui per appellationem sunt retenti pro quacunque turpi causa, si plegios standi ad rectum invenire possunt, ut plenum inde fiat, liberentur: et illi qui uthlegati sunt per commune rectum sine appellatione, per justitias redeant ad pacem, ita quod plegios inveniant standi ad rectum, si quis versus eos loqui voluerit. Si autem per appellationem retenti sunt, si fecerint pacem cum adversariis suis, redeant ad pacem: et omnes illi qui retenti sunt per appellationem illorum qui se malefactores esse cognoscunt, liberentur quieti, et illi malefactores, quibus pro suis probationibus concessa sunt membra et vita, abjurent terram domini Ricardi et abscedant: et illi malefactores qui sine concessione vitae et membrorum alios appellant propria voluntate, in prisone custodiantur, donec aliud inde habeatur consilium." Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 3:4-5.

pairs Eleanor's actions with an oath of loyalty to the new king, Eleanor's son Richard.⁶⁰ Henry died while at war with his sons, and it may have been that, in light of Richard's recent rebellion, Eleanor felt the need to help her son solidify his new reign and the loyalty of his new subjects by demonstrating his clemency and settling any domestic unrest that may have resulted from the recent war. The specific references to abuses of forest law, common law, and outlawry in Howden's text also suggest that Eleanor was correcting the perceived legal "abuses" of her husband, particularly those concerning unjust imprisonment without proper recourse to the law or courts. Her actions in progressing through the kingdom may also have been coordinated in conjunction with Richard's settling of foreign disputes; at the time of Eleanor's release of the prisoners, Richard was in France making peace with the French king.⁶¹

Evidence from the life of Queen Eleanor of Castile also suggests that queens in particular may have been associated with ransoming for political reasons, especially in diplomatic situations, and once again suggests the blending of domestic, national and international concerns within the role of queen. In 1288, while her husband Edward I negotiated the release of the prince of Salerno, Charles II of Naples, from captivity at the hands of the King Peter III of Aragon, Eleanor prepared lodging for the prince and kept his wife, Maria of Hungary, informed of the negotiation's progress.⁶² In both of the Eleanors' cases, it can be seen again how monarchy split into kingship and queenship creates a false dichotomy. Both Eleanors used the release of hostages and captives to solidify the domestic or international authority of the monarchy in which

⁶⁰ "Et praecepit, quod unusquisque liberorum hominum totius regni jurasset, quod fidem portabit domino Ricardo regi Angliae, filio domini regis Henrici, et dominae Alienor reginae, de vita et membris suis, et honore terreno, sicut ligio domino suo, contra omnes homines et foeminas qui vivere possunt et mori, et quod ei justitiabiles erunt, et auxilium ei praestabunt ad pacem et justitiam suam per omnia servandam." Ibid., 5.

⁶¹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁶² John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*, 46. The *Records of the Wardrobe and Household, 1286-89*, contain the relevant documents.

they shared as mother and wife. As Queen Mother and Queen, the Eleanors were one source of power and authority within the larger framework of monarchy that could be called upon to settle hostage and captive situations.

Saint Margaret of Scotland, wife of King Malcolm III of Scotland, was also known as a mass ransomer of captives and hostages like Eleanor of Aquitaine, going so far as to send out emissaries in search for them. Her motivations, however, seem to have been cast as religious and patriotic rather than political. Her *vita*, written for her daughter Queen Matilda of Scotland, wife of King Henry I of England, praises her for her efforts:

Who, moreover, would be able to calculate the numbers of those captives from the Anglo-Saxon nation for whom she paid ransom? How often and how freely would she restore to liberty those who had been reduced to slavery by the violence of the enemy! For she had sent out her secret explorers throughout the provinces of Scotland so that she could find out which captives were enduring the harshest conditions or who were treated more inhumanly than others, and these spies would secretly report back to her where the captives and by whom they were being maltreated, and she, who empathized with them from the bottom of her heart, hastened to restore liberty to the ones she had redeemed.⁶³

Margaret's *vita* may have even further significance than simply recording her pious deeds. Because it was written for her daughter, another queen, it may have had a didactic purpose. Lois Huneycutt argues that her *vita* "shaped Matilda's own ideas about what it meant to be England's queen" and that "much of her conception of her own office grew out of the example, both real and literary, of her mother." She further suggests that "literary representations of both Margaret and Matilda helped create an ideal of queenly behavior that contributed to the development of queenship in the later twelfth century and beyond."⁶⁴ Given the importance of captive ransoming in the *vita*

⁶³ From the translation of the Life of Saint Margaret found in Lois Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Rochester, NY, 2003), 172.

⁶⁴ Lois L. Huneycutt, "The Idea of the Perfect Princess: The *Life of St. Margaret* in the Reign of Matilda II (1100-1118)," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 12 (1989): 81-97; for the quotes, see *idem.*, *Matilda of Scotland*, 4.

and the number of later queens associated with ransoming, the evidence supports the theory that such activities were considered an integral part of the office of queenship.

Nor was Margaret the only saintly queen to ransom captives. The tradition seems to have gone back well into the early Middle Ages. According to the *Vita Sanctae Balthildis*, Queen Balthild of Neustria, a 7th century Anglo-Saxon saint and wife of King Clovis, ransomed captives in memory of her own experiences in captivity as a young girl.⁶⁵ Her *vita*, written shortly after her death in 680, revised in the ninth century, states that she:

prohibited the sale of captive Christian folk to outsiders and gave orders through all the lands that no one was to sell captive Christians within the borders of the Frankish realm. What is more, she ordered that many captives should be ransomed, paying the price herself. And she installed some of the captives she released and other people in monasteries, particularly as many men and women of own people as possible and cared for them. For as many of them as she could persuade thereto, she commended to holy communities and bade they might pray for her.⁶⁶

Saints could also perform the miracle of freeing captives after their death. Both Henry of Huntingdon and Orderic Vitalis write of the seventh century English saint and queen Etheldreda⁶⁷ freeing Bricstan, a man imprisoned at the behest of Ralph Basset in 1115. According to Orderic's lengthier tale, Bricstan, "unjustly laden with iron fetters of excessive weight" for a crime he did not commit, prayed constantly to

⁶⁵ Balthild was not the only sainted Frankish queen to have been a captive as a young woman. Radegund, daughter of the Thuringian king Berthaire, suffered a similar fate. She was brought up by her uncle Hermanfred, who had murdered her father. In 531, the Franks invaded, and she was captured and taken back to Francia as part of the spoils. She eventually became the wife of her captor, King Clothaire I. She, too, is associated with the freeing of captives, although not strictly war-related captivity. Instead, her miracle was the freeing of criminals from fetters. Her *vita* reports: "Once at her villa in Péronne, while that holiest of women was strolling in the garden after her meal, some sequestered criminals loudly cried to her from the prison for help. She asked who it might be. The servants lied that a crowd of beggars were seeking alms. Believing that, she sent to relieve their needs. Meanwhile the fettered prisoners were silenced by a judge. But as night was falling and she was saying her prayers, the chains broke and the freed prisoners ran from the prison to the holy woman. When they witnessed this, those who had lied to the holy one realized that they were the real culprits, while the erstwhile convicts were freed from their bonds." Jo Anne McNamara, ed., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC, 1992), 74-5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁶⁷ Henry of Huntingdon calls her Saint Æthelthryth. She died in 679.

St. Etheldreda and St. Benedict to free him. She appeared to him with St. Benedict and her sister St. Sexaburga and freed him of his chains, an act considered so miraculous by contemporaries that Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I and daughter of the aforementioned Queen Margaret, had the broken chains placed at St. Etheldreda's church in Ely.⁶⁸

Although none of the basic Christian law books mention ransoming as a religious duty, Christian tradition designated the ransoming of captives a "meritorious deed of charity." It was also sometimes considered one of the seven good works expected of Christians. As such, pious women like Saints Margaret and Balthild⁶⁹ may have wanted to perform this duty, because as with other acts of charity, a visitor to a captive was visiting Christ himself.⁷⁰ Further, both Margaret and Balthild were also of Anglo-Saxon heritage, and Balthild had spent a good deal of time in Francia. Given the frequency of Viking attacks on Anglo-Saxon and Frankish lands as well as the reputation of St. Margaret's husband, Malcolm, for capturing and enslaving the English during raids that would have made captivity and the slave trade a harsh reality for the English and Frankish people, the suggestion in their *vitae* that they ransomed captives has a ring of truth in it. The association of Etheldreda and Sexaburga with miracles of freeing captives also perhaps implies that it may have been part of a larger Anglo-Saxon hagiographic tradition for female saints.

⁶⁸ OV, 3: 350-359; HH, 662-3.

⁶⁹ It should be noted here that saintly ransoming was not limited to these women, nor to women at all. Many saints were associated with ransoming. Saints Raymond Nonnatus, John of Matha, Dominic of Silos, Felix of Valois, and others were all known to have ransomed captives. These particular saints were also associated with founders of monastic orders specifically created to ransom captives. Other saints were associated with the miracle of freeing captives from prison. See Michael E. Goodich, "The Miraculous Military Escape in Canonization Documents," in *Lives and Miracles of the Saints: Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography* (Brookfield, VT, 2004).

⁷⁰ Yvonne Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies*, 2-4.

Intercessor or Impediment, Loving Mother or Betrayer of Family? The Context and Meaning of Women's Ransoming

Women had, then, the capacity to ransom captives and hostages. And on many occasions they actually actually did so. This prompts some questions about possible connections with the roles that medieval women played and some of the ways contemporaries conceptualized the nature of medieval women. One of the first is the role of women as intercessors. Ransoming is a subset of intercession; to ransom someone, one needs to intercede on that person's behalf and then try to gain their freedom through an exchange of goods or money. The connection between these two activities is highlighted by Eleanor of Aquitaine's intercessory letters to the Pope on behalf of her captive son. Queens in particular were known as intercessors throughout the Middle Ages, depicted as capable of softening the king's heart and improving his reign,⁷¹ which may explain the high proportion of ransomers who were queens. Their proximity to the king as queens and wives⁷² and their positions outside the "official" avenues of political power made them valuable resources for those seeking favors. As Lois Huneycutt has remarked, "The ability to intercede with the king and to influence his actions assured the medieval queen of her status within the court and kingdom, and medieval women cultivated and embraced this ability."⁷³

⁷¹ This role of intercessor was not without its problems for queens, however, nor were intercessory queens always seen as benevolent benefactresses. As John Carmi Parsons notes, intercession potentially gave queens an extraordinary power, and "if the queen could channel patronage in a certain direction she might also obstruct it, a diversion of royal largess that was bound to cause resentment among those who thought themselves entitled to the king's bounty." The Tewkesbury annalist, for example, on one occasion, called Eleanor of Provence's intercession with her husband "serpent-like fraud." *Annales Monastici*, 1:177; "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England," in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth Maclean (Chicago, 1995), 152; Margaret Howell, "Royal Women of England and France in the Mid-Thirteenth Century: A Gendered Perspective," in *England and Europe in the Reign of Henry III (1216-1272)*, ed. Björn K.U. Weiler and Ifor W. Rowlands (Burlington, VT, 2002), 170-2.

⁷² See Sharon Farmer's "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," *Speculum* 61:3 (1986): 517-43, for the ability of women to use their status as wives and the intimacy associated with it to persuade their husbands to action.

⁷³ Lois Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, 82-3.

As time passed, the role of the “queen as intercessor” became increasingly defined and acquired biblical overtones, from both the Old and New Testaments. The image of the Old Testament Queen Esther, who interceded with her Persian husband and saved the Jewish people from destruction, was quite popular. The use of Esther and other biblical women like Judith can be found in early Frankish *ordines*,⁷⁴ and remained popular well into the 13th century. At the coronation of Eleanor of Provence, for example, the prayers exhorted her not only to be fertile, but also to be like Queen Esther, stressing the importance of a queen’s ability to intercede with husband for the needs of the people. Motherhood and its nurturing aspects, in particular, were linked with intercession,⁷⁵ especially in the English tradition. John Carmi Parsons has noted that there was “a close connection between a queen’s intercession and maternity that was mapped explicitly for an English king’s wife at the moment she became queen. Intercession and childbearing were the two functions of her office upon which her coronation *ordo* dwelled most intently.” Queens also made appeals for favor or pardon right after childbirth.⁷⁶

As a result, sources of the time also often evoked the image of the Virgin Mary interceding with her Son on the behalf of sinners. Mary was one of the primary models for both literary and real motherhood,⁷⁷ and her intercession was directly constructed

⁷⁴ Janet Nelson, “Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship,” in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Rochester, NY, 1997). For editions of the French *ordines*, see *Ordines Coronationis Franciae: Texts and Ordines for the Coronation of Frankish and French Kings and Queens in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard A. Jackson (Philadelphia, 1995-2000). Volume One contains the *ordines* through 1200.

⁷⁵ This may reflect the fact that medieval mothers and sons often shared a particularly close relationship. As Charlotte Newman notes, “The relationship between the noble mother and the heir differed from that between her and her husband or between him and the heir. This difference may have been a product of a difference in ages. [David] Herlihy has argued that the age gap between husband and wife may have placed her in an arbiter’s position between father and heir. In age, she was, after all, approximately half way between generations.” Newman, 47.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

⁷⁷ See Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), Chapter 4, for the importance of Mary as a “mother.”

around the nursing breast or on baring her breast as she interceded,⁷⁸ which may explain the appearance of breasts in descriptions of intercession.⁷⁹ More directly, Mary was also associated with the rescue of children in danger, particularly hostages, in many collections of her miracles. According to Jacobus de Voragine's version in the *Golden Legend*, a popular 13th century collection of saints' lives, a distressed mother's only son was captured and put in chains. She prayed to Mary to save her child. When Mary appears not to help, the mother steals the image of the Christ Child, refusing to return Him until Mary helps her, which Mary then does.⁸⁰ The miracle story neatly details many aspects of women's involvement in hostage and captivity: not only are both women mothers, but the mother is a hostage taker, and Mary serves as an intercessor and hostage rescuer.

The fact that the same relationships found within the images of female intercessors (mother/son, wife/husband) are mimicked in the relationships found in hostage and captive negotiations involving women further indicates the connection

⁷⁸ John Carmi Parsons, "The Pregnant Queen as Counselor and the Medieval Constructions of Motherhood," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York, 1996), 55.

⁷⁹ See below for examples.

⁸⁰ Atkinson, 135. The story in the *Golden Legend*, goes as follows: "A woman who had lost her husband had her only son, whom she loved tenderly, for consolation. It happened, however, that the son was captured by enemies and imprisoned in chains. When she heard this, she wept inconsolably, and prayed incessantly to the Blessed Virgin, to whom she was much devoted, to obtain her son's liberation. Then, seeing that her prayers were not answered, she went alone into a church where there was a sculptured image of the Blessed Mary, and, standing in front of the image, she addressed it in these terms: 'O Virgin blessed, I have often asked you for the liberation of my son, and so far you have not come to the aid of this pitiable mother. I have sought your patronage for my son and see no return for my prayers. Therefore, as my son has been taken away from me, I will take your Son away from you and hold him in custody as a hostage for mine.' She then went up and took the image of the Child from the Virgin's lap, went home with it, wrapped it in spotless cloths, and hid it in a cupboard, which she locked carefully. Thus she could rejoice at having a good hostage for her son and guarded it closely. The following night the Blessed Virgin appeared to the young man and opened the door of the prison. She told him to get up and leave and said: 'Son, you will tell your mother to give my Son back to me as I have given hers back to her.' The youth walked out, went to his mother, and told her how the Virgin had set him free. Overjoyed, she took the image of the Child, went to the church, and returned her Son to Mary, saying, 'I thank you, my lady, for restoring my only son to me, and now I return your Son to you, because I acknowledge that I have received my own.'" Jacobus de Voragine, 2:155. The Latin can be found in *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (SISMEL/Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), 527.

between the two roles. The language used in the texts about female ransomers highlights the importance of these relationships. Roger le Poer's mother chooses to surrender the citadel of Devizes to free her son, saying that she "gave birth to him, and it can never be right for me to cause his destruction; instead I should offer my life in exchange for his if necessary."⁸¹ Eleanor of Aquitaine's letters to the Pope concerning her son Richard's captivity in Germany likewise evoke her role as a mother grieving for the loss of her son. Although her pleas come from a concern for the fate of England, the image that is repeated over and over is that it is her son, not just the King of England, who is imprisoned. She calls herself a "pitiable mother" in both letters, and in the second "a mother so wretched," an "ill-fated mother," and says that what she most wants to see is "the face of her son."⁸² One may argue that these are mere rhetoric, but this within itself is significant for it implies that it was a proper motif for women to employ or a role that could assume. In fact, the choice not to ransom was seen as a sign of bad motherhood. Matthew of Paris reports that Margaret of Flanders refused to ransom her own children from their half-brother (also her son), John d'Avesnes. Calling her "cruel" and a "second Medea," Matthew writes:

It happened afterwards that John of Avesnes, son of the aforementioned countess, took her two sons, also his uterine half-brothers, prisoner by lying in ambush. Pleased, he took them into close custody, hoping through them to make peace with his mother. He sent her a letter through messengers he thought would be agreeable, saying: 'Dear mother, if you do not wish to have pity on me, at least pity your sons, my uterine brothers, whom I hold in chains, and consent to a peace advantageous to you.' To this, she said: 'My sons, your brothers, are in your hands; I will not be deflected because of them. They are exposed to your will and pleasure. Slaughter them, ferocious butcher, and devour them, one boiled in pepper, and the other roasted with garlic.' Because

⁸¹ "Turgido nepote cum suis asseculis in rebellione pertinaciter persistente, et irato rege ut prefatus Rogerius patibulo mox suspenderetur iubente, meticulosa mater luctuosam prolis conditionem audiens prosiluit, et pro filio sollicita dixit, 'Ego peperī [illum] nec ullatenus debeo eius promereri interitum, sed si sic necesse est ipsum debeo per meum saluare obitum.' Protinus regi nuncium destinavit, et pro redemptione inimicorum validam munitionem quam tenebat obtulit." OV, 6:532-4.

⁸² *Foedera*, vol. 1, 72-8. *The Letters of the Queens of England*, 36-43.

these offensive words passed to many, much shame was brought upon all women, especially mothers.⁸³

While Margaret's offer to let John eat his half-brothers was surely at worst a polemical squib and very likely an invented slur, Matthew uses this imagery to highlight Margaret's failure to act as a mother should and ransom her children.

Many female intercessions came during wartime, a fact which strengthens the connection between intercession and ransoming, which was often a war related activity. Matilda of Scotland, Henry I of England's first wife, was known as a great intercessor, and the charters of the reign demonstrate the influential way she shaped her husband's policies.⁸⁴ Jeanne of Valois, countess of Holland, Zeeland, and Hainault and sister of King Philip VI of France, made at least two attempts at peacemaking during the Hundred Years War: once on the eve of its eruption, and once at the end of the first phase of the war. She was more successful on the second attempt: she is credited with bringing about the 1345 Truce of Esplechin.⁸⁵ During the Anarchy, Queen Matilda played the role of intercessor on multiple occasions, reconciling her husband with King David of Scotland, Count Thierry of Flanders, and Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, among others.⁸⁶ Eleanor of Provence took the role of intercessor very seriously, intervening on the behalf of others with both her husband and her son, Edward I.⁸⁷ Even long dead queens might intercede for peace's sake.

Roger de Howden reports that William the Lion of Scotland prayed at the tomb of his

⁸³“Contigit postea, quod J[ohannes] de Avennis, filius comitissae memoratae, positus insidiis cepit duos filios ejusdem comitissae, fratres scilicet suos, sed tantum uterinos; et in custodia tuta fecit reservari laetabundus, sperans per eos matrem ad pacis unitatem revocare, dicens ei per scriptum et nuntios quos plus credit gratiosos, ‘Cara mater, si mei non vis, saltem filiorum tuorum fratrum meorum uterinorum, quos in vinculis teneo, miserere, et paci consenti tibi fructuosae.’ Cui, illa ‘Filii mei fratres tui in manu tua sunt; non flectar propter eos; voluntati et arbitrio tuo exponuntur. Macta eos, carnifex truculente. Et unum eorum coctum elixum devora piperatum, et alium assatum et alleatum.’ Quod verbi offendiculum in multorum faucibus ad omnium mulierum, praecipue matrum, obprobriumolvebatur.” CM, 5:439-40.

⁸⁴ Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, *passim*.

⁸⁵ Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, “Jeanne of Valois: The Power of a Consort,” in *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (New York, 2003).

⁸⁶ Tanner, “Queenship, Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc?” *passim*.

⁸⁷ Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, *passim*.

ancestress, Margaret of Scotland, before a planned invasion of England in 1199. She came to him in a dream and warned him of the futility of his plans, and following her advice, he abandoned them.⁸⁸

Nor were queens the only ones who could intercede with kings for peace-making purposes. Eleanor of Provence, for example, was not the only lady attested to have appealed to Henry III's mercy: his sister Eleanor de Montfort, his sister-in-law Sanchia, his daughters, and two ladies not directly connected with the royal family—Alice de Warenne and Alice de Lacy—are all known to have interceded with him.⁸⁹ Countess Adela of Blois was also recognized as an arbiter of peace in the turbulent counties of Blois and Champagne, not only managing to mediate between her own lords, but also internationally between her brother Henry I of England and her husband. Furthermore, she attempted with some success to reconcile Ivo of Chartres with Louis of France.⁹⁰ Her correspondence with Ivo reveals a woman not only acting for peace for her family, but also for the general peace of the broader Anglo-Norman world. Intercession, and by extension, ransoming, too, were ways in which women could shape war and politics.

Women in hostage and captive ransoming narratives are also consistently depicted as emotionally overwrought under the pressure of the negotiations, tapping into the larger medieval motif of women as over-emotional. Rainer's wife was "weeping and wailing" when she heard of her husband's capture, and "distressed" by Rollo's threat against her husband's life. Roger le Poer's mother, also described as "distressed" by the "wretched plight of her son," immediately chooses to surrender the castle of Devizes and, as noted above, claims her life should be given in exchange for

⁸⁸ Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, 12.

⁸⁹ Howell, *Margaret of Provence*, *passim*.

⁹⁰ Kimberly A. LoPrete, *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord* (c. 1067-1137) (Dublin, 2007).

his.⁹¹ Guibert of Nogent's mother, upon hearing of her husband's capture, was "struck down half dead with wretched sorrow," refused to eat or drink, and had a hard time sleeping due to her "despairing anxiety."⁹² William of Malmesbury does not characterize Mabel of Gloucester as a weepy woman, but he does remark that her affection for her husband plays a part in how she proceeds with the negotiations for his release. She agrees to exchange King Stephen for Robert "on account of her longing for her husband" ["pre desiderio uiri sui"]⁹³ and "from a wife's affection [was] the more eager for his release" ["in eius liberationem coniugali caritate propensior"].⁹⁴ The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*'s version of the tale of Queen Gerberga's ransom of her husband Louis IV, more detailed than the earlier versions of Flodoard and Richer, also portrays her as under stress and an emotional woman. "Full of anxiety" ["consternata animo"] she "swiftly" ["celerrime"] sought out her father and "begged" ["orans"] him for help; when he refused, she "hurried" back to France ["concite reuertitur"] and "implored" ["postulat"] Duke Hugh the Great "to help rescue her husband."⁹⁵

Women in literary texts are also portrayed as using emotion to free captives. But depicted here is a different image: that of a woman using the power of emotions for her own purposes. In *The Romance of Reynard the Fox*, a popular satirical story of a fox who constantly gets in trouble, yet manages to escape serious punishment, Reynard's wife Hermeline and her sons come to his rescue:

He [Reynard] was on the point of being hanged, when the king looked down across the plain and saw a great cavalcade full of distressed women; and there was Reynard's wife galloping through the clearing. She was coming at top speed, distraught with grief. His three sons, themselves sorely lamenting, were not hanging back. They were rending and tearing at their hair, ripping their clothes to shreds, and making such a loud hullabaloo that they could be heard a

⁹¹ OV, 6:532-4.

⁹² *Self and Society in Medieval France*, 69.

⁹³ One version of the text adds "beloved" ["dilecti"] before husband.

⁹⁴ HN, 116-17.

⁹⁵ GND, 1:112-35.

league away. Theirs was not a leisurely advance: on the contrary, they were riding at a great pace and bringing with them a packhorse laden down with valuables as a ransom for Reynard. [T]hey burst through the throng and came pell-mell to fall at the king's feet. The lady thrust herself to the fore to be first to fling herself down: 'Have mercy on my husband, sire, in the name of the Creator, God the Father! I will give you all this wealth, if you will deign to have pity on him.' King Noble eyed the treasure before him that consisted of silver and gold. Being very greedy for wealth, he said: 'By the faith I owe you, lady, Reynard's not in my good books, for his crimes against my vassals have been of an indescribable enormity. I must therefore take vengeance on him; and seeing that he makes no amends for his wrongdoing, he has deserved to be hanged. All my lords tell me to hang the brigand from the gallows; indeed, if I keep my word to them he will soon suffer the penalty.' – 'Sire, by God in whom you believe, pardon him this once!' The king replies: 'By the love of God, for your sake I give him pardon on this occasion; and he will be restored to you on the condition that the first time he misbehaves again, he will be hanged.' – 'I agree sire,' says she, 'and I'll never plead for him again.'⁹⁶

Although Hermeline is depicted as being as frantic and desperate as the women depicted above, her actions reflect a much more cunning approach to ransoming a captive. She uses the public nature of her husband's hanging to perform a submission and present the king with ransom money. She makes an offer that it is hard for King Noble, despite his justified anger at Reynard, to refuse. By doing so, she places him under significant pressure to free her husband. But she also provides him with the opportunity to seem magnanimous by freeing an obvious felon in an act of ostentatious public generosity towards a distraught wife. The performance is politically beneficial to both parties.

Guiborc, the formerly pagan, now Christian, wife of William of Orange, is also a useful example. In the *Chanson de Guillaume*, William returns home from the battle that led to the death of his beloved nephew Vivien and meets his wife. Exhausted and mourning, he recounts his losses to Guiborc at the gate of the castle as means of identifying himself to her as her husband.⁹⁷ But as they are standing there, Guiborc notices a pagan army:

⁹⁶ *The Romance of Reynard the Fox*, trans. D.D.R. Owen (Oxford, 1994), 35.

⁹⁷ When her husband had left her for battle, he had left her alone, and she is cautious about letting a man girded in pagan weapons who may or may not be her husband into the castle.

Guiborc looked along a metalled road and saw seven thousand armed pagans coming. They were returning from a raid on sweet France where they had laid waste to St. Martin of Touraine: they had smashed down the highest pinnacle. They were leading a hundred prisoners in chains; they often beat them with heavy sticks and clubs, with scourges and flails. Guiborc saw them; she began to cry: 'If you were William Hooknose holy Christendom would be rescued, as well as the booty those swine are carrying off.' 'Ha!' said the count, 'I never heard the like! She really wants to try me. Whether I live or die I must go that way!'⁹⁸

William, whom the pagans believe to be their king, catches them by surprise, kills several of them, and forces them to flee, leaving their prisoners and booty behind. He then presents the booty to the prisoners.⁹⁹ Guiborc also expresses repeated grief when William recounts the capture of several of his men at the battle from which he has just returned. When William is ready to give up and flee rather than rescue them, it is she who encourages William to go to the Emperor Louis and ask for aid to defend Orange and fight the pagans.¹⁰⁰ Guiborc's actions on both these occasions are not solely concerned with the freeing of captives; they are also clearly linked with the wifely role of motivator of her husband to do what is right and noble, and as a guardian of her husband's knightly and warrior virtue. Although her actions are not as direct as those of Mabel, Rainer's wife, or Roger le Poer's mother, she, too, seeks ways to help captives in need of rescuing even when her husband appears unwilling to do so. She uses emotion to manipulate her husband into helping those he does not really wish to help.

The link between emotion, women, family, honor, the power to manipulate, and the freeing of captives and hostages is more than a mere literary motif, however.

⁹⁸ "Guiborc regarde tut un chemin ferré, / si veit venir set mille paiens armez. / De dulce France reirent de preier, / de saint Martur de Turoine gaster: / le maistre cumble en unt acraventé. / Si ameneint cent chaitifs enchainé; / sovent les batent od fustz et od tinels, a lur excurges et a lur flagulers. / Veit Guiborc; comence a plurer: / "se vus fuissez Willame al curb niés, / ja fust escuse sainte crestiente, / et cele preie qu'i eminent cels lecchers." / "A!" dist le cunte, "unc mas n'oi tel! / Tut veirement me volt experimenter. / U moer u vive, la m'estoet aler!" / Dunc point et broche a le destrer abrivé; / cil curt plus tost que oisel ne pot voler." *La Chanson de Guillaume*, ed. and trans. Philip E. Bennet (London, 2000), ln. 2259-75.

⁹⁹ Ibid., ln. 2276-2298.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., ln. 2337-2377; 2381-2453.

Women are not only depicted using emotion or as being emotional in such situations, but actively present themselves as emotional and purposefully use emotion as a means to convince others to help them in their ransoming efforts. Eleanor of Aquitaine's letters to the pope concerning her son Richard's captivity in Germany repeatedly highlight her grief and frantic emotional state. They demonstrate her frustration and emotion over Richard's capture and the ravages England suffered as a result. In the first letter, she asks the pope to "listen to the cry of the afflicted, for our troubles have multiplied beyond number," describes herself as possessing "a fullness of heart and a passionate grief," and calls the pope the "comforter of those who mourn and those who grieve."¹⁰¹ In the second, she writes graphically of her pain, extensively documenting her suffering and emotional state:

I am all anxiety, both within and without and as a result my words are full of suffering. There are fears which can be seen, but hidden are the disputes, and I cannot take one breath free from the persecution of my troubles and the grief caused by my afflictions, which beyond measure have found me out. I have completely wasted away with torment and with my flesh devoured, my bones have clung to my skin. My years have passed away full of groans and I wish they could pass away altogether. I wish that the blood of my body, already dead, the brain in my head and the marrow of my bones would dissolve into tears, so much so that I completely melt away with sorrow. [...] Mother of mercy, look upon a mother so wretched, or else if your Son, an unexhausted source of mercy, requires from the son the sins of the mother, then let him exact complete vengeance on me....

She goes on to accuse the pope of inaction. "My son is tortured in chains," she writes, "but you do not go down to him, you do not send anyone, you are not even moved by the sorrow that moved Joseph. ...Legates have been promised to us three times, yet have not been sent."¹⁰² Emotion here becomes a rhetorical tool, and a position which initially appears weak becomes powerful through its suggestion that somehow the pope is failing in his duty. Such pleas seem to have worked precisely because they evoked pity in the men at whom they were directed. Eleanor was eventually

¹⁰¹ *Foedera*, 1:72.

¹⁰² *Foedera*, 1:74-5.

successful in securing the release of her son, although it took over a year. Likewise, according to Dudo and Robert of Torigni, Rollo had reportedly been moved by the pleas of Rainer's wife (as well as by the gold and silver) to release Rainer.

Women used emotional pleas based on their role within the family outside of hostage and captive taking situations as well. References to it in these contexts thus may be part of a larger trend in medieval literature and historical writing about women and warfare. In particular, such pleas are linked with women's instigation of war or peace-making efforts, and often highlight the relationships between mothers and sons and wives and husbands just as the roles of intercessor and ransomers do. Hostage and captive situations, then, can help illuminate such situations more thoroughly. Once again, women use a perceived emotional weakness within themselves in order to shift the burden of action upon the person with whom they interact. The *Gesta Stephani* recounts how Baldwin de Redvers' wife begged King Stephen to lift his siege of Exeter Castle in 1136. According to the *Gesta*'s author, Baldwin's wife "came to the king to offer entreaty on their behalf, barefooted, with her hair loose on her shoulders, and shedding floods of tears." Although Stephen apparently felt sympathy for Baldwin's wife "on account of the pity he felt for one of her sex in such wretched affliction," she was ultimately unsuccessful.¹⁰³ Others had better luck. In the early 1030s, King Henry of France, feeling threatened by his mother Constance of Arles' independent policies in her dower lands, besieged her at the castle of Le Puiset. It was not until she threw herself at his feet and begged that the unfortunate be spared, herself included, that peace was made between the two.¹⁰⁴ Orderic Vitalis also records women using emotive tactics to end violent conflict and reform violent behavior. When the knight, Ralph, son of Albert of Cravent, attacked a monk and stole his

¹⁰³ *GS*, 26-8.

¹⁰⁴ Penelope Ann Adair, "Constance of Arles," 20-21.

horses, the monk appealed to Ralph's father Albert for help. When Albert refused, his wife Aubrée was appalled and "began to lament and wring her hands and tear her hair and weep as though he [that is, her son] were already dead." She begged her husband to help her son and restore the monk's goods, for fear that their son would "become possessed of a demon here and now for such a crime." Duly chastised, and terrified of his wife, Albert and his household did as Aubrée asked.¹⁰⁵

These broader types of manipulative wartime emotional interactions between mothers and sons and husbands and wives can also be found in literary texts. In *Raoul de Cambrai*, for example, Raoul's mother Alice strives vainly through extended emotional pleas to convince Raoul not to fight Count Herbert's sons, arguing not only that the war is wrong, but also that she will die of grief if he dies. She also invokes her role as his mother, saying "I fed you with milk from my own breast. Why do you strike such pain in my heart?"¹⁰⁶ In Wace's *Roman de Brut*,¹⁰⁷ the war between the brothers Brenne and Belin is ended by their mother's dramatic battlefield intervention, mirroring in many ways the ancient Roman tale of the Sabine women. Like Alice, she relies on her status as a mother. When speaking to Brenne, Torwenne "tore all her garments down to her belt and showed him her bare breasts which were withered and

¹⁰⁵ OV, 3:242-45.

¹⁰⁶ *Raoul de Cambrai*. Her pleas extend from laisse XLVIII through LVII. One has to wonder whether the specific reference to breast feeding here is deliberate. Given that most aristocratic mothers in the middle ages would have likely had wet nurses for their children, there is the implication that the bond between Alice and Raoul is especially close, and thus her pleas take on a more special meaning. Bernier's mother, Marsent, also pleads with Raoul to stop his violence in laisses LXIII through LXVI. She begs him not to torch the town and her convent, stating that the nuns are helpless and cannot fight to defend themselves. She suggests he go to the convent's fields nearby and that she will supply him with food and supplies. Raoul agrees to this, but later breaks the agreement, resulting in the death of Marsent and 100 nuns. As Penny Schine Gold points out, part of the tragedy of the chanson is that Raoul refuses to listen to women's advice, even when it is clear from the text that the advice is sound, a sign of Raoul's overall *demesure*, or immoderacy. Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago, 1985), 12-15.

¹⁰⁷ This story is also mentioned in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*, but not nearly in as much detail. Although Wace uses the same motif of the emotional plea as Geoffrey, he greatly expands on the length of Torwenne's speech, heightening the drama of the moment. See Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1:27-8.

hairy with age. Weeping she spoke to her son, her words broken by frequent sobs and sighs.” She reminds him of the pain she suffered in giving birth to him, chastises him for wanting to hurt his own family, herself included, and points out that he is at fault in rebelling against his brother, the king. ““You have only one brother,’ she sobs, ‘you should love him. [...] ...My fine son Brenne, what do you think? Put down your lance and shield, trust your mother’s advice and be reconciled with your brother....”

Brenne, pitying and trusting his mother, makes peace with his brother on the battlefield.¹⁰⁸ The *Chanson de Guillaume* also depicts Guiborc using tears and supplication as influence outside of the context of captive rescue. She pushes the obstinate William to aid his nephew Vivien by weeping violently, bowing down and kissing his shoe, and begging him to help.¹⁰⁹

Although not all of these women were successful, women attempted to use tears and self-humiliation to influence various aspects warfare in two related ways. First, nearly all of the occasions of hostage and captive negotiations and the wartime emotive tactics mentioned above had some public element to them. There was almost always an audience in these depictions, be it on the battlefield or in the lord’s hall. Even Eleanor of Aquitaine’s letters, as official letters from an English queen to the pope, would have likely been read aloud and then discussed publicly. Emotional pleas were, therefore, staged events, performative acts designed to get specific responses.¹¹⁰ In other words, as noted above, they were an attempt to obligate the person with whom women were pleading to respond in a positive way and to release the captive or hostage in question. These tactics are very similar to those used by vassals when they sought help from their lords. It demonstrates that women had

¹⁰⁸ Wace, 68-73.

¹⁰⁹ *La Chanson de Guillaume*, lines 1003-1030.

¹¹⁰ As Paul Hyams notes, “Men and women used emotion concepts dynamically, to lead to action by themselves and to block or change the actions of others.” *Rancor*, 37.

knowledge of, and recourse to, some of the same social rituals of obligation as men. Just as a vassal in a lord's court might, these women, through their own humiliation, sought to evoke pity and shame men into action, because, if they did not, it reflected poorly on them. Their individual wrong essentially became a wrong to the lord, as well.¹¹¹ Women, however, often used different, expressly female tactics. Many of these women exposed body parts and highlighted actions exclusive to women—breasts,¹¹² wearing long hair loose and flowing the way young women did prior to marriage or pulling and ripping at their hair,¹¹³ breastfeeding, and giving birth. Further, the women also regularly evoked specifically female kinship or marriage bonds and are often depicted in these situations as guardians of their husbands' or male kin's honor and warrior reputation, as Guiborc was in her interactions with her husband William. They consistently reminded those they were entreating of a specific, family-oriented obligation grounded in the importance of women in their lives. Thus, rather than being the shame of failed lordship, the shame the men would suffer was usually family-related: a failure to help out, spare, or take up the cause of a family member. As the failure of Baldwin's wife to secure her husband's release

¹¹¹ Paul Hyams, "Feud in England" *Haskins Society Journal* 3 (1991): 1-23, esp. 12; see also more generally Paul Hyams, *Rancor*, Ch. 4.

¹¹² Bearing of breasts may also have an ancient antecedent here. In the *Illiad* Hecuba bears her old and withered breast when she begs Hector not to fight Achilles. "And his mother wailed now, standing beside Priam, / weeping freely, loosing her robes with one hand / and holding out her bare breast with the other, / her words pouring forth in a flight of grief and tears: / "Hector, my child! Look—have some respect for *this*! / Pity your mother too, if I ever gave you the breast / to soothe your troubles, remember it now, dear boy-- / beat back that savage man from safe inside the walls! / Don't go forth, a champion pitted against him-- / merciless, brutal man. If he kills you now, / how can I ever mourn you on your deathbed?-- / dear branch in bloom, dear child I brought to birth!" Homer, *The Illiad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York, 1990), 544.

¹¹³ The tearing or pulling out of hair is a long standing visual symbol of grief for both men and women, but tends to be associated more with women, "and was one of the most common and expressive ways women lamented." Robert Bartlett, "Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., vol. 4 (1994): 53-55. See more generally Mosche Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York, 1976).

Long hair was associated with women in general, so much so that when a "fashion craze" for long hair erupted among the men of northern France and England in the late eleventh through twelfth centuries, several chroniclers and moralists lamented the trend as a sign of effeminacy and moral degeneracy. Bartlett, 49-52.

suggests, the lack of a familial connection between the woman supplicant and the man with whom she was pleading may have been a deciding factor in the outcome.

Second, such moments of emotive action in hostage and captive ransoming became part of the balance of power within families and marriages, and indeed, between women and men generally. On the one hand, by using emotional tactics, the women depicted here appear to acknowledge their own submissive position within their marriage, family, and in relationship to men. Medieval wives and women in general were expected to be obedient to the husbands or male kin. Women were not allowed to intercede as equals, but had to debase themselves and beg for pity; as Bernice Kliman put it, “theirs is a diplomacy which is born of impotence.”¹¹⁴ Just as a queen’s intercession allowed for a king to maintain his image as a powerful male while still providing him with the opportunity to appear magnanimous, emotional intercession in general, “sustain[ed] a profile of masculine rigour,” allowing men to remain the powerful, severe, and wrathful partner, and making women “responsible for tempering masculine aggression.”¹¹⁵

Once again the parallel to the paradigm of medieval lordship is clear: women play a similar role in their marriages as vassals do in the relationships to their lords. But just as a lord owes his vassal certain duties of defense, aid and the promise of listening to counsel, the women in these depictions are reminding their husbands or sons of the obligations they owed within the marriage or the family, in this case, to listen to wifely or motherly advice, and when it is good, to follow to it.¹¹⁶ The women assert, through their public pleas, their interpretation of the events that have taken place, forcing those with whom they are speaking and those who are watching to

¹¹⁴ Bernice W. Kliman, “Women in Early English Literature, *Beowulf* to the *Ancrene Wisse*” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 21(1977): 34.

¹¹⁵ Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford, 1997), 88. See also Paul Hyams, *Rancor*, Chapter 4.

¹¹⁶ Penny Schine Gold has demonstrated this link between advice and the nurturing/mother/wife in the *chansons de geste*, and the examples here suggest the link is present in historical texts, as well. 15-16.

acknowledge their persuasive readings of the situation. While such acknowledgment did not always result in the desired outcomes, it did to some extent require that these understandings be considered and validated. Further, the women above who used such tactics were reminding men that their actions were somehow failing another family member. They present themselves as guardians not only of their families as a whole,¹¹⁷ but also of the well-being of each individual within that family.¹¹⁸ By staking their claim as guardians of the family, women could in essence subvert the social dominant/submissive, male/female dichotomies and assert a female-based authority. Highlighting their authority in the private space of the family—where women were allowed to exercise a certain authority—provided them with a stepping stone to actively intercede in and influence primarily public and male-dominated activities such as warfare, and specifically hostage and captive ransoming, even as it required them to function within the established dichotomies. These intercessions create images of marriage and family, based at least partially on the idea of partnership, albeit an unequal one.

Such an argument helps enhance our understanding of medieval emotions. While much has been written on this subject in recent years,¹¹⁹ scholars have not adequately explored this topic in discussions of gender.¹²⁰ Yet women are consistently depicted using emotions to achieve their wartime goals and, as demonstrated here, specifically in the context of hostage and captive ransoming. Several interpretations of medieval emotions are useful. The first, posited by Lisa Perfetti and others,

¹¹⁷ i.e., keeping it a whole entity and making sure members protect each other.

¹¹⁸ i.e., making sure that each member remains a moral person and maintains his or her honor by acting correctly.

¹¹⁹ Barbara Rosenwein has written most extensively on the subject. See her *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2006), the bibliography of which is an excellent place to start for references; her edited collection of essays by various scholars *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: 1998); see also the debate on emotions in *Early Medieval Europe* 21 (10:2).

¹²⁰ In fact, there is very little in general on women and emotion. The edited editions by Perfetti and Vaught and Bruckner are two of the few volumes that consider gender.

suggests that emotions in the Middle Ages were not “inner feelings that serve to constitute a highly individualized self with a unique personality.” She hypothesizes that, instead, they were “oriented outward and define[d] an individual’s relationship to a community ... [and] one’s position relative to other individuals, families, and groups.”¹²¹ Examples within literary and historical texts in which women use emotion, then, reflect ways women could navigate their position within society in real life. In much the way Stephen White and others have suggested for a king’s or lord’s uses of anger,¹²² emotive acts were avenues of power that medieval women could direct the outcome of war, including ransoming hostages and captives, playing a role in politics, and, in many cases, gaining a measure of control and influence over their own lives and that of their families. Emotions were tools, ritual acts, performances, and most importantly, socially constructed. They were, in White’s words, “all the product of experience, and experience itself is shaped by the practices and norms of a person’s household, neighborhood, and larger society.” Though to modern sensibilities, weeping publicly, ripping hair, and tearing at one’s breast may seem extreme, within the world in which the women described here functioned these actions could be logical and served a purpose. This is not to argue that these women did not feel sincere emotion at the loss of their family and kin, for it is certainly possible, if not likely, that they did. “Real” and “functional” emotions need not be mutually exclusive; they could be both at the same time.

But as Barbara Rosenwein has cautioned, the model of social construction can lead scholars to believe that there is only one set of emotions relevant to a certain time period or available to an individual. In fact, women interact with and function within

¹²¹ Lisa Perfetti, “Introduction,” in *The Representation of Women’s Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Lisa Perfetti (Gainesville, FL, 2005)8-9; see also Stephen D. White, “The Politics of Anger,” in *Anger’s Past*, esp. 131.

¹²² White, *passim*.

multiple “emotional communities,” which Rosenwein defines as “groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value—or devalue—the same or related emotions.”¹²³ As queens, mothers, elites, wives and “woman,” the women discussed here accessed different views on the emotions appropriate for hostage and captive situations and the way those emotions should be deployed. This does not preclude the fact, likelihood of shared ideas; certainly all these women functioned within an “overarching emotional community, tied together by fundamental assumptions, values, goals, feeling rules, and accepted modes of expression.” At the same time, the smaller emotional mini- or sub-communities of which they were members provided them opportunities to either accept or expose the inadequacies of the larger community.¹²⁴ As noted earlier, emotional behavior gave voice to women’s alternative interpretations of political or military events in the creation of which they may have had no say.

Second, the use of emotions by medieval women was intimately linked to the popular belief that women were highly persuasive, a literary and ecclesiastical motif with ambiguous meaning in Middle Ages. On the one hand, the secular and ecclesiastical image of women worsened in eleventh and twelfth centuries, brought on by the system of primogeniture, the rise of the Augustinian view of men as rational and women as irrational, and the rise of the image of Eve as the enticing temptress, the active agent in man’s fall from grace. Yet, as Sharon Farmer has noted, “male clerical writers persistently emphasized the ability of women to use spoken language—sweet words and eloquence—to soften men’s hearts.” Beginning in the twelfth century, clerical writers began to praise pious women who used their persuasive capabilities for good, portraying women as more spiritual and thus more responsible for the overall

¹²³ Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

moral behavior of themselves and others.¹²⁵ By interceding with others to ransom and free captives and hostages, women pushed men to act in more noble and pious ways. Both the real Eleanor of Aquitaine and the fictional Guiborc used this tactic with success.

Women were certainly not the only ones to access emotions as an avenue of power—men also appealed to the emotions when they needed something, though in their own manly fashion.¹²⁶ But alpha women too could deploy emotional appeals as a political act to powerful effect, when the situation called for it, a reality to which scholars ought to pay more attention. We now need further research into the specific patterns in which women employed these techniques to clarify how women could exercise power in such contexts as hostage and captive ransoming. Women did not wait around hopelessly for someone to come and rescue them or their menfolk. When necessary, they took the initiative and used the tools that society offered them to shape their own fates. Further, the examples above are more than just stereotypical images of women as overly emotional or persuasive.¹²⁷ Despite the intervening layers of motif and convention, medieval fictional texts in some measure reflect medieval societal values and norms. The frequency and similarity of these depictions of women using emotion to manipulate hostage and captive situations in both historical and fictional texts implies that these were tactics that women could and actually did *use* or were at least plausible to the audience as such. Thus reading these examples together can expand understanding of what medieval society considered reasonable behavior for women in real life.

¹²⁵ Sharon Farmer, “Persuasive Voices,” 518-19, 534, 539. In fact, Thomas of Chobham, the subject of Farmer’s paper, even encourages women to persuade their men to act piously.

¹²⁶ For example, in *The Deeds of Louis the Fat*, Suger reports that when Hugh of Le Puiset was ravaging lands in and around Blois and Chartres, many of the clerics, bishops, and archbishops of the area came to Louis and asked for help. According to Suger, they “cried out and threw themselves down at the feet of the king...[and] begged him to keep the greedy robber Hugh in check.” Suger, 86.

¹²⁷ See Farmer and Perfetti in her introduction to *The Representation of Women’s Emotions*, especially 4-7, on the stereotypes of the emotional and persuasive woman.

It is also likely that the authors who wrote these texts were trying to express what they believed to be the appropriate emotions for a woman whose husband, son or kin had just been captured. In a successful and loving marriage and family, it appears that authors expected a wife to be distressed and emotional if someone in her family was captured. She was supposed to care if he or she was hurt or in potential danger. Moreover, she should want to do anything she could to save the people closest to her. This is not to deny that women actually felt distress or worry over the fate of their family; it is likely that many did. But the authors were distanced in time and place from their characters and unable to interrogate them about their emotional states. As a result, what historians have is what medieval writers thought *should* have happened. So, as much as emotions were a potential political tool for the women expressing them, they were also a literary device for authors crafting visions of the “ideal” family and the relationships between its members.

At the same time, however reasonable or ideal such behavior might have been, the sources do express anxiety over female hostage negotiators and suggest several difficulties that women may have faced in the role of hostage ransomer. First, while many of the women were ultimately successful in their negotiations, several had to work many years before accomplishing their goal. It took Jeanne of Flanders nearly fourteen years to secure the release of her husband Ferrand of Portugal, and it was eight years before Agnes successfully paid Joscelin III de Courtenay, count of Edessa’s, ransom. Reynald de Chatillon remained in prison for an extraordinary seventeen years before his connection to the Byzantine Empress Maria secured his release. Certainly it was possible for men not ransomed by women to remain in captivity for lengthy periods of time. Raymond III of Tripoli who was ransomed in 1174 by the Hospitallers, was held in Aleppo for nine years, and the size of his ransom—80,000 gold *dinars*—likely contributed to this fact, as it likely did for the

lengthy captivities of Reynald, Joscelin, and Richard I of England.¹²⁸ The strategic importance of keeping good fighting men in captivity, rendering them harmless, rather than releasing them only to find them in an opposing army may have also played a part. However, the fact that women were often associated with lengthy captivities may be an indication that they were less successful negotiators than men, or perhaps that they persisted in ransom attempts even in unlikely cases.

Second, while the texts imply that emotive tactics can be a source of power and strength for women, they also seem to indicate that women's emotional state at the captivity of their family members was a distinct weakness, something that hostage and captive takers could use to advantage. Dudo's and Robert of Torigni's descriptions of Rainer's wife's actions following Rollo's threat imply an almost frantic effort on her part to free her husband before he is killed. Mabel of Gloucester is also painted as emotional to the point of irrationality, willing to trade her husband for King Stephen outright immediately [*"statim"*] after the offer is made. It is only her husband's calmer, more rational understanding of the political realities that keeps her from making this mistake.¹²⁹ This may help explain the reason why the Empress Matilda does not appear to have been heavily involved in her brother's ransoming. Perhaps the nobles felt that she would be less easy to cow or coerce than his wife. In Matilda of Ramsey's case, too, it appears that—at least in Orderic's opinion—Stephen may have deliberately threatened to hang her son because he correctly wagered it would appeal to a mother's emotional attachment to her son. Devizes Castle was certainly capable of holding out against Stephen for a considerable period of time. But Matilda was

¹²⁸ Even a king might wait a long time to be ransomed: Baldwin II of Jerusalem remained in Muslim hands for sixteen months. Yvonne Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies*, 77.

¹²⁹“At first the earls, and those whose concern it was to speak of such things, tried if the earl would allow the king and himself to be released on equal terms. Though the Countess Mabel, on account of her longing for her husband, at once accepted this proposal when she received the messengers, being from a wife's affection the more eager for his release, he with deeper judgement refused [ille profundiori consilio contradixit], saying a king and an earl were not of equal importance.” HN, 116-17.

willing to surrender an almost impregnable castle to save her son's life, putting his safety over the strategic concerns of the bishop of Ely and his men. The bishop appears not to have been as worried about Roger's fate, since Orderic depicts him and his men as frustrated by her actions. Even the unshakeable Eleanor of Aquitaine is described as having fallen prey to her emotions. According to an anonymous Salzburg annalist, Eleanor was so "desirous of freeing the son whom she especially loved" that it was on her advice that Richard resigned England to Emperor Henry IV and received it back from him as an imperial fief for which he owed £5000 annually, a fact which German sources trumpeted and English sources virtually ignored.¹³⁰

The role of Joan, wife of Llywelyn the Great, in negotiations for and care of hostages demonstrates yet another crucial problem of women and hostage taking/holding and reveals one of the many reasons medieval society was anxious about women having power/control over, or contact with, hostages and captives at court. In 1230, Joan was caught by her husband committing adultery with her husband's former captive, William de Braose. William was the young scion of the de Braose family, who were major landholders in the Welsh Marches. Llywelyn had captured him in 1228 during a failed English campaign against him. He was eventually released after agreeing to pay a huge fine, turn over a strategic castle, and marry his daughter to Llywelyn and Joan's son, Dafydd.¹³¹ We hear nothing of Joan's contact with the young man, but given his status as a powerful lord and the known fact that he does not seem to have been kept in a prison, it is likely she would have met him. In any case, she seems to have caught young William's eye, and perhaps vice versa, for a year later when William was visiting Llywelyn's court for Easter, they were discovered together. William was hanged as a result and Joan was imprisoned.

¹³⁰ Gillingham, *Richard I*, 247-8.

¹³¹ *Annales Monastici*, 3:117.

William's death had serious repercussions. Not only was he the member of a powerful family, but his wife Eva was the daughter of William Marshal the Younger, and thus also a member of another powerful Marcher family. Although Llywelyn tried to smooth things over with Eva by writing her to excuse the execution of her husband, relations between the two families were justifiably strained and there was a distinct threat of war. Joan's fate, however, was less serious. Although she was initially imprisoned, she seems to have been forgiven quickly and released, indicating that either she was an unwilling recipient of William's advances or that she was politically too important to Llywelyn's relationship with her brother Henry, who was now king of England.¹³² Regardless of Joan's feelings about William and her role in the adultery, her case demonstrates the danger of having male captives or hostages around one's womenfolk. There was risk involved. There was concern that women were either too lustful to contain themselves and might commit adultery, or that they could evoke lust in men, who would then violate them. Either case would upset delicate power relationships between men, because the violation of women was a justifiable excuse to go to war.

Medieval romances in particular play upon the fear that women will betray their families for the love of a captive or hostage. The semi-historical "Romance of Fouke Fitz-Waryn,"¹³³ which survives in a mid-fourteenth century translation, is illustrative of this concern. In the story, Sir Jocelyn of Dynan takes Sir Walter de Lacy and one of his men, Sir Ernalt de Lys, captive in battle. They are conveyed to the tower of Pendover, where their wounds are treated by the women of the house, whose job this appears to be. But exposing the women to the men was clearly dangerous, for,

¹³² Wilkinson, 89-92.

¹³³ Fouke (III) le Fitz Warin was a historical figure whose family had settled in the Welsh Marches as a part of the Norman Conquest of Wales. Fouke actually did revolt in 1200-01 after one of his castles had been given to a Welsh castellan named Morys fitz Roger. He and forty others were pardoned for outlawry in 1203.

as the romance remarks, Sir Ernalt was a “handsome young man,” and he fell in love with Marion, the chief handmaiden of the lady of the castle. With promises of love and marriage, he managed to convince her to help him and Sir Walter escape:

Sir Ernalt and the maiden spoke to each other frequently, for each day she was accustomed to come to the tower with her lady in order to bring comfort to Sir Walter de Lacy and Sir Ernalt. It so happened that when Sir Ernalt saw the opportunity he spoke to the maiden and told her that she was the one he loved most and that he was so deeply in love with her that he could get no rest day or night unless she would yield to him, for she could provide him with relief for all his misery. If she were willing to do this, he would give her reassurance of his own free will that he would take her to be his wife. The maiden heard this fine promise and agreed to do his bidding in all things. The maiden promised that secretly and in every possible way she would help them to be released from prison. Taking towels and sheets, she brought them to the tower and sewed them together. Using them, she let Sir Walter and Sir Ernalt down from the tower. She asked them to keep their faith and the promise which they had made to her. They told her that they would behave loyally towards her and not break any agreements, and they entrusted her to God.¹³⁴

Sir Walter and Sir Ernalt escape successfully and head back to Walter’s castle.

Walter, determined to get revenge, made war upon Sir Joce. Although peace is temporarily made, Ernalt comes up with a plan for Sir Walter to take Sir Joce by surprise. Marion, his lady love, had written him, asking him to honor his bargain with her and come to her at the castle of Dynan. Ernalt tells her to leave her window open and he will come to her, which the lady, “having no suspicion of treason” [nul suspeciou de tresoun naveit], did. Having convinced Sir Walter that Sir Joce is

¹³⁴ The translation comes from *Two Medieval Outlaws, Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess. (Rochester, NY, 1997), 140-1. The Old French text reads: “Sire Ernald fust jeune bachiler e bel, e grantement fust surpris de lamur Marioun de la Bruere une mout gentile damoisele, e si fust la mestre chaunbrere la dame de chastiel de Dynan. Sire Ernald e la damoisele entreparlerent sovent; quar ele soleit chescun jour venir en la tour, ou sa dame, de conforter sire Water de Lacy e sire Ernald. Avynt qe sire Ernald, quant veyt temps, aresona la damoysele; e dit qe ele fust la chose quil plus ama; e qe tante est surpris de samour, qe repos ne puet avoir, jour ne nuyt, si ele ne se asente a ly; quar ele ly puet socours fere de tous ces anuys; e, si ele le voleyt fere, yl la freit seurete a sa volente demeyne qe james nulle autre namera, sy ly noun. E, al plus tost quil serreit delyvres, yl la prendreit a femme. La damoisele oy la bele promise, e ly graunta fere sa volente en totes choses: e prist seurete de ly quil la tendreit covenant de sa promesse. La domoisele les promet qe ele les eydereit en tous poyntz privement quil fussent delyvres de prisone. E prist towayles e lynceles; si porta en la tour, e les fist coudre ensemble, e par els avala sire Water e sire Ernalt de la tour, e lur pria qil tenysent lur lealte e la promesse qe eux ly aveynt promys. E yl la dysent qe lealment se contendreint a ly sauntz fauser nul convenant, e la comanderent a Dieu.” “The Legend of Fulk Fitz-Warin,” in Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicum Anglicanum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London, 1875), 300-1.

gathering an army against him, Ernalt gathers a small force and goes to the castle, and using Marion's open window, enters the castle along with his men. While Ernalt and Marion share a night in bed together, Ernalt's men, unbeknownst to Marion, kill the soldiers in the castle. Marion, awaking in the morning, hears the fight going on, and, realizing what Sir Ernalt has done, kills him with his own sword, and, knowing that "if she were taken she would be delivered to an evil death," throws herself out of the window to her death.¹³⁵ Despite Ernalt's death, the castle is taken, the townspeople are slaughtered mercilessly, and war erupts again.

Even though Marion's character in some ways redeems herself by killing Ernalt,¹³⁶ she was, by contemporary standards, clearly to blame for the capture of the city and the resulting deaths. The author partially absolved Marion of the guilt by noting several times that she was unaware of Ernalt's plan and the fact that he took advantage of her. But regardless of her lack of knowledge, she herself even recognizes her guilt, saying, "Alas, why was I ever born? For because of my misdeeds my master, Sir Joce, who brought me up lovingly, has lost his castle and his fine men. Had it not been for me, nothing would have been lost! Alas, that I ever trusted this knight, for by his flattery he has deceived me, and my lord as well, which means even more to me!" She acknowledges that her duty was to her lord, but her trust of Ernalt and her love for him misled her. The point of the narrative seems to be that while women are expected to be a part of the care of hostages, they are also a huge risk factor, because their exposure to men outside the family can only lead to trouble. Overwhelmed by looks and love, they may end up betraying their family and lords,

¹³⁵*Two Medieval Outlaws*, 142-5; "The Legend of Fulk Fitz-Warin," 302-12.

¹³⁶ She tells Ernalt right before she runs him through: "Since you have deceived me, you cannot reasonably blame me if I offer you a service in accordance with your desserts. You will never boast to any future beloved that through deceiving me you conquered the castle of Dynan and the region."

willingly or not.¹³⁷

This fear of women's betrayal of their families and lords with captives arises in other contexts such as the epic narrative. One of the most popular medieval literary images of the ransoming woman is that of the Saracen princess who frees a captive crusading prince.¹³⁸ From the period of 1150-1300, seventeen such princesses appear in the *chansons de geste*.¹³⁹ Such images found their way into histories, as well: Orderic Vitalis, for example, extensively narrates the story of Melaz and her rescue of the famous crusader Bohemond in his account of the First Crusade, which may be the earliest version of this type of story.¹⁴⁰ These princesses betray their Saracen families, commit adultery, treason, murder, and in the end, convert to Christianity and usually marry the heroes whom they have saved. The basic story is almost identical in all of the narratives, with some minor variation. Some Frankish heroes are captured, either while invading or scouting Saracen lands. The Saracen Emir imprisons the captured Franks in his prison. The Emir's daughter falls in love with one of the Frankish captives, and commands the guards to release them, and then hides the captives in her rooms. She arms them and helps them escape. In the end, the Frankish army, led by the princess's beloved, defeats her family and the Saracens, they are married, and she converts to Christianity.¹⁴¹ I have in fact several times already discussed the most famous, Orable, who frees William of Orange, and at her baptism is renamed Guiborc.

¹³⁷ The idea that women will betray their lords or husbands for the love of another, captive or not, is a common theme in medieval literature. See, for example, Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, 1998).

¹³⁸ The following comes from an excellent and detailed study of Saracen women in Medieval epic literature: Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York, 1998), esp. the Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, and 4.

¹³⁹ Out of a total of twenty-one princesses. Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁰ OV 5:358-79. See also F.W. Warren, "The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 29:3 (1914): 341-358; for his claim that it is one of the first of the type, 345. As Warren notes, the account is a strange mixture of fact and fiction. Bohemond did spend time in Muslim captivity, and he did make a vow to travel to St. Leonard's shrine if he was released. Ibid., 343-4.

¹⁴¹ De Weever, 112-13.

But although the story may seem to have “happily-ever-after” connotations, the character of the Saracen princess is much more ambivalent and problematic. In the epic, *effictio*, or physical description, is supposed to be directly related to *notatio*, or character. As such, this Saracen princess, whose description—always beautiful, blond with sparkling eyes and rosy lips, and, most importantly, white—codes her as a Frankish heroine thus erasing her pagan roots, correlates in ways commonly associated with epic values. In the world of the epic narrative, “loyalty to king and lord coupled with filial piety are the prime values,”¹⁴² but although she is demarcated in the text as a heroine to be admired, the Saracen princess’s actions—betrayal of her family and lord—are the exact opposite, clearly those of a traitor. The function of the noble lady “is totally inverted and emphasizes [a] turning away of the very values of this genre.”¹⁴³ Traitors in the epics are usually punished harshly, often with death,¹⁴⁴ and even though the treachery of these Saracen women comes from love of the hero, “examples of treachery, taken from ... romance and epic, speak trenchantly of aversion to disloyal women whose actions are moved by excess of love.”¹⁴⁵ Yet, as the case of Guiborc illustrates, these Saracen women can sometimes, in the right circumstances, go on to become noblewomen of the highest rank, praised and lauded for their virtues. Those Saracen women who do remain loyal to their families are given the opposite treatment,¹⁴⁶ described as black, a color associated with the devil,

¹⁴² Ibid., xxvi.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 10. “The Saracen women reflect the ideals of Frankish aesthetic totally, becoming mirrors in which that society sees itself. Paradoxically, however, by insisting on these two essentials—that the Saracen reflect Frankish standards of beauty but not Frankish values of loyalty to lord and devotion to community—the rhetoric undermines the very values held to be important and thus misrepresents itself in a self-contradictory discourse.” 115.

¹⁴⁴ The arch traitor of the epic, Ganelon from the *Chanson de Roland*, for example, is pulled apart by horses for his betrayal of the Frankish army’s rearguard which resulted in the death of his nephew Roland.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 122.

¹⁴⁶ See also Kristi Gournay, “A Pugnacious Pagan Princess: Aggressive Female Anger and Violence in *Fierabras*,” in *The Representation of Women’s Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Lisa Perfetti (Gainesville, FL, 2005) for a similar argument to de Weever’s.

they are depicted as ugly and monstrous.

Although the stories of the Saracen princesses are used to “showcase certain cultural imperatives [like] the ideologies of beauty, political ambition, and Frankish superiority against Saracens”¹⁴⁷ through the conquest, submission, and integration of not only the princesses but their land, and although the texts make every effort to erase the Saracen princess’s betrayals by making her as “Frankish” and “Christian” as possible, they never really succeed. The Saracen princesses’ natal families often voice complaints about their behavior, although these voices are often silenced in the text through death.¹⁴⁸ Further, concerns about the Saracen princesses’ association with magic, herbs, and knowledge of astrology appear within the text, which undermines the attempt at a complete concealment of the princesses’ true nature. Even the names of many of these Saracen princesses reflect their ambiguous status.¹⁴⁹ As a result, the texts are self-contradictory, built around a constant internal concern about treachery, treason, and disloyalty by women who come into contact with hostages and captives.

Conclusion

Women, at least elite and royal ones, participated in hostage and captive ransoming with some regularity in the central Middle Ages, in both the absence and presence of their male relatives. Nor did these activities end abruptly in the thirteenth century. Women continued to perform these roles throughout the whole of the Middle Ages.¹⁵⁰ And despite what has been written in the past about the status of medieval

¹⁴⁷ De Weever, 115.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., Chapter 4.

¹⁴⁹ For example, in *Folque de Candie*, Anfelise is likely a variant of *enfelist* (bitterness) and Fausete means “falsehood.” Flandrine, from *Doon de Maience*, likely derives from *flan* (murderess). The prefixes *mal* and *mau*, both of which connote “evil,” appear in names like Malatrie (*Siège de Barbastre*) and Maugalie (*Floovant*). Gaudisse, whose name means “mockery,” appears in *Anseis de Carthage*. Ibid., 132.

¹⁵⁰ See K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: The Ford Lectures for 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford, 1973), 27-33; M.A. Hicks, “Counting the Cost of War: the Moleyns Ransom and the Hungerford Land Sales 1453-87,” *Southern History* 8 (1986): 11-31; M.K. Jones, “Henry VII, Lady Margaret Beaufort and the Orleans Ransom,” in *Kings and Nobles in the Later Middle Ages: A Tribute to Charles Ross*, ed. R.A. Griffiths and J. Sherborne (Gloucester, 1986), 254-73. For women

women, female hostage and captive ransomers demonstrate that women could actively participate in politics and war in the Middle Ages. They tapped into powerful emotive and intercessory rituals and highlighted their importance as mothers, daughters, wives, and sisters to free their kinfolk and asserted their rights as warriors, lords, and commanders, and to determine the fates of hostages and captives. Regardless of this reality, however, medieval authors expressed anxiety about women who took part in these activities. They worried that their overemotional nature might lead them to make hasty decisions in situations when patience was needed most. Furthermore, they feared that the proximity of women to foreign men in their household would tempt women to act inappropriately. Such problems could have larger political significance and potentially change the course of events. Just how and in what ways the actions of one particularly powerful woman —the Empress Matilda—concerning her most important hostage, King Stephen of England, became problematic merits further discussion.

during the later Middle Ages who faced particular difficulties as a result of their husbands' imprisonments, see M.A. Hicks, "The Last Days of Elizabeth Countess of Oxford," *English Historical Review* 103 (1988), 76-95; C.D. Ross, "Forfeiture for Treason in the Reign of Richard II," *English Historical Review* 71 (1956), 560-75.

Chapter Five:

“Every Trace of a Woman’s Gentleness Removed from her Face:” Abuse, Gender, and Politics in the Case of the Empress Matilda and the Battle of Lincoln, 1141

Women’s hostage and captive-taking practices could play out in their broader political and social contexts. One of the most famous examples in English history is that of the Empress Matilda’s capture and mistreatment of King Stephen after the Battle of Lincoln. This can be compared to Queen Matilda of Boulogne’s subsequent capture and treatment of the Empress’s half-brother and stalwart supporter and military commander, Robert of Gloucester, several months later. The men’s captivity left both Matildas essentially in charge of their political factions from February to November 1141. With her cousin King Stephen captured, the Empress was as close to being crowned a ruling Queen of England as she would ever get. With her husband Stephen imprisoned, Queen Matilda of Boulogne would rally the royalist forces that eventually defeated the Empress. While neither woman was a stranger to exercising power,¹ it was one of the few times in which women were the primary negotiators and sources of authority at the same time, presenting a unique opportunity for both contemporaries and modern scholars to reflect upon them. As a result, although the two men were eventually released and the war dragged on in a continuing stalemate, the chroniclers’ depictions of both of these women and their actions are useful. Not only do these provide ample insight into the rules and limits of hostage abuse, especially of those of royal blood or high standing, but, more importantly, they offer their commentary on how gender shapes one’s ability to rule. The treatment of both hostages became symbolic of both the positive and negative aspects of female rule.

As noted in the previous chapter, none of the chroniclers expressed particular

¹ See *The Empress Matilda*, and Heather Tanner, “Queenship: Office, Custom or Ad Hoc?”

surprise at the hostage and captive taking activities of either Matilda, because they were part of a larger historical trend of women performing those roles. At the same time, however, the various depictions of the women's treatment of hostages became a part of the larger interpretation of each of these women's realization of political power. Each woman displayed what can be called her own personal interpretations of queenly authority and power, shaped by vastly different individual situations and very dissimilar goals. For the Empress, the goal was to become sole ruler of England, to assert her dynastic right to inherit the throne her father had left her. For Matilda of Boulougne, it was to see the return of her husband to power—she was a queen consort, not a queen regnant.

To achieve these goals, the women approached their tasks differently. The Empress adopted a much more of the “masculine model,” that of an already ruling king—perhaps that of her father, Henry I—and attempted to exercise the powers associated with an already active kingship; in particular, she demanded allegiance and punished harshly those who did not obey. Her actions towards Stephen reflected this kingly self-conceptualization. She treated her captive as a rebellious baron and dangerous threat to her authority rather than an already anointed king whom she had overthrown. She refused to act with clemency, exercising *ira regis*, or “anger of the king.” To this, the chroniclers' reacted harshly; however just she may have felt her anger to be, *ira regis* was a very gendered emotion—there was no *ira reginae*, for it was the antithesis of the traditional model of female intercession. Such treatment they might have expected (or at least excused) from a king already on the throne, but not from a potential queen whom the barons had already overlooked for Stephen. In part, this may have been because there was no model for a sole ruling queen—none existed in the twelfth century. Women ruled as consorts or as regents, exercising power only

for a short time.² Her adaptation of kingship, which was distinctly male, did mesh well with what was expected for good queens. What positive models for queenship existed portrayed queens as mild and gentle companions, softening their husband's violent, angry behavior rather than exhibiting violence and anger themselves. But the Empress Matilda's potential power and right to the throne came not from a husband or marriage, as it would for a traditional queen, but by birth and through the oaths sworn to her by her father's nobles. She stood alone, partnerless,³ and thought of herself as queen by right, and acted as such, with all the attitude and actions of a king, including anger. As a result, Matilda was depicted as a tyrant rather than being perceived as a just, if harsh, ruler. Her treatment of Stephen became a key factor in the portrayal of her as a woman unable to rule, either because she could not control her emotions—in particular, her anger—or because her actions demonstrated that she did not possess the qualities or insight needed to negotiate the unpredictable terrain of Anglo-French politics.

Queen Matilda, however, took a more “feminine” or traditional female approach to her newly assumed leadership position. While she took on roles typically assumed by males, she did so without making demands, by treating those around her with humility, generosity and respect, and with supplication, and for this she received praise. Most importantly, Queen Matilda was a queen consort, a wife first and queen

²Two contemporaries of Matilda, however—Urraca of Castile and León, and Melisende of Jerusalem—also stood in direct line of succession as their father's only heirs, and faced similar issues to those of Matilda. For Urraca, see Bernard F. Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla Under Queen Urraca 1109-1126* (Princeton, 1982). For Melisende, see H. E. Mayer, “Studies in the history of Queen Melisende of Jerusalem,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 26 (1972): 93-183. For issues of succession more generally, see Jane Martindale, “Succession and Politics in the Romance-speaking world c. 1000-1140,” in *Authority and Regional Power: Aquitaine and France, 9th to 12th Centuries* (Brookfield, 1997).

³In fact, her husband was completely absent from her campaigns in England. He contented himself with helping her conquer Normandy, but this seems to have been out of his own ambition for himself and his sons, rather than out of any desire to help his wife. He actually goes so far as to undermine her ability to conduct her war in England, at one point recalling Robert of Gloucester to Normandy to help him instead of her, during which time she fared poorly. Whether or not this was intentional is unknown, but it is clear from the sources that Geoffrey, while he helped Matilda on the continent, did very little to further her claim to the English throne. *The Empress Matilda*, 116-117.

only by marriage. Although Queen Matilda had always been her husband's partner in ruling England—she had led military exploits before, negotiated treaties, and presided over judicial courts—her goal to release her husband meant that her assertion of sole power was temporary until her husband was restored to his throne, which was acceptable, and even admirable in the eyes of the chroniclers. Her generous treatment of Robert of Gloucester made her the chroniclers' foil of the Empress, and she became an *exemplum* of proper queenship.

Hostage and captive-taking practices are only one piece of the larger narrative and do not explain fully either the Empress's or Queen Matilda's failure or success. In fact, the chronicles which cover the events of 1141 most extensively—John of Worcester's *Gloucester Continuations*, William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella*, and the *Gesta Stephani*—highlight three main factors in the Empress Matilda's inability to secure the throne: her failure of temperament in her dealings with her followers and her use of patronage, her dealings with the Londoners, and her attitude towards the House of Blois, including Stephen, Stephen's son Eustace, Bishop Henry of Winchester, and Queen Matilda herself.⁴ But within each of these categories, the Empress' treatment of Stephen can be seen as an important contributing issue, and therefore, while it is perhaps not the sole reason, nor even a reason that the chroniclers highlighted as one of the most important, it deserves discussion. The references to her anger and poor choices may be brief, but when considered in the context of societal beliefs about women, emotions, power, and rulership, these references are quite telling.

Furthermore, while it cannot be expected that these narratives tell the stories with complete accuracy or that they represent the emotions and actions of these

⁴ See the "Introduction" of HN, lvi and onward for this list and its explanation in greater detail.

women as they happened in reality, especially when it comes to representations of emotions, what is found in the sources more likely depicts “what people thought other people would like to hear (or expected to hear).”⁵ This may leave historians in search of fact frustrated, but this knowledge is useful in its own way. Because emotions help “create, validate, and maintain belief systems,”⁶ the Empress Matilda’s expressions of anger and their representations in the sources can help scholars locate her actions within a scale of acceptability. Moreover, there are conflicting representations at work here. Because the interpretations of the Empress’s actions do not uniformly agree, it is easier to see how texts are not passive reflections of culture or cultural expectations, but a multiplicity of voices that contest the meaning of events and actions. The issue of women’s power in the Middle Ages was a problematic one for medieval writers, and the authors use historical and textual moments such as these to make judgments.

Sources

Because the main sources of the civil war between Stephen and Matilda are often heavily biased towards one side or the other, an explanation of their uses and limitations is necessary. One of the problems with the study of the conflict is that the historical sources are somewhat limited. Sources like the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which provides information until the early 1150s, lack detail, and can only be used to support the most basic of narratives. Many of the important chronicles of the period end in the 1140s, well before Stephen died in 1154, and many of those that do cover the whole period focus on territories outside of England.⁷ Orderic Vitalis’

Ecclesiastical History, for example, represents both of these problems. The

⁵ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 193.

⁶ Ibid, 196.

⁷ For example, of those discussed below, John of Worcester died in 1140, Orderic Vitalis in 1141, William of Malmesbury in 1142. The Chronicles of Richard and John of Hexham are excellent examples of chronicles that have specific regional foci. Although they do cover events across England, they tend to center their narratives on events in and around the priory of Hexham.

Ecclesiastical History is one of the most valuable sources for study of the Anglo-Norman world in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but Orderic seems to have died in the early 1140s, leaving any narrative of Stephen's reign incomplete. Although he covers the beginning of the war between Stephen and Matilda and even goes so far as to dwell at length on the battle of Lincoln itself, Orderic frustratingly decided not to cover the aftermath of the battle, except for a brief discussion of the Norman baron's choice to advocate for Theobald count of Blois after Stephen's capture. Further, because Orderic writes from a monastery in Normandy, he focused on Norman events. As a result, many details of Norman events are included, but not from elsewhere. Very few of the happenings in England are related, except that the king was taken captive and this caused a "great division in the kingdom of England," and "so troubles spread everywhere, far and wide, and England was filled with plundering and burning and massacres; the country, once so rich and overflowing with luxuries, was now wretched and desolate."⁸ While this lament is illustrative of the damage the civil war caused, it provides very little from which to analyze the reception of Matilda's actions in the aftermath of the battle of Lincoln. Orderic is useful, however, for examining social and military mores of the 12th century. He knew many of the secular patrons of his monastery, and many of them retired there later in life, providing him information about lay culture and mentalities.

Although John of Worcester may have originally intended to end his chronicle in the year 1130/1,⁹ at some point he appears to have chosen to continue his chronicle, gathering information and writing until it abruptly ends in the middle of 1140, probably with John's death. His manuscript up to 1130, however, was disseminated to

⁸ "Peracta itaque pugna et rege capto, dissensio magna facta est in Anglorum regno. ...Sic ad mundum malitia hinc et inde passim multiplicata est, et rapinis ac incendiis hominumque cedibus Anglia repleta est, et quae olim ditissima deliciisque affluens fuerat nunc miserabiliter desolata est." OV, 6:546-7.

⁹ The manuscript shows evidence of having been revised from the year 1128 onward, with erasures and rephrasings that indicate an author writing during King Stephen's reign. Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307*, 146.

at least five other monasteries, including Gloucester, where a continuator took his *Chronicon ex Chronicis* until 1141 and perhaps farther.¹⁰ Until 1121 or so, the *Chronicon* is essentially a compilation of other sources, relying heavily on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Eadmer's *Historia Novorum*, although the author does depart from his sources on many occasions.¹¹ But after 1121, the text seems to be original, and from this it derives much of its value.¹² The 1121 date also marks a more narrative and anecdotal style of writing, rather than annalistic entries, which provides greater detail about events. It is a mix of local and national history, providing access not only to the big picture of the Anarchy, but also personal details not found elsewhere about how the ravages of the Anarchy affected the area around Worcester and Gloucester.¹³ Gloucester was at the heart of the Empress's territories in England, and thus John and his continuator give a detailed overview of her and her followers' tactics and actions. What makes this text particularly interesting as well as frustrating is that while John appears to have been a supporter of Stephen, the Gloucester continuator seems to have been inclined towards the Empress. Neither, however, is wholeheartedly behind one party or the other, each criticizing both sides when they felt they acted inappropriately.¹⁴ The text, as a result, blends together criticisms of Matilda with those of Stephen. Stephen is depicted as a weak king, and his accession to the throne

¹⁰ The editors of *The Chronicle of John of Worcester* state that the Gloucester manuscript written by the continuator contains entries in John's hand until 1123, where it switched into another hand—with brief interruptions—until 1141. This continuation follows John almost verbatim, while adding details which John missed, like Matilda's actions after her arrival in Arundel and movements around Gloucester and Worcester in 1141. JW, 3:xl-xlv.

¹¹ JW, 3:xx.

¹² Gransden, 143-8.

¹³ JW, 3:xxxvii-iii. John repeatedly cites himself as a witness and highlights the accuracy of his account. He also in places feels it necessary to insert his opinions on the actions of others. For example, when he notes that in 1140 Stephen moved his army to Ely to "secure peace and end war," he remarks in the first person that he thinks it "was quite pointless" and "to be regretted since it much increased the great arrogance of his warriors by satisfying their passion for vainglory." Ibid, 3:280-1.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3:xlx.

marked by discord and violence.¹⁵ Yet at the same time, John never indicates that Stephen usurped the throne. He also sees good in Stephen, remarking with a great deal of longing, “Stephen is the king of peace. If he were only the king of firm justice, crushing enemies under foot, assessing all things with the balanced lance of judgment, protecting and strengthening with his mighty power the friends of peace.”¹⁶ Likewise, although John calls those who broke their oath to Matilda perjurers,¹⁷ he always refers to Matilda as “the former empress of the Romans, now countess of Anjou,” [dudum Romanorum imperatrice, nunc Andegauensi comitissa] and the “ex-empress” [eximperatricem],¹⁸ and never depicts Matilda as justified in her invasion, even going so far as to paint her rule in Worcester and Gloucester as cruel.¹⁹ It is only the Gloucester continuator that terms Stephen’s capture as achieved “by the just judgment of God” [iusto Dei iudicio].²⁰ As such, the *Chronicon* and its Gloucester continuation provide valuable insight into the early part of the conflict between Stephen and

¹⁵ Under the year 1138, the chronicle states: “After Henry [I]’s burial, and with Stephen as king, it was not long before there was much discord throughout England and Normandy, and the bonds of peace were torn apart. Each man rose against his fellow. Conflict arose, infiltrating the tall, massive, and diverse fortifications of both greater and lesser alike, and devastating everything. Each man plundered the goods of others. The strong violently oppressed the weak. They deter with threats any criticism of their actions. They kill those who resist. The rich nobles of the kingdom, in their affluence and wealth, are not in the least bothered by the way the poor are unjustly treated. They care only for themselves and theirs. They store castles and towns with necessary provisions. They garrison them with armed followers. They fear any change in the kingdom, not considering the divine dispensation: whose ways are past finding out. When all should be at peace through fear of the king, who should be as a roaring lion, there is in many places, particularly in Wales, depopulation and devastation. From this anyone can see with how little foresight and with what feeble power, with what injustice rather than with the justice due from rulers, England is governed. Temperance the mother of all virtues is scarcely to be found when greed and the petty search for every kind of honor everywhere rules.” Ibid., 3:216-19.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3:268-9.

¹⁷ The heading for John’s section on the oath is “Concerning the oath now altered through perjury to the peril of many.” He gives extensive coverage to the oath swearing, and concludes with what is an obvious later addition by saying “But alas, behold we see an oath turned into perjury. As Terence says, ‘Fawning makes friends, truthfulness hatred.’ But although this is true, God and His Christ and the Spirit descending from both, know this: if I were not afraid that the royal majesty would harm John’s head, I would assert that all the oath-takers were guilty of perjury. But may the God of all things to whose eyes everything is open and clear, so that He sees well and wishes all lords to be better, dispose all this in his mercy and compassion, as he knows so well how to do.” Ibid., 3:176-83.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3:268.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3:271.

²⁰ Ibid., 3:292-3.

Matilda.

Likewise, William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella* is a helpful source for the early period of the conflict. Focused mostly on the contemporary events surrounding Matilda's struggle for the English throne,²¹ it too ends before the conclusion of Stephen's reign because of the author's death.²² This enhances its usefulness, however, because the *Historia* does cover the battle of Lincoln and its aftermath, but stops shortly afterwards in 1142. This means it reveals not only essential details not found elsewhere, but, most importantly, it gives an account that is not shaped by later events and the ultimate success of the Angevin party. In 1142, with Stephen's release, the status quo between Matilda and Stephen was essentially the same as it was before the battle, and, with no end to the conflict in sight, the battle of Lincoln's significance might have appeared differently to William than it would to other authors. Further, the *Historia Novella* was commissioned by one of the important patrons of William's monastery of Malmesbury, Robert of Gloucester, and thus tends not only to glorify Robert, but also to be supportive of Matilda's cause.²³ He clearly admired Matilda, writing elsewhere that she "displayed her father's courage and her mother's piety; holiness found its equal in energy, and it would be hard to say

²¹ The work seems to have been commissioned no earlier than 1140, and it goes back to cover Matilda's return to England in 1125 after the death of her husband, Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. HN, xxix-xxx.

²² William of Malmesbury was one of the more prolific writers in England in the twelfth century, and certainly one of England's greatest medieval historians. He wrote widely, including commentaries, and saints' lives, as well as his two most famous historical works, the *Gesta regum Anglorum* and the *Gesta Pontificum*. His *Gesta Regum*, or "Deeds of the English Kings," covered British history from the arrival of the Saxons to the reign of Henry I, providing valuable information about the political history of England, and his *Gesta Pontificum* ("Deeds of the Prelates") is essential for those studying the history of the English Church.

²³ He is careful to repeat, for example, that oaths had been sworn to Matilda. He also refers to her 1139 return to England as "the year in which that formidable lady came to England to vindicate her right against Stephen" [*anno quo eadem virago in Angliam uenit, ius suum contra Stephanum assertura*]. He was also hostile towards Stephen. He writes "In the year of the Lord's Incarnation 1139, the poison of malice, long nurtured in King Stephen's mind, at length burst forth to be observed by all. Reports were being spread in England that Earl Robert might arrive from Normandy at any moment with his sister. And since, in expectation of this, many were deserting the king in deed as well as thought, he sought to assuage his own wrongs by inflicting loss on many." HN, 42-3; 44-5.

which was more admirable.”²⁴ Further, William not only likely knew and spoke with Robert, but also several other “actors” in the story, among them Bishop Roger of Salisbury and Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, both of whom were frequent visitors to Malmesbury. He was also present at legatine councils at Winchester in 1139 and 1141, which gave him first-hand access to texts, sources, and events in a way not available to other writers.²⁵ William thus provides a perspective not offered by other authors.

Several other sources do in fact cover the entirety of wars between Matilda and Stephen. These can provide insight not only into the Battle of Lincoln and its aftermath, but also into the frameworks needed to understand such an event. Perhaps the most valuable of these is the anonymously²⁶ written *Gesta Stephani*. It is unique among the twelfth century chronicles because it focuses solely on contemporary events of the civil war, and, although there are several significant lacunae, it is the only chronicle to cover in detail the whole of Stephen’s reign. It is also completely independent of other historical sources, providing a unique perspective on the events it describes. Furthermore, because it is not written with the hindsight provided by the successes of Henry II, it tends not to paint Stephen in as harsh a light as later chroniclers did, and it is more critical of the Angevin party, Matilda in particular. The *Gesta*’s author clearly supported Stephen. Not only does he praise the king, he also justifies many of Stephen’s failures.²⁷ At the same time, the author does see many of

²⁴ “...exhibebat patrem fortitudine, matrem religione; contendebat in ea pietas industriae, nec quod magis probares discerneres facile.” GR, 1:782-3.

²⁵ HN, xxiii-iv.

²⁶ There have been many theories as to who the author of the *Gesta* really was. For a detailed discussion by the *Gesta*’s editors, see GS, xviii-xxxviii, where Robert of Lewes, the bishop of Bath is proposed.

²⁷ Gransden, 190-1. For example, it was the “wantonness and drunkenness” and “pride and insolence,” as well as the “degraded and monstrous way of living” of the English people that caused England to be “tormented by so much internecine strife, such confusion of wars, so many crimes on every side.” Stephen is painted as a good king who is a victim of God’s greater plan. “So, though Stephen watched over the pacification of the kingdom with the greatest soldierly skill, though he continually wearied himself and his men with endless efforts in contending with the foe, yet did his success not equal his desire” because the Lord was intent on punishing the English for their sins. GS, 84-7.

the events in the beginning of Stephen's reign—King David of Scotland's invasion of England and Stephen's defeat at Lincoln—as punishment for the king's sins. The author also in turn seems to recognize Matilda's son Henry's claim to the throne as legitimate, making this source more balanced in its assessment of events than might at first seem obvious.

Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* also covers the whole reign, but his focus is much different from the *Gesta* and the *Historia Novella*. Henry is less concerned with contemporary events, for as he notes in his Prologue, the book was meant to “narrate the history of this kingdom and the origins of our people.”²⁸ Even further, Henry spends a good deal of his text charting the development of the English monarchy. Thus the wars between Matilda and Stephen are not only set within a *longue durée* vision of English history but also within the context of the English monarchy, making the *Historia* a valuable source for understanding how Matilda's actions as a potential ruler would have been perceived. Despite Henry's focus on the past, the *Historia* is thought to be contemporary from the year 1129 or so onward. But his chronicling of contemporary events is much less detailed than the previous parts of his history, and is filled with quite a bit of “providential interpretation.”²⁹ The *Historia* is also valuable because—like the *Historia Novella*, it tends to be supportive of Matilda's cause.³⁰ But because Henry of Huntingdon composed his text as a historical reader for a general public,³¹ it contains a level of exaggeration and literary illusion

²⁸ “...huius regni gesta et nostre gentis origines...decurrenda suscepi.” HH, 4-7.

²⁹ HH, lxii.

³⁰ He writes, for example, about Stephen's accession to the throne: “But in the time that followed [after the death of Henry I], which was set on fire by the mad treacheries of the Normans, what Henry had done [during his reign that might cause criticism]—whether in the manner of a tyrant or of a king—seemed, by comparison with worse, to be the summit of excellence. For without delay came Stephen, the younger brother of Count Theobald of Blois, a man of great valor and boldness, and trusting to his vigor and effrontery [*impudentia*], although he had sworn the English realm's oath of fealty to the daughter of King Henry, he challenged God by seizing the crown of the kingdom [*regni diadema Deum temptans inuasit*]. William, archbishop of Canterbury, who had been the first to take the oath, blessed him—alas!—as king.” Ibid., 700-1.

³¹ Henry of Huntingdon termed it as written for “the many (I mean the less educated).” Ibid., 585.

that is not found in the *Gesta*, and must therefore be read with care. Henry's penchant for romantic and didactic literature adds to its more "popular" nature, something reflected in the large number of copies that survived.³² Given its popularity, it is reasonable to assume his opinions are a reflection of popular belief.

Background: Matilda's Struggle for the Throne, the Battle of Lincoln, and its Aftermath

The Empress Matilda, daughter of King Henry I of England, arrived in England in 1139, intent on taking the throne from King Stephen. Stephen, her paternal cousin,³³ had ascended to the throne under suspicious circumstances after Henry I's untimely death without a male heir in December 1135.³⁴ Henry had on more than one occasion asked the barons of England to swear allegiance to Matilda,³⁵ but many in England were luke-warm at best about the idea of a female ruler. Not only was she

³² Over thirty medieval copies of the *Historia Anglorum* have been found, and at least five (with a possible three more) were made in the twelfth century. In an age when books were laboriously copied by hand, and the number of literate and scholarly were few, the survival of so many copies of Henry's text is amazing. Ibid., cxvii-cxliv.

³³ Stephen was the second son of Countess Adela of Blois, Henry I's youngest sister, ie the Conqueror's grandson by his daughter, Adela.

³⁴ Henry had had a son William who died tragically in a shipwreck in November 1120. Henry remarried shortly thereafter in January 1121 to Adeliza of Louvain, but the marriage remained childless.

³⁵ The first time was in January 1127 at his Christmas court, and is mentioned in multiple sources. According to John of Worcester, they swore to defend her loyally and against all others if she outlived her father and he left no legitimate male heir. The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* reports that Henry "uolebat enim illam post suam mortem in regnum Anglie hereditario jure succedere, fecit episcopos et archiepiscopos et abbatem potentiores necnon comites et satrapas totius Anglici regni sub artissimo sacramento illi fidelitatem hoc pacto promittere, quatinus ipsi pro suis uiribus obniterentur, ut eadem augusta, post decessum patris, monarchiam Majoris Brittannie, quam nunc Angliam vocant, obtineret." Likewise, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reported that with the King of Scotland there to help support his effort, Henry "had archbishops, and bishops, and abbots, and earls, and all those thegns who were there swear England and Normandy after his death into the hand of his daughter...." Henry had delayed as long as possible before making arrangements for Matilda to succeed, hoping that his new wife would bear an heir, but as this became less and less likely, Matilda became, in the words of Marjorie Chibnall, his "insurance policy." She had been married to the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V (1106-25), but after his death, Henry recalled her in an effort to solidify her claim to the throne. The second oath, reported only by John of Worcester, was at Easter Court 1128. There also seems to have been a third oath swearing in September 1131, after Matilda had married her second husband, in which oaths of those who had sworn previously were renewed and those who had not, were required. There may also have been oaths sworn again in 1133 after the birth of Matilda's first son, Henry, but this was reported by late sources, and therefore not entirely reliable. *ASC*, 256; *GND*, 2:240; Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, 1:186-7; *HN*, 6-9 (for the first oath), 18-21 (for the second oath); Ralph de Diceto, 1:246-7; *The Empress*, 51-2; 59.

female, but at the time of the first oath swearing she was a widow and childless, making her even more vulnerable. When Henry did provide her with a husband, he chose someone many of the barons heartily disapproved of: Geoffrey of Anjou, son of Duke Fulk of Anjou. Their distaste was likely three-fold. First, Geoffrey's role as consort to Matilda was undefined and many worried about Angevin rule when Matilda became queen. This worry was not abated by the fact the Henry himself refused to discuss Geoffrey's intended role, and likely hoped to yet have a male heir, which would have precluded the need to have the discussion in the first place.³⁶ Second, it also upset the balance of power within France, uniting Normandy and Anjou together against France. Given that many of Henry I's nobles in Normandy were also subject to the King of France, it put them in an awkward position.³⁷ Third, Henry I appears to have married Matilda to Geoffrey without consulting his barons beforehand. William of Malmesbury remarks that it was shortly after the marriage that men began "to assert, as though by some prophetic spirit, that after his [Henry I's] death they would fail to keep their oath," in particular Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, who reportedly told William himself that he had only sworn the oath on the condition that he was consulted in the matter of Matilda's marriage.³⁸ As a result, when Henry I died in Normandy in 1135, the succession, as it had been after the death of both his father and his older brother, was disputed. None of the sources agree about what Henry's last wishes truly were. Although William of Malmesbury states that Henry did indeed pass the throne to Matilda, the *Gesta Stephani* reports that the barons felt the oath they had sworn to her was done under duress, and that Henry, realizing this to be true, had

³⁶ This may explain why Geoffrey did not come with Matilda when she eventually invaded England and limited his activities to Normandy, which was the long-time rival much closer to Anjou and more relevant to his regional ambitions.

³⁷ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* remarks that Henry had Matilda "wedded to the son of the earl of Anjou, [who] was called Geoffrey Martel...despite the fact that it offended all the French and English." ASC, 256. See C. Warren Hollister, "Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman Regnum," *Speculum* 51:2 (Apr., 1976), 202-242.

³⁸ HN, 11.

absolved his barons of their oaths to Matilda on his deathbed.³⁹ Furthermore, a recent border war between Anjou and Normandy had led to a quarrel between Matilda and her father,⁴⁰ and many barons were even more concerned about Matilda inheriting the crown. Stephen, who must have known in advance that Matilda's accession to the throne was problematic for many of the barons, quickly crossed the Channel from Boulogne and went to London, where he was welcomed by the citizens, and later crowned with the help of his brother, Henry, bishop of Winchester, on December 22nd, 1135. Matilda, too far away in Normandy to beat Stephen to the punch, could do nothing to undo Stephen's *fait accompli*. Civil war was inevitable.

In 1139 Matilda invaded England in an attempt to take the throne. She

³⁹ Ibid., 13. The *Gesta Stephani* states that Henry "in his death-agony, when very many were standing by and listening to his truthful confession of his errors, ...plainly showed repentance for the forcible imposition of the oath on his barons." [...supremo eum agitante mortis articulo, cum et plurimi astant, et ueram suorum erratum confessionem audirent, de iureiurando uiolenter baronibus suis iniuncto apertissime paenituit.] *GS*, 12-13. The story is corroborated by John of Salisbury in the *Historia Pontificalis* where he reports that Arnulf, archdeacon of Séz, at a papal curia to decide the matter, asserted that Henry's oath had been "extorted by force and was conditional only," that he had only sworn the oath to support the Empress Matilda's right to the throne if another candidate was not found. He further stated that on his deathbed, "Henry changed his mind...and designated his sister's son, Stephen, his heir." Arnulf claimed that Hugh Bigod, steward of Henry I and future earl of Norfolk, and two knights were witness to Henry's change of heart, to which they publically swore before the Archbishop of Canterbury, causing him to change his mind and crown Stephen. This is also reported in Gervase of Canterbury, 1:94.

According to William of Malmesbury, however, Henry did quite the opposite, confirming that "when he was asked...about his successor he assigned all his lands on both sides of the sea to his daughter in lawful in lasting succession." Both the *Gesta* and William of Malmesbury were highly partisan—the *Gesta* for Stephen's side and Malmesbury for Matilda—so it is hard to decipher which version of events is more accurate. John of Salisbury reports only what he heard at the curia, not what he knew from personal knowledge. Although he follows Arnulf's testimony before the court with a condemnatory response by Ulger, the bishop of Angers, John does not pass judgment either way, only remarking that the Pope (Innocent II) refused to make judgment either way. Whatever the reality, however, the story that Henry had backed down on Matilda's inheritance of the throne, combined with Stephen's quick action and the acceptance of his claim by Londoners, provided the barons of England with just the impetus they needed to back Stephen, despite reluctance on some people's parts. John of Salisbury, *The Historia Pontificalis*, 83-85.

⁴⁰ C. Warren Hollister remarks that "Maud's [Matilda's] opponents in 1126 would probably have had no choice but to accept her in December 1135, had it not been for her violent break with her father several months before." By getting involved in the endemic warfare along the Angevin-Norman border, they lost support when they needed it most. Further, both Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni report a serious dispute over Norman castles that had been promised to Matilda and her husband at the time of their marriage. It could not have looked to the Anglo-Norman barons as if Henry really wanted Matilda to inherit at this point, despite any oaths they may have taken. *OV*, 6:444-5; *Chronique de Robert de Torigni*, ed. L. Delisle, 1:200. C. Warren Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World* (London, 1986), 162-4. See also *The Empress Matilda*, 61.

initially had the momentum provided by the support of her illegitimate half-brother Robert, Earl of Gloucester; her maternal uncle David, King of Scotland; Brian Fitz Count, Lord of Wallingford; and Miles of Gloucester,⁴¹ as well as the rebellion of Baldwin de Redvers,⁴² but her progress soon ground to a halt. The year prior to the battle (1140) was one of stalemate, as the two sides gained little ground. A full-scale civil war had yet to erupt, and efforts at peace were made, but these failed to resolve the conflict between the two parties.⁴³ While both Matilda and Stephen had their loyal adherents, many barons switched sides to suit their own needs and the reality of which army was nearby. As Marjorie Chibnall aptly describes it, “some [barons] kept the balance so delicately that even their contemporaries were uncertain which side, if any, they supported at a particular time.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Miles of Gloucester had originally declared for Stephen and was constable at his court in 1136. The king granted him the honor of Gloucester and Brecknock. But in 1139, he declared for Matilda who in 1141 made him earl of Hereford.

⁴² Baldwin was the only English baron to declare for Matilda from the very start, never accepting Stephen as king of England. He immediately seized Exeter, holding it against Stephen, although he later was forced to leave it when Stephen besieged him there. He then continued his rebellion from the Isle of Wight and then Normandy at the urging of Matilda. The *Gesta Stephani* reports: “But Baldwin, rejecting for the time being the pleasures of the court, girded himself with resolution to encourage rebellion against the king; he complained bitterly to his friends and relations of the king’s persecution, saying that he had been driven from his country and disinherited, had unjustly suffered banishment and exile, and therefore had fled to the only harbor of refuge open to him, that with strength and arms united they might try if they could in any way to improve his fortune. And those very distinguished men, showing their tender compassion for his complaints, aided him so vigorously with deed and counsel that they admitted him and his followers into their own castles and granted him without reserve the respect due to a lord. So he himself, with very numerous supporters, began to cause strife in the whole of Normandy, directed especially against the king’s adherents; he did not refrain from plunder or violence; he did not shrink from the sword or from arson; by sudden pillaging raids he carried everything away without pity; creating disorder everywhere he made himself a terror to all. The Countess of Anjou, King Henry’s daughter, was urging him to the commission of these deeds by continual entreaties and reminders, because on the death of her father King Stephen had appropriated his treasures, which it would have been more just to distribute to the poor for the benefit of his soul, and fortified some castles as his own property.” *GS*, 44-7.

⁴³ The first attempt at peace was made at a conference in Bath, where negotiations were led by Robert of Gloucester and Henry of Blois (bishop of Winchester and Stephen’s younger brother), Theobald archbishop of Canterbury and Stephen’s queen, Matilda of Boulogne. But neither side could agree who should decide how the succession issue should be settled—Matilda’s side arguing that the church decide, and Stephen’s side vehemently refusing to let this happen—and thus the conference resulted in a stalemate. Henry of Blois later travelled to France to meet with King Louis VII and Theobald, Count of Blois (his and Stephen’s elder brother), but neither could broker a peace. Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, 81.

⁴⁴ *The Empress Matilda*, 90.

But it was the actions of two such barons that finally gave Matilda her chance: Earl Ranulf of Chester and his half-brother, William of Roumare. Their mother had been a great heiress, and when Stephen came to the throne both brothers pushed for the return of lands they felt were theirs through her, including the castle of Lincoln. Towards the end of 1140, Stephen made some concessions, granting Ranulf the title of Earl of Lincoln, but did not grant him custody of the castle, which appears to have angered Ranulf deeply. Believing that the Ranulf and his brother were satisfied with the arrangements, Stephen appears to have left the castle lightly guarded. Although William of Malmesbury and the *Gesta* imply nothing untoward about Ranulf and William's actions in moving into the castle,⁴⁵ most of the sources agree that in Stephen's absence, the two brothers—clearly not pleased—decided to take by force what they could not get by grant, seizing the castle.⁴⁶

The battle, which took place on February 2nd, 1141, began as a siege, but developed into the only full-blown battle between Stephen and Matilda in the entire civil war. The citizens of Lincoln, either upset with Ranulf and William's seizure of the castle or, in the words of William of Malmesbury, "wishing to lay the king under great obligation,"⁴⁷ did not submit but sent for Stephen, who led an army to besiege the earl and his brother. Things went well for Stephen at first because neither Ranulf

⁴⁵ William even calls their actions "unsuspicious." HN, 80-1; GS, 110-11.

⁴⁶ Orderic Vitalis writes: "In the year of our Lord 1141 ... Ranulf, earl of Chester, and William of Roumare, his uterine brother, rebelled against King Stephen and, by a trick, captured the castle which he held at Lincoln for the protection of the city. They cunningly found a time when the household troops of the garrison were widely dispersed, and then sent their wives ahead to the castle under the pretext of a friendly visit. When the two countesses were passing the time there, laughing and talking with the wife of the knight who ought to have been defending the castle, the earl of Chester arrived, unarmed and without his cloak, as though to escort his wife home, and three knights followed him without arousing any suspicion. Once inside the castle they suddenly snatched crowbars and weapons which lay to hand and violently expelled the king's guards. Then William burst in with a force of armed knights, according to a prearranged plan, and in this way the two brothers took control of the whole city." Orderic Vitalis is the only source to give any details of the seizure of the castle of Lincoln, although Henry of Huntingdon, Robert of Torigni, and William Newburgh all also imply that the occupation of the castle was unwarranted. OV, 6:538-9; HH, 724-5, Robert de Torigni, 1:220. *The Empress Matilda*, 94.

⁴⁷ HN, 80-1.

nor his brother had apparently learned from Stephen's mistake about leaving the castles unguarded. The *Gesta Stephani* reports that, "the king, arriving suddenly and unexpectedly ... found the castle almost empty, except for the earl's wife and brother and a few of their adherents, whom the earl had left there... [while he] manag[ed] to escape by himself."⁴⁸ Ranulf's timely escape, however, allowed him to seek help from his father-in-law, Robert of Gloucester. After swearing fidelity to Matilda, he and Robert returned to Lincoln, and the king was eventually taken in battle.

With the king held securely in captivity, Empress Matilda pushed to have herself crowned queen. But she failed to take advantage of the situation, underestimating the limits to which she could push her baronage, the citizens of London, and the bishop of Winchester, Stephen's brother. Unable to convince either the ecclesiastical or lay elements of England of her legitimacy, she was forced to retreat from London. On November 14th both she and her illegitimate half-brother Earl Robert of Gloucester were trapped by a royalist army while attempting to take the castle of Winchester. During Matilda's flight from Winchester, Earl Robert appears to have allowed himself to be captured fighting the rearguard action against the forces of Matilda of Boulogne, Stephen's wife, allowing his sister to escape to the castle of Devizes.⁴⁹ With both men being held as captives of war, it was left to their wives—Matilda of Boulogne and Countess Mabel of Gloucester—to negotiate their release. Robert and Stephen were eventually exchanged and the other hostages from Winchester released after paying their ransoms.

As a result, the battle of Lincoln and its aftermath resulted in a return to the status quo.⁵⁰ The Angevins did manage to exact promises that the castles and lands

⁴⁸ *GS*, 110-11.

⁴⁹ This battle is known as the Battle of Stockbridge. See Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*, chapters 4-5, and Chiball, *The Empress Matilda*, 88-117, for more detailed explanations of the events surrounding the Battle of Lincoln and the seizure of Robert of Gloucester.

⁵⁰ The *Gesta Stephani* duly notes that things "returned to the earlier position of the civil war." The author laments this, remarking: "These were indeed harsh and ill-judged terms [the exchange of Robert

they had taken since their arrival in England would remain in the hands of Matilda and her followers,⁵¹ but Matilda seems to have lost almost all hope of gaining the throne. The bishop of Winchester, as papal legate, assured that those who had switched sides to join Matilda were not bound by their oaths, and although Matilda made efforts to gain new support, she was forced to send Robert of Gloucester to Normandy in order to find it. He was delayed there by Matilda's husband, Geoffrey of Anjou, who was more concerned with securing a conquest of Normandy for his son Henry than he was with installing his wife on the throne on England. While Robert was gone, Matilda suffered several losses, and, even when Robert finally returned, little was gained. Although she stayed in England until 1148, she never again had the opportunity that she had in 1141.

***“Dei igitur iudicio circa regem peracto.”*⁵² The Problem of Kingly Captives**

With Stephen's capture, Matilda was ready to ascend the throne, progressing slowly towards London and receiving homage along the way. All the sources, even those hostile to her, recognize that she was in a prime position to become ruling queen of England. According to the *Gesta*, after the battle of Lincoln, “the greater part of the kingdom was at once inclined to the countess and her adherents.”⁵³ Henry of Huntingdon reports that “she was received as lady by all the English nation except for the men of Kent,”⁵⁴ and William of Malmesbury states that “the greater part of England ... graciously accepted her lordship.”⁵⁵ John of Worcester, too, confirms that

of Gloucester for Stephen] and calculated to do harm to the entire country, but because there could be no peace and friendship between them for the moment, since the two parties were hotly at variance while negotiations were going on, this arrangement was made at last and gladly accepted by both sides.” *GS*, 136-7.

⁵¹ *The Empress Matilda*, 115.

⁵² *HH*, 738-9.

⁵³ “Sed tamen maior regni pars comitissae suisque se fautoribus continuo inclinavit...” *GS*, 114-15.

⁵⁴ Kent was a stronghold of Stephen's and in the hands of William of Ypres, one of his main military commanders. As Henry comments, “Imperatrix ab omni gente Anglorum suscipitur in dominam, exceptis Kentensibus, ubi regina et Willelmus Ypresensis contra eam pro uiribus repugnabant.” *HH*, 738-9.

⁵⁵ “Pleraque tunc pars Angliae...dominatum eius suscipiebat.” *HN*, 96-7.

Matilda received a good deal of support once Stephen had been captured.⁵⁶

Stephen's capture was not, however, the complete boon it may have at first appeared. While it opened up numerous opportunities for Matilda, it also left several complications that were not easily resolved. While some sort of confinement seemed to be a good solution for the moment, the issue of the long-term captivity made Stephen more of a problem than he had been as a free man. As Donald Matthew has noted, "By later standards, it may seem extraordinary that means were not found to murder him and so get him out of the way, as happened to four English kings in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the twelfth century, the murder of a king would have hopelessly compromised the position of his successor. Even to keep him in captivity was considered infamous...."⁵⁷ Within a matter of months of Stephen's capture, the throne of England had slipped through Matilda's fingers, and according to the sources, at least part of the reason was that Matilda mistreated Stephen while he was her hostage.

Despite the fact that Matilda's status as a hostage and captive-taker/holder does not appear to have been considered extraordinary in the sources, Stephen's treatment while in her care elicited almost universal condemnation. The *Gesta Stephani* reports that Matilda of Boulogne—Stephen's wife and queen—approached the Empress about the release of her husband shortly after the battle of Lincoln. The author writes:

Just about this time too the queen [Matilda of Boulogne], a woman of subtlety and a man's resolution, sent envoys to the countess [The Empress Matilda, who was also the Countess of Anjou by marriage] and made earnest entreaty

⁵⁶ "...The lady empress, King Henry's daughter...was ecstatic at this turn of events [Stephen's capture], having now, as she thought, gained possession of the kingdom, which had been promised to her by oath. Therefore, after taking counsel with her followers she...approached Cirencester. There...she received hospitality, and then imposed her rule. Leaving Cirencester, she approached Winchester, and there the bishops of almost all of England, many nobles, the chief magnates, innumerable knights different abbots with their monks, from the same city monks from two houses, nuns from a third house, chanting in procession hymns and thanksgivings, and the clergy of the city with all the citizens and crowds of people, all came to meet her in great state and pomp. Then the most famous city of Winchester was handed over to her, and the crown of the English kingdom was given to her rule." He then goes on to describe the joyful greetings she received in Wilton, Reading, Oxford, and Westminster. JW, 3:292-7.

⁵⁷ Donald Matthew, *King Stephen*, 103-4.

for her husband's release from his filthy dungeon and the granting of his son's inheritance, though only that to which he was entitled by her father's will; but when she was abused in harsh and insulting language and both she and those who had come to speak on her behalf completely failed to gain their request, the queen, expecting to obtain by arms what she could not by supplication, brought a magnificent body of troops across in front of London from the other side of the river and gave orders that they should rage most furiously around the city with plunder and arson, violence and the sword, in sight of the countess and her men.⁵⁸

William of Malmesbury also highlights Matilda's treatment of Stephen, even though he is the only chronicler to imply that Stephen may have been placed in chains out of necessity. William reports that, once transferred to Bristol, he was at first allowed his liberty, but when he was found outside his place of detention, Stephen was eventually "confined in iron rings."⁵⁹ But William also hints that this was not entirely just, for it was done "because of the insolence of some who said openly and continually, in an offensive way, that it was not to the earl's advantage to keep the king in a different fashion from what they themselves desired."⁶⁰ He certainly makes it clear that there was contemporary criticism in the months after the battle. He describes a letter from Queen Matilda that was read before a council held after the battle of Lincoln in which she complains that "cruel men...have cast [Stephen] into chains."⁶¹

John of Worcester also does not mention that Stephen was in chains at first.

He states that Stephen was placed "under close guard" first at Gloucester and then at

⁵⁸ "In huius etiam temporis instantia regina, astuti pectoris uirilisque constantiae femina, nunciis ad comitissam [of Anjou] destinatis, pro uiro ex carcerali squalore eruendo, filioque illius ex paterno tantum testamento hereditando, enixe supplicauit; sed cum duris et inhonestis conuiciata inniuriis, tam ipsa quam et illi, qui uice illius supplicaturi accesserant, suae petitionis compotes [minime] exstiterant, regina, quod prece no ualuit, armis impetrare confidens, splendidissimum militantium decus ante Londonias ex altera fluuii regione transmisit, utque raptu et incendio, uiolentia et gladio in comitissae suorumque prospectu ardentissime circa ciuitatem desaeuissent praecepit." *GS*, 122-23.

⁵⁹ *HN*, 86-7.

⁶⁰ "Succedenti uero tempore, propter insolentiam quorundam palam et probrose dictitantium non expedire comiti ut regem secus ac ipsi uellent seruaret, simul et quia ipse ferebatur plusquam semel, uel elusis uel delinitis custodibus, extra statutam custodiam noctu presertim inuentus, anulis ferreis innodatus est." *Ibid.*, 86-7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 96-7.

Bristol.⁶² But by the time Matilda had reached London, he evidently had been placed in chains, for John reports that “the queen of England [Matilda of Boulogne] interceded with the empress on behalf of her king, who was a prisoner under guard and in chains.” The “chief men and highest nobles of England” also pleaded with the empress on Stephen’s behalf, and “offered to give her many hostages, castles, and great riches, if the king were to be set free and allowed to recover his liberty, though not his crown. They promised to persuade him to give up the crown, and thereafter live a life devoted to God alone as a monk or pilgrim.”⁶³

Henry of Huntingdon tells a slightly different story which puts the blame for Stephen’s treatment squarely on Matilda’s shoulders. Whereas William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester place Stephen’s harsh treatment before Matilda’s flight from London, Henry places the event later. It was only after she was driven out of the city that she “ordered the king, the Lord’s anointed, to be put in irons.”⁶⁴

None of the four main authors suggest that Stephen’s treatment while in prison was the sole reason for Matilda’s failure to gain the throne. However, despite the fact that none of them can agree on exactly how it was that Stephen ended up in chains, Stephen’s mistreatment and Matilda’s refusal to release him from captivity are consistently highlighted as among of the more important reasons that the nobles and ecclesiastics of England turned away from her.⁶⁵

The consistent message in all four sources is that Matilda’s mistreatment of

⁶² “...primo ad Glocestrensem...., deinde ad Bricstouuensem urbem adductus et custodie mancipatus est.” JW, 3:292.

⁶³ “...interpellauit dominam Anglorum regina, pro domino suo rege capto et custodie et uinculis mancipato. Interpellata quoque est pro eadem causa et a maioribus seu primoribus Anglie, obsidibus multis, castellis et diuitiis magnis sue ditioni tradendis, si rex absolutus, non regno sed sue tantum redderetur libertati. Se enim ei suasuros sponderunt, quatinus regno dimisso, Deo soli, siue monachus siue pergrinus, exinde deseruiet.” Ibid., 3:296.

⁶⁴ “Irritata igitur muliebri angore regem unctum Domini in compedibus poni iussit.” HH, 740-41.

⁶⁵ The other main reasons seem to be her treatment of the citizens of London and her refusal to let Stephen’s son Eustace inherit the counties of Boulogne and Mortain, which had been bestowed on Stephen by Matilda’s father Henry I, and as such were Stephen’s prior to his assumption of the throne. HN, 98-101.

Stephen was a major blunder on her part. In Henry of Huntingdon, it is the event that directly precedes Matilda's rout at Winchester, and as noted above, in the *Gesta* it is Matilda's failure to release Stephen from his "filthy dungeon" that led the queen to raise an army and chase Matilda out of London. John of Worcester reports that she refused all the requests made of her while she was in London, including that for Stephen's release from captivity, and as a result, "a plot was made against her, and the Londoners who had received her with honor now tried to seize her with indignity. She was forewarned...and escaped shamefully with her followers, abandoning her goods and those of her men." When the bishop of Winchester saw this, he "began to think of setting free his brother."⁶⁶ While William of Malmesbury suggests that Matilda's refusal to give Stephen's son Eustace his father's lands was the "origin of all the evils that followed in England," Stephen's mistreatment once again plays an important role in Queen Matilda's complaints against the Empress, and his imprisonment serves as one of her pleas to Henry of Winchester in order to get his help.⁶⁷ As a result, Matilda's imprisonment and maltreatment of Stephen require a bit of contextualization and analysis. What was it that Matilda did that was so dreadfully wrong by putting Stephen into prison and chaining him up?

As noted in Chapter One, life-long imprisonment of high-profile and problematic captives was not unusual in Anglo-Norman England, and, like her father before her with Robert Curthose, Matilda faced a conundrum. She probably never had

⁶⁶ JW, 3:296-9.

⁶⁷ According to William, Henry of Winchester, who had assumed these lands would go to Eustace, was "enraged" when Empress Matilda refused to let this happen and promised them to others. As a result, he met with the queen and "influenced by her tears and offers of amends he resolved to free his brother." Although Robert of Gloucester attempted to make peace between Henry and Matilda, once she got wind of his betrayal, she led a troop to Winchester to besiege the bishop, and while she was there, she was eventually besieged by the forces of Queen Matilda. But I would like to suggest that this depiction of events is shaped by William's desire to allievate some of Matilda's fault in treating Stephen so harshly. Further, it sounds to me like this is an interpretation that would be favorable to Henry of Winchester, and a justified excuse for his leaving the Angevin party and returning to Stephen's camp. So while Matilda's refusal to grant Eustace his father's estates was likely a sore spot, I think that Stephen's mistreatment was just as important for the reasons suggested above. HN, 98-101.

any intention of releasing Stephen from prison. In fact, the *Gesta Stephani* reports that he was “to be kept there [in the tower of Bristol] until the last breath of his life.”⁶⁸ To release Stephen would make no sense. Why would Matilda release the enemy she had worked so hard to catch and one who would be unlikely to calmly resume being a mere lord, having once been king? Stephen would only become a rallying point for the barons Matilda had only recently received submission from (or had not received submission from yet), and thus his wife’s request that he be released was unreasonable from the Empress’ perspective. Further, despite whatever ability the barons of England might have had to sway Stephen to give up his throne, their request (as reported in John of Worcester) to have him freed so he could become a monk or pilgrim seems ridiculous and her refusal prudent. Even if Stephen had agreed, there were plenty of people in England willing to make trouble for the Empress in his name. Keeping Stephen in prison for life was the judicious choice.

Much of the problem for the authors of the contemporary sources, however, was not his imprisonment, but that Matilda mistreated Stephen, actions that reflected poorly on her. It would be easy to dismiss Stephen’s suffering in Matilda’s hands as malicious revenge against the man she perceived having stolen her throne and birthright. But even if this were true, things are likely more complicated than that. Again, as noted in chapter one, degradation of elite captives was not unusual in either the Anglo-Norman or the broader medieval European world by any means, and, we have seen that it was not uncommon for lords to purposefully abuse or threaten to abuse captives in order to press their advantage and gain concessions regardless of social status.⁶⁹ Matilda’s own experience as queen consort of Germany would have provided her with ample opportunities to see this for herself; her husband Henry even

⁶⁸ *GS*, 114-15.

⁶⁹ See Strickland’s arguments in Chapter One.

held prisoner the pope himself and his cardinals until they conceded to his demands.⁷⁰ Given this tradition, it is likely that this was at least in part Matilda's strategy. The scale here, however, is much grander. While the kings above used captive abuse as pressure to gain the surrender of castles, Matilda's capture of Stephen gained her the potential surrender of an army, a queen, and a kingdom. It is possible that she expected her mistreatment of Stephen and her disregard of requests for concessions would force what was left of Stephen's support—led by his wife—to surrender completely.

Matilda may also have been working within the cultural standard discussed in chapter one that rebels taken in active defiance of the king or their lord seem to have, in general, been punished more severely. Defiance and refusal to concede justified the harsh treatment and was one way for a lord or king to show his resolution that the rebellion or defiance was not acceptable or defensible. It is certainly possible that Matilda was making a deliberate effort to construe Stephen as a defiant rebel rather than a legitimate king. Stephen had sworn the 1127 oath to support Matilda's accession to the throne as Henry I's heir. By defying that oath and having himself crowned king, Stephen was arguably, in a technical sense, a rebellious lord, and therefore in Matilda's mind, the worst kind of criminal, worthy of harsh treatment. By treating him harshly and making no secret of it, Matilda may have wanted to shift the focus away from Stephen's royal status. In essence, she attempted to desacralize him, to make clear through her actions that he was never a king to begin with, despite any unction he may have received.

Matilda's actions in publically deciding the fate of captives, receiving hostages, and locking Stephen up indicate that she might have wanted to disseminate an image of herself as swiftly just and capable of waging war in order to demonstrate

⁷⁰ *The Empress Matilda*, 25, 50.

her strength as the rightful inheritor of the throne despite her sex. Since Matilda knew her claim to the throne had not been considered valid because she was female, she might have felt the need to prove that she had the authority and power to act decisively against those who crossed her. Stephen was the prime offender, and as such she might have wanted to make a clear example of him. Stephen was only a noble when he seized the throne. Although he was the king's nephew and the biggest secular landholder in England second to the king at the time, he was still only the Count of Mortain and as a second son not even heir to the Counts of Blois and Champagne. Matilda refused to acknowledge Stephen's status as king as legitimate and treated him according to his status prior to his assumption of the throne: as a recalcitrant noble. But whatever message Matilda may have been trying to convey to others by her treatment of Stephen, the nobles of England did not accept it. As far as they were concerned, Stephen's anointing as king changed his status irrevocably. As Henry of Huntingdon's comments suggest, many in England—even those likely to support her—saw Stephen as a consecrated king, whether or not he had assumed the throne honestly. As Marjorie Chibnall suggests, the capture of a king did not automatically mean he was deposed, 'whatever the circumstances in which he had originally seized the crown.'⁷¹ While she might have been mimicking her father in his efforts at strong justice towards criminals and traitors, she might have been wiser to take the example of his treatment of Robert Curthose, who, despite never having been anointed king, was thought by his contemporaries to have a legitimate claim as the eldest son of William the Conqueror. Stephen had a claim whether or not Matilda liked it. Even the pope had supported his accession to the throne; by 1136, Stephen had letters of support from Pope Innocent II, who reconfirmed his commitment to Stephen in 1139

⁷¹ *The Empress Matilda*, 96.

after Matilda had brought her case before the Papal Curia.⁷² Matilda could not erase the fact that there were many in England and Normandy who had not sworn an oath to her, or who, in the last days of her father's rule had felt unsure of Henry I's intentions. Nor could she deny that, usurper he may have been, he had been consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury and ruled England for six years at the time of his capture. Certainly Matilda should have been aware that many of both the lay and ecclesiastical barons understood Stephen as a legitimate king defeated in battle when Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury and "most of the bishops, together with a number of laymen," went to seek Stephen's permission to transfer their allegiance to the Empress "as the times required."⁷³ As a result, her choice of mistreating him became an example not of her political astuteness, but her inability to understand the rules of politics and war.

Further, as Annette Parks notes, the higher the status of the incarcerated individual, the greater the expectation that he or she would be treated with respect.⁷⁴ Likewise, Jean Dunbabin argues that while "chains were probably regarded as suitable for most people, it is apparent that they were perceived as demeaning to those of high status."⁷⁵ Once crowned, a king was supposed to be protected from poor treatment by his new and elevated status. This may be why William of Malmesbury was so careful to mention that Robert of Gloucester did not chain Stephen up out of "regard...[for] the splendor of the crown."⁷⁶ A harsh imprisonment of Stephen would inevitably cause a public outcry and cause worry among the barons of England about their own treatment in the future. If she could treat a consecrated king that way, they could likely expect no better. If, as John Gillingham has remarked, the civil war was "virtually unwinnable" for Stephen, because chivalric conventions limited his freedom

⁷² Ibid, 75-6.

⁷³ HN, 90-91. Stephen gave them "courteous permission."

⁷⁴ Parks, 199-200.

⁷⁵ Dunbabin, *Captivity*, 29.

⁷⁶ HN, 86-7.

to treat Matilda as he would have treated a man who challenged his throne,⁷⁷ Matilda, too, was limited in her ability by that very same code to punish Stephen in a harsh way. Her abuse of Stephen was therefore not read as the decisive action of as strong monarch, but the vindictive action of an over-emotional woman.

Ira Reginae? The Problem with Anger and Angry Women

Matilda's mistreatment of Stephen took on yet another nuance it did not for other abusers of captives. It became one way in which sources negative to her could not only suggest that she was unfit to rule, but that she was unfit precisely because was an angry, haughty, and overbearing woman. Even if certain parts of her behavior, like deciding the fate of hostages and captives were acceptable, once she went out of bounds, the sources reduced her behavior to a product of her femininity (or lack thereof) and therefore her inherent weakness. She became the justification for many of the sources as to why women were not supposed to rule alone, something the sources indicate was an issue when her succession was first proposed in the 1120s. Even if women did on occasion have to fill in for their husbands as Queen Matilda of Boulogne did, left to their own devices, women would go too far, and in the minds of the authors of the sources, Matilda's actions proved exactly how and why. As Marjorie Chibnall remarks, while Matilda may have learned statecraft from her father, Henry I, "some of his methods set examples she would have been wise not to follow.... Conduct acceptable in a powerful king whose barons had reason to fear his anger was not acceptable in a 'Lady of the English' fighting an uphill struggle to establish her authority."⁷⁸ She could not maintain the upper hand simply by retaining control over Stephen. Following Stephen's capture, Matilda's husband Geoffrey had

⁷⁷ "Indeed it was chivalry which made the civil war virtually unwinnable for Stephen since it meant that he was unable to treat his female rival in the way he would have dealt with a man." He is referring here to the moment of Matilda's arrival in England at Arundel, when Stephen let Matilda leave and go to Bristol rather than capture her. John Gillingham, "1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry", 209.

⁷⁸ *The Empress Matilda*, 62-3.

gone to Normandy to force the barons to a decision. When the barons there proposed their solution, it was not in Matilda's favor. Instead, they suggested that Stephen's elder brother Theobald, count of Blois, be given the throne and Stephen be released and granted the territories he had held before becoming king,⁷⁹ demonstrating just how much ground Matilda had yet to gain in her attempt to take the throne. Matilda may have felt completely justified in her actions and she may have considered them completely rational under the circumstances, but the chronicles clearly believed that she acted out of anger, without caution or forgiveness, and paint her as irrational as a result. Since she still faced resistance from the queen and those who remained loyal to the king despite his capture, and because she also needed to gain the support of the Church in order to be accepted and crowned queen, her choice to mistreat Stephen was, as Dr. Chibnal says, unwise. Rather than being read as justice, her treatment of Stephen was read as an example of her inability to control her on anger and therefore also a sign of her tyranny.⁸⁰

Three themes are important to consider in discussions of Matilda's anger. First, anger is often easy to find in medieval texts, historical and literary alike, because in the medieval understanding of anger, anger manifests itself physically. It so consumes the person experiencing it that not only does a person feel it internally, but also physiologically, and her or she expresses it through words, gestures, changes in physical appearance and facial expressions. This burning up with anger, in a much used image, is often considered involuntary, almost like a disease spreading through the body against which a person must vigilantly defend himself. Alcuin, writing in the 8th century, said that anger was so debilitating that it literally took over a person's ability to think and act. It was "one of the eight principal vices. If it is not controlled

⁷⁹ OV, 6:546-51; *The Empress Matilda*, 95.

⁸⁰ Annette Parks makes a similar conclusion about the treatment of hostages.

by reason, it is turned into raging fury, such that a man has no power over his own soul and does unseemly things. For this vice so occupies the heart that it banishes from it every precaution in acting and in seeking right judgment.”⁸¹ Medieval writers depicted the victims one infected as having red and visibly angry or fierce faces, pulling their hair out, throwing tantrums, eating straw, foaming at the mouth, bursting with rage, possessing burning eyes, gnashing teeth, and boiling blood.⁸²

Second, as Lester Little and others have noted, the standard Christian theological view of anger differentiated between a “vice that was self-indulgent and could be recklessly destructive and a righteous zeal that could marshal passion and thus focus energy to fight constructively against evil.”⁸³ Philosophers across the Middle Ages consistently highlighted the destructive nature of anger, pointing out not only how the individual was ruined by it, but also how anger threatened the whole surrounding community with chaos and destruction. Furthermore, Christian writers condemned anger because “from a theological perspective, anger was regarded as one of the central sins which guaranteed eternal damnation without any hope for ultimate salvation.”⁸⁴ Standards were higher for monks and nuns: the elimination of anger was especially necessary in order to pray and practice religion perfectly.

For the laity, however, “anger was an accepted aspect of the human condition that could have legitimate origins and could be made to serve legitimate ends.”⁸⁵ One of the few contexts in which anger carried some legitimacy was royal or kingly anger. While the just and merciful king was favored over the violent and angry one, anger had its place in the repertoire of emotional acts available to kings, even if it was

⁸¹ Alcuin, from the *Liber de virtutibus et vitiis*, as quoted in Geneviève Bührer-Thierry, “‘Just Anger’ or ‘Vengeful Anger’? The Punishment of Blinding in the Early Medieval West,” in *Anger’s Past*, 75.

⁸² Stephen White, “The Politics of Anger,” in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, N.Y., 1998), 136-7.

⁸³ Lester K. Little “Anger in Monastic Curses” in *Anger’s Past*, 12.

⁸⁴ Albrecht Classen, “Anger and Anger Management in the Middle Ages: Mental-Historical Perspectives,” *Mediaevistik* 19 (2006): 25-32.

⁸⁵ Little, 27.

frowned upon by medieval authors, especially ecclesiastical ones.⁸⁶ On the one hand, beginning in the Carolingian period, the Church, which “offered the ruler the advantage of sacral legitimacy and thereby the stabilization of his rule,...demanded from kings...conduct in line with Christian claims and norms,” in this case a king who was “patient, mild, and...ever forgiving.” Anger became anathema to the representation of good kings; in fact, “anger functioned...as proof that a ruler could not meet the demands of his office.”⁸⁷ To be angry was to fail as a king.

By the twelfth century, however, a new literary motif emerged in which the king could express just anger, or anger in a just cause. This new motif co-existed with the older one and “broadened the range of [a king’s] options and lifted the all too obligatory duty to leniency.”⁸⁸ It is likely that this motif reflected a long-standing reality that, however much ecclesiastics might encourage kings to act, the expectations of secular society were much different. As Paul Hyams explains, “the patience to suffer evil was not what secular magnates and barons wanted of their king. [...] The prime functions of a good king for them inevitably included such *impatient* actions as the defense of the realm from enemies without, maintenance of peace within, and the doing of good, strong justice on wrong doers.”⁸⁹ Even churchmen could not only justify but demand the king’s anger if it was directed against “infidels” and heretics, or disturbers of the peace of the realm, as Orderic Vitalis has Serlo, bishop of Séez, do in a sermon before Henry I of England.⁹⁰ But this liberty was limited to “just” anger. A

⁸⁶ Gerd Althoff, “*Ira Regis*: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger,” in *Anger’s Past*, 61. See also Paul Hyams, “What Did Henry III of England Think in Bed and in French about Kingship and Anger?” in *Anger’s Past*, 99.

⁸⁷ Gerd Althoff, “*Ira Regis*,” 65, 67.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 70-3.

⁸⁹ Hyams, “What did Henry III,” 99.

⁹⁰ “Just king, in this dire distress of your native land, ‘be angry’ to some purpose, and, as David, prophet and king teaches us, ‘sin not’ by taking up arms not for lust of earthy power but for the defense of your country.” [“Pro tanta natalis soli erumna probe rex utiliter irascere, et sicut Dauid propheta et rex commonet noli peccare, arma sumens pro defensione patriae non pro terrenae potestatis augendae cupiditate.”] The bishop is supposedly giving an Easter sermon to Henry in response to Robert Curthose’s lackadaisical rule of Normandy. OV, 6:60-67; quoted here from 62-65.

king could not arbitrarily harm his subjects or unleash unmitigated war against his barons or enemies, for if he did, he risked his kingdom. The rise of chivalry, reflected not only in courtly and epic literature, demanded generosity among friends and more merciful treatment of enemies, and meant that a king faced secular as well as ecclesiastical pressures to mitigate his anger and violence.⁹¹ Especially when dealing with factions or rebellious lords, it may have been in a king's best interest to act with leniency and bring former offenders back into the fold, as Henry III did in 1267 after Simon de Montfort's rebellion.⁹²

What this suggests is that, as Barbara Rosenwein proposes, in the Middle Ages, "an entire repertory of conflicting norms persisted side-by-side.... Some of these condemned anger outright; others sought to temper it; still others justified it."⁹³ As a result of dichotomous ambiguity in medieval discussions of anger, authors could wield descriptions of anger as weapons in their writing, describing both friends and foes as possessing different types of anger. As Stephen White has noted, "medieval emotion talk was often used in such a way as to suggest that when writers imputed anger to specific people, they did so, not because they had direct knowledge of their feelings (if there is such a thing), but rather because they considered this emotion appropriate to a particular situation. In other cases, writers represented emotions whose inappropriateness was supposed to be evident to all."⁹⁴ The anger of those of whom they approved was just and rightly motivated with proper results. For those they detested, anger was excessive or misdirected. As a result, examining an author's descriptions of moments of anger provides insight into how an author felt about a

⁹¹ Ibid., 107-8; 112-16.

⁹² Ibid., 122-3.

⁹³ Barbara Rosenwein, "Controlling Paradigms" in *Anger's Past*, 242-3. She cautions here, however, against letting Norbert Elias's idea of the "civilizing process" influence the history of emotions too much. To a certain extent, both Hyams and Althoff both appear to subscribe to a least a modified version of Elias's theory, albeit one that pushes his idea of a turning point back to the middle ages.

⁹⁴ White, 137.

specific person or their actions, revealing not only an author's personal bias but also illuminating medieval social values.

Third, while Christian writers encouraged all their readers to avoid anger at all costs, they especially admonished women, who were particularly prone to the sin of anger. In fact, Anger, or *Ira* in Latin, was depicted as a woman, a tradition that art historians believe dates back to the fifth-century text, *Psychomachia*, by Prudentius, which tells the epic story of the war between the virtues and vices. In this story and in the literature, art and images that resulted from this tradition, *Ira* appears as violent and disheveled with distorted features, or foaming at the mouth, a figure that eventually in her frustration at being unable to control her own violent behaviors, turns them upon herself, committing suicide with her own weapon.⁹⁵ Anger was also often associated with the Devil. In Christian writings, the virtues and vices were often spoken of in pairs, Patience and Anger were placed together, and Patience was associated with the actions of Christ, leaving Anger to be the epitome of the Devil.

Not only were women in general considered to be more, and often excessively, emotional, but specific emotions were thought to affect women in different ways than men. In particular, because in Augustinian thought women were deemed wet and cold, their anger lasted longer than that of men, whose temperament was hot and dry. As a result, while men could burn with anger quickly, their anger was also short-lived, whereas women, who were damp, smoldered over long periods of time. For men, then, any loss of reason associated with loss of control due to anger was short-term—what might be called temporary insanity—whereas women's anger was premeditated and their inability to overcome their anger in a short period of time was a sign of the “perpetually irrational state of women.”⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Little, 14. Kristi Gournay, “A Pugnacious Pagan Princess,” 137-8.

⁹⁶ Perfetti, “Introduction,” 5.

Descriptions of Matilda's anger and its relationship to her hostage-taking practice make it clear that the sources felt she let her anger get the better of her and that this was one source of her downfall. The *Gesta Stephani* makes this point most clearly. The author suggests that her actions and overly arrogant attitude were what really pushed people away. The barons of England, the ecclesiastical community, and the city of London had all been at least partially willing to submit to her. Her accession to the throne was to usher in a time of peace and prosperity. But rather than graciously forgive those who had previously chosen Stephen but humbly submitted to her, she took away their lands and titles. Drunk on power, she became "arbitrary, or rather headstrong, in all that she did."⁹⁷ Her anger was not perceived as being used in any sort of just cause, but in revenge for the wrongs she felt had been committed against her. According to the *Gesta*, she:

by reckless innovations...lessened or took away the possessions and lands of some, held on a grant from the king, while the fees and honours of the very few who still adhered to the king she confiscated altogether and granted to others; she arbitrarily annulled any grant fixed by the king's royal decree, she hastily snatched away and conferred on her own followers anything he had given with unshakeable perpetuity to churches or to his comrades in arms.

She also did not treat her own followers with respect, refusing to either stand in their presence or listen to them. Instead she acted on her own, without their counsel.⁹⁸

Furthermore, when she finally came to London with her army to be crowned and gain

⁹⁷ The author repeats this idea of her arbitrariness later, saying she "arranged everything as she herself thought fit and according to her own arbitrary will." See below for the Latin and citation.

⁹⁸ "Illa itaque in hunc supremi honoris cumulum tam gloriose tam et excellenter euecta, cuncta coepit potenter, immo et praecipitanter agere, et alios quidem, qui regi paruerant, quique se illi et sua subicere conuenerant, inuite et cum aperta quandoque indignatione suscipere, alios autem iniuriis et minis afflictos indignando a se abigere; istorum possessiones et terras, ut rex haberi permiserat, ordine indiscrete permutato minuere uel auferre; illorum feudos et honores, qui, licet perpauci, regi adhuc paruerant, distrahere ex toto et aliis permittere; quicquid rex decreto regali permissum statuerat, ore imperioso destituere, quicquid ecclesiis uel secum commilitantibus fixe et inconcusse donarat, abripere confestim et suis impendere; quodque plurimi fuerat supercilii et arrogantiae indicium, cum rex Scotiae et episcopus Wintoniae et frater illius comes Glaorniae, quos totius regni primos continuos tunc comites secum ductabat, pro quolibet supplicaturi, poplitibus ante ipsam flexis accesserant, non ipsis ante se inclinantibus reuerenter ut decuit assurgere, nec in postulatis assentiri, sed inexauditos quam saepe, tumidaque responsione obbuccatos a se inhonore dimittere; iamiamque non illorum consiliis, ut decebat et ut eis promiserat, inniti, sed suo quaeque prouisu, suae et dispositionis praesumptu, cuncta ordinare." *GS*, 120-1.

the support of the city, she demanded a large sum of money. The citizens told her that the war had hurt the city's wealth and asked for an extension on the payment until the city had recovered, but she arrogantly refused and angrily lashed out. She told them she would not spare them because they had given money to Stephen many times.⁹⁹ The Londoners immediately became regretful of their decision to support the Empress, for the "new lady of theirs was going beyond the bounds of moderation and sorely oppressing them," and they had no hope "that in time she would have bowels of mercy or compassion for them, seeing that at the very beginning of her reign she had no pity on her subjects and demanded what they could not bear." They decided to make a deal with the queen, "since having incurred a just censure for too hastily and too heedlessly abandoning the king they were in some fashion accepting, while he was still alive, the tyranny of usurpers that was laid upon them."¹⁰⁰

As the editor of the *Historia Novella* points out, her refusal to accept the grants made by King Stephen—one of the *Gesta*'s sore spots—was not all that remarkable because her own son would essentially refuse to do the same. The mistake was "one of policy, not personality."¹⁰¹ But regardless of what current historians may judge to be her mistakes, her own contemporaries saw her policy failures not only as examples

⁹⁹ "...cum immenso militum apparatu, rogatu Londoniensium, qui se illi supplices obtulerunt, ad ciuitatem postremo deuenit. Cumque ciues laetos se pacis et tranquillitatis attigisse dies, regnique infortunium in melius permutatum aestimarent, illa, ditioribus quibusque mandatis, infinitae copiae pecuniam, non simplici cum mansuetudine sed cum ore imperioso, ab eis exegit. Proinde cum illi solitas diuitiarum opulentias per regni dissensionem conquererentur amisisse, ad asperrimae famis, quae imminebat, releuandam inedia plurima impendisse, usque ad impudentem pauperiem regi semper obtemperasse ideoque pie illam et humiliter implorarent, quatinus calamitatis et oppressionis suae miserta, in exigendis pecuniis modum eis imponeret, iniungendis insoliti tributi angariis uexatis ciuibz uel paucio tempore parceret; deinde uero, cum sopitis per regnum bellorum tumultibus pax ex integro rediret stabilior, quanto amplius diuitiis dilatarentur, tanto obnixius ei suffragarentur. Talia his modis ciuibz prosequentibus, illa, torua oculus, crispata in rugam frontem, totam muliebris mansuetudinis euersa faciem, in intolerabilem indignationem exarsit, regi inquam Londonienses plurima et saepe impendisse; diuitias sua ad eum roborandum, se autem imbecillandam, largissime prorogasse, cum aduersariis suis in malum suum dudem conspirasse; ideoque nec iustum esse in aliquot eis parcere, nec exquisitae pecuniae uel minimum relaxare. His ciues perceptis tristes et inextincti ad sua discessere."

Ibid., 120-23.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ HN, lviii.

of her tyranny, but as intimately linked to her status as a woman. The *Gesta* makes this link between Matilda's tyranny and her gender explicit by considering her behavior un-womanly. Her anger was clearly the type that was considered out of control and unjust. It so powerfully consumed her that it could make her appear other than who she was. As soon as Stephen was captured, "she at once put on an extremely arrogant demeanor instead of the modest gait and bearing proper to the gentle sex, began to walk and speak and do things more stiffly and more haughtily than she had been wont...."¹⁰² Later when she was outside London, she acted "not with simple clemency/mildness, but with an imperious/domineering voice" [non simplici cum mansuetudine sed cum ore imperioso]. When the Londoners asked for a reprieve from the heavy financial burden she asked of them, her anger was so great that it physically manifested itself, going to far as to make her the embodiment of Ira herself: "she, with blazing eyes, her forehead wrinkled into a frown, every trace of a woman's gentleness removed from her face, blazed into unbearable fury" [illa, torua oculos, crispata in rugam frontem, totam muliebris mansuetudinis eversa faciem, in intolerabilem indignationem exarsit].¹⁰³ Her failure to act with a woman's "gentleness" and "clemency" drove the Londoners away.

Further, she failed to act with the restraint of a just ruler, regardless of gender. According to the *Gesta*, she went "beyond the bounds of moderation" and was "sorely oppressing them." They felt they had no hope that "she would have the bowels of mercy or compassion for them, seeing that at the very beginning of her reign she had no pity on her subjects and demanded what they could not bear."¹⁰⁴ Her anger was

¹⁰² ...illa statim elatissimum summi fastus induere supercilium nec iam humilem femineae mansuetudinis motum uel incessum, sed solito seuerius, solito et arrogantius procedere et loqui, et cuncta coepit peragere...."

¹⁰³ *GS*, 122-3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 122-5. "...noua illa domina discretionis metas transcendens immoderate se contra eos erigebat, nec futurae eam mansuetudinis uel pietatis habituram erga se uiscera sperabant, cum in primo iam regendi capite suorum nequaquam miserta intolerabilia eos postuleret: quocirca dignum consultu iudicarunt, ut cum regina pacis et cofoederationis pactione redintegrata, ad regem et dominum a

personal—the Londoners had helped her enemy, and therefore needed to be punished—and irresponsible at the delicate moment that was the beginning of a new reign. She seems to have underestimated or forgotten how powerful the Londoners truly were; they had, after all, practically made Stephen king. Rather than take their belated acceptance of her right to the throne for the gift it was and welcome the Londoners as subjects, she completely destroyed any chance she had of winning them over. Instead, they chose to return their loyalty to Stephen because of “the tyranny of usurpers that was laid upon them.”¹⁰⁵

Other sources also make the link between Matilda’s tyranny, her treatment of Stephen, and her gender. Her anger erupts because she is *too* womanly, again highlighting the medieval link between anger and femininity. According to John of Hexham’s chronicle, although the nobles agreed to make her queen, “she ... elated by a woman’s levity, assumed a majestic haughtiness of demeanor, and so she provoked the nobles by arrogant denunciations; she also declared that she would deal severely with King Stephen.” He then makes the direct connection between her choice to punish Stephen and her loss of the kingdom, remarking that it was on this account that “the legate Henry, bishop of Winchester, king Stephen’s brother, deserted from her, and very many were excited to enmity against her.”¹⁰⁶ Even Henry of Huntingdon, a source more favorable to Matilda than the *Gesta*, remarks that after her victory at Lincoln, Matilda was filled with “insufferable arrogance” [*superbiam intolerabilem*] and that as a result “she alienated the hearts of almost everyone” [*omnium fere corda a se alienauit*]. This was the reason she was driven out of London, and “provoked by this into a womanly rage, she ordered the king, the Lord’s anointed, to be put in

uinculis eruendum unanimiter conspirarent, quod pro rege nimis subito nimis et indiscrete relicto iuste notati, iuiunctam sibi nouorum tyrannidem quoquomodo spirante adhuc rege susciperent.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 124-5.

¹⁰⁶ Simeon of Durham, 2:309-10.

irons.”¹⁰⁷ For these authors, Matilda gave in to her base womanly nature, which was naturally prone to anger, and allowed her emotions to control her. Her emotions made her incapable of making the proper, rational kinds of decisions a king would have to make.

Only the *Historia Novella*, the source most favorable to her, refrains from placing overt blame on her unpopularity and failure to take the throne on her gender or tyrannical nature. Its author does his best to shift blame elsewhere. William focuses on the role of the Bishop of Winchester and the Londoners rather than the Empress. Here, they are the ones who are angry and cruel. First, William highlights the bishop’s role in the Empress’s rise to power. It is the bishop who urged the prelates and lords of England to abandon Stephen. He dismissively records the bishop as saying that it was too “tedious to wait” for the Empress to arrive from Normandy in order to be made queen, so he had supported his brother. So he soon began to regret his initial decision. He was “vexed to remember and ashamed to tell” of how his brother acted as king, “how no justice was enforced upon transgressors, and how peace was at once brought entirely to an end, almost in that very year,” and gives a list of Stephen’s transgressions. Because “God has executed his judgment on [his] brother in allowing him to fall into the power of the strong,” he then supports Matilda, “the daughter of a king who was a peacemaker.” When the Londoners and the barons demanded that Stephen be freed, it was the legate who answered their request negatively, and he also the one who refused Queen Matilda’s request to free her husband.

It is also the bishop who, in his anger, was responsible for Matilda’s downfall. He demanded from Matilda that she give Eustace, Stephen’s son and his own nephew, the lands which Stephen had held before he was king. Matilda refused, having already

¹⁰⁷ HH, 738-41.

promised them to others. The bishop, “displeased by this injury [*ille offensis iniuria*], kept away from court for many days and, though often summoned back, persisted in refusal.” He then made a pact with Queen Matilda to free his brother. The blame for her failure to keep London, William also places firmly on the Londoners, who also have uncontrollable anger. “But, behold,” he writes,” when it was thought that she was about to gain possession of the whole of England, everything was changed. The Londoners, who had always been under suspicion and in a state of secret indignation [*semper suspecti et intra se frementes*], then gave vent to the expressions of unconcealed hatred [*tunc in aperti odii uocem eruperunt*]; they even laid a plot, it is said, against their lady and her companions. The latter, forewarned of it and avoiding it, left the city gradually and calmly with some kind of military discipline.”¹⁰⁸ Given that William of Malmesbury was at this council,¹⁰⁹ his account of events may in fact be the most accurate, namely, that, contrary to what the other authors suggest, Matilda was not entirely to blame for what happened. But regardless of the truth, whether or not William was covering for his patron’s sister or the sources accurately depicted Matilda, most of the sources of the time chose to paint her as a haughty, tyrannical, and power-hungry woman whose gender got in the way of her ability to rule England.

Even William himself seems to have criticized Matilda for her behavior in the treatment of Stephen. Although he never actually states that Matilda placed Stephen in chains, he goes out of his way to state that Robert of Gloucester treated Stephen with the utmost respect:

Therefore the worthy earl of Gloucester gave orders that the king should be kept alive and unharmed, not suffering even that he should be the victim of any insulting language. Behold, he mildly protected in humiliation him whom he had just been furiously assailing when exalted in majesty, so that, controlling

¹⁰⁸ HN, 91-101.

¹⁰⁹ He writes “As I took part in this council, I will not deny posterity the whole truth of what occurred, for my memory is very clear” [*Cuius concilii actioni quia interfui, integram rerum ueritatem posteris non negabo; egregie quippe memini.*” Ibid., 91.

emotions of anger and joy, he both showed kindness to a relative and had regard, even in the person of a captive, to the splendor of the crown.¹¹⁰

The overall impression is that William feels the need to exculpate his hero and patron Robert for Stephen's treatment by overstating the chivalry of his treatment in the beginning. Robert is depicted as having respect for family as well as royalty and his actions are portrayed as having been made rationally and correctly. The fact that he is careful to point the finger away from Robert indicates that perhaps he was conscious of general criticism against him for Stephen's treatment at the time he was writing. He is careful to note that Robert of Gloucester controlled his emotions, in particular those of extremes—anger and joy—suggesting that William was aware that these emotions may have been an issue.

William also provides other clues that Matilda may have been prone to anger and perceived as a problematic ruler. He writes that while the legatine council was in session, Robert:

constantly with her, increased her prestige in every fitting way, by speaking affably to the chief men, making promises, either intimidating the opposition or urging it to peace by his envoys, and beginning the restoration of justice and of the ancestral laws and peace in every region that supported the empress. It was well-established that, if other members of his party had trusted his restraint and wisdom, they would not afterwards have endured such a turn of ill-fortune.¹¹¹

This description of Robert's actions reflects the person that Matilda should have been, which may have been William's point. Unable to criticize the sister of his patron openly, he presented Robert as a foil to Matilda. Robert did everything right: he spoke affably, rather than haughtily; he restored justice and made promises to the opposition,

¹¹⁰ "Predicandus itaque comes Glocestriae precepit regem uiuum et illesum asseruari, non passus etiam ullo exprobrationes conuitio illum proscindi. Ex quem iratus modo impugnabat regno fastigatum, placidus ecce protegit triumphatum, ut, compositis irae et letitiae motibus, et consanguinitati impenderet humanitatem, et in captiuo diadematis respiceret dignitatem." HN, 86-7.

¹¹¹ "Frater eius Rotbertus assiduus circa eam omnibus quibus decebat modis eius gloriam exaltare, proceres benigne appellando, multa pollicendo, diuersas partes uel terrendo uel etiam per internuntios ad pacem sollicitando, iam iamque in omnibus partibus imperatrici fautoribus iustitiam et patrias leges et pacem reformando. Satisque constat quod, si eius moderationi et sapientiae a suis esset creditum, non tam sinistrum postea sensissent aleae casum." Ibid., 96-7.

rather than demanding fees and disinheriting; he restored justice and peace, rather than ruling by the *Gesta*'s so-called "reckless innovations." Most importantly, he treated Stephen with respect and dignity, while Matilda did not.

The various descriptions of Queen Matilda of Boulogne also serve within the sources to highlight the links connecting the Empress's irrational anger, Stephen's mistreatment, and her inability to rule. William of Malmesbury's description of Queen Matilda's treatment of Robert of Gloucester is illustrative. When Robert was captured at the Battle of Stockbridge, he was handed over to the Queen, who placed him under house-arrest at Rochester. But as William notes, the Queen was careful to treat Robert with the utmost respect, perhaps directly in response to the Empress's mistreatment of her own husband. "The queen," William writes,

though she remembered her husband had been fettered by his orders, never allowed any chains to be put on him or ventured anything that would have dishonored his rank. Finally, at Rochester, for he was taken there, he was free to go to the churches beneath the castle when he liked, and to talk with whom he liked, at least as long as the queen was there.

When the queen finally did leave, he was kept "under open arrest," but was free enough to receive money from his men in order buy "some expensive horses."¹¹² John of Hexham also contrasts Queen Matilda with the Empress to prove his point that the latter was unworthy of the throne. Shortly after his depiction of the Empress Matilda as haughty, he writes that Queen Matilda worked hard to gain support for her husband. He writes that she "made supplication to all, importuned all with prayers, promises, and fair words." He then ends the whole narrative with a moral, saying "And God resisted the proud, and gave grace to the humble."¹¹³ The *Gesta Stephani* also notes a

¹¹² "Itaque regina, quae licet meminisset uirum suum eius iussu fuisse compeditum, nichil ei umquam uinculorum inferri permisit, nec quicquam inhonestum de sua maiestate presumpsit. Denique apud Rofacestram, illuc quippe ductus fuit, libere ad aecclesias infra castellum quo libebat ibat, et quibus libebat loquebatur, ipsa dumtaxat regina presente. Nam post profectionem eius in turrin sub libera custodia ductus est, adeo presenti et secure animo ut ab hominibus suis de Cantia accepta pecunia equos non parui pretii compararet, qui ei post aliquanto tempore et usui et commodo fuere." Ibid, 114-17.

¹¹³ Simeon of Durham, 2:310.

marked difference between the Empress and Queen Matilda. Whereas the Empress's feminine inability to control her anger leads her to tyranny and thus greater weakness, the *Gesta's* author admires Queen Matilda's strength, remarking that "forgetting the weakness of her sex and a woman's softness she bore herself with the valor of a man."¹¹⁴ These comments directly precede others about Queen Matilda's supplicating technique and its success as a tactic. Rather than demanding money and submission, she won over valuable friends "by prayer or price." The author also reports that she "humbly besought" bishop Henry to "take pity on his imprisoned brother and exert himself for his freedom, that uniting all his efforts with hers he might gain for her a husband, the people a king, and the kingdom a champion." Henry, "moved by the woman's tearful supplications, which she pressed on him with great earnestness and by a dutiful compassion for a brother of his own blood," began to contemplate ways to help her.¹¹⁵

The intended contrast between the two Matildas is obvious. Whatever rights the Empress may have thought she had, she went about gaining them in a fashion that the chroniclers heartily disapproved of, even those that tended to be supportive of her elsewhere in their narratives. She emerges as a woman unaware of the limits of her authority and the means to calm her anger and smooth over what was for many in England a hostile take-over of the throne. Whatever legitimacy her status as the daughter of King Henry I may have given her was completely obliterated by her perceived inability to control herself and negotiate the tricky political situation that resulted from Stephen's capture. If the barons inclined to support her had worried about the lawlessness of Stephen's reign, they appeared almost immediately to have become even more worried about the tyranny of Matilda. Robert of Gloucester and

¹¹⁴ "Regina...sexusque fragilitatis feminaeque mollitiei oblita, uiriliter sese et uirtuose continere...."
GS, 126-7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Queen Matilda, on the other hand, appear in the chronicles to have understood that winning over the barons required a light touch and promises that their rights, honors, dignity, and freedoms would be respected. More importantly, they seem to have realized that men and women in positions of need were not supposed to demand what they wanted outright, but present themselves as supplicants. The sources paint the Empress Matilda as unaware of—or at least unwilling to use—such methods. She demands rather than asks, just as she punishes rather than forgives.

Previous historians have read the complaints of the contemporary sources about Matilda's personality and taken them at face value, arguing that Matilda pridefully threw away her chance at the throne.¹¹⁶ And in some ways, this interpretation is at least partially correct. She appears to have misjudged how to treat Stephen, and in this, proved herself to be politically imprudent, or at least unaware that her actions would be construed so negatively. But as Marjorie Chibnall has suggested, the Empress Matilda was a politically astute woman who had the potential to become a good ruler by medieval standards. While married to her first husband, Holy Roman Emperor Henry V, he had relied on her to rule in his stead on many occasions, even during times of war.¹¹⁷ She apparently did an excellent job; several Anglo-Norman chroniclers claim that she was so loved in Germany that, after her husband's death, they wished her to stay.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, when she realized that her own chances of

¹¹⁶ See the list of scholars who take this approach in Jean Truax, "Winning over the Londoners: King Stephen, the Empress Matilda, and the Politics of Personality," *The Haskins Society Journal* 8 (1996): 43, nt. 2.

¹¹⁷ *The Empress Matilda*, Chapter 2.

¹¹⁸ William of Malmesbury writes that after the Empress had returned to England, "some princes of the Lombards and Lotharingians came to England more than once in the following years to ask for her as their lady." This is confirmed by Robert of Torigni in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, who writes that "the eminent princes of the Roman [German] court, well aware of her prudence and charming character, had expressed their wish while her husband, the emperor, was alive, that she would rule over them in every way and for this reason followed her to her father's court [when she returned to England] making this petition." Orderic Vitalis also writes that Matilda was well-loved in Germany, and that "The Empress Matilda returned to her native land after her husband's death, preferring to live among her own people although she was greatly loved abroad." HN, 4-5; GND, 1:240-1; OV, 5: 200-1.

gaining the throne were limited, she switched gears and successfully paved the way for her son Henry to assume the throne, which he did in 1154. She too clearly knew how to successfully manipulate people. Walter Map recorded in his *De Nugis*

Curialium [*Courtier's Trifles*] Matilda's advice to her son Henry:

I have heard that his mother's teaching was to this effect, that he should spin out the affairs of everyone, hold long in his own hand all posts that fell in, take the revenues of them, and keep the aspirants to them hanging on in hope, and she supported this advice with an unkind analogy: an unruly hawk, if meat is offered to it and then snatched away or hid, becomes keener and more inclinably obedient and attentive. He ought also to be much in his own chamber and little in public: he should never confer anything on anyone at the recommendation of any person, unless he has seen or learned about it.

Although Walter likely meant this as a criticism of Matilda and her son, as Marjorie Chibnall notes, "it reads like a lesson in practical statecraft."¹¹⁹ But this is a modern interpretation of Matilda's actions, and to her contemporaries "practical statecraft" was not the best response given the circumstances. Her treatment of Stephen, practical though it may have been, was seen as a sign of her disrespect for custom and nobility, and her inability to act without anger and vengeance. But more importantly, for better or worse, the Empress Matilda's mistreatment of Stephen and her governance more broadly were consistently linked to and seen as the direct result of her gender. Matilda did what her male contemporaries consistently did, seemingly expecting that her actions would be understood in the same light. But clearly her actions were read differently, and her chance at the throne was lost as a result.

¹¹⁹*The Empress Matilda*, 62. Walter Map's comment can be found in *De Nugis Curialium/Courtiers' Trifles*, ed. and trans. M.R. James, revised C.N.L. Brookes and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), 479.

Conclusion:

The Broader Implications of Women's Participation in Hostage and Captive-Taking Traditions

Just how important were women to hostage and captive-taking practices in the Middle Ages? Evidence suggests that they were extremely important, and that, as suggested throughout this entire study, medieval society did a great deal of agonizing over their fate. Moreover, there was a continuing concern about the fate of women who were affected by hostage- and captiveship into the Later Middle Ages beyond the scope of this study. The abduction of women became a treasonous crime in France, and King Edward III of England attempted to make it treason in England, as well, although he failed.¹ Women continued, however, to be captured in wartime. Joan of Arc is perhaps the best known of all medieval women captives. Her capture, trial, and execution are among the best documented.² Other, lesser-known women, however, also suffered in captivity. The Countess of Roucy, captured along with her husband in 1358,³ is just one among many.

Further, women from all levels of medieval society also continued to ransom. The Hundred Years War, with its seemingly never-ending conflict, provided plenty of opportunities for women. Jeanne of Penthièvre organized a ransom treaty for her husband, Charles of Blois, captured in 1347 at the Battle of la Roche-Derrier. She sent the ambassadors herself, although her attempts failed due to opposition from King Philip VI of France and Pope Clement VI.⁴ The biography of Saint Mary of Maille reports that her husband, Robert, was captured sometime between 1356 and 1360 and taken to the castle of Guernelle. It is clear that she was responsible for payment of his

¹ J. G. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2004), 12, 14.

² The bibliography concerning Joan is far too vast to even touch upon here. A good place to start is with Kelly DeVries' excellent study of her as a military figure. *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Stroud, Gloucester, 1999).

³ Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Fire* (Philadelphia, 2001), 405-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

ransom, for when she was late making payment, her husband was poorly treated in response. According to the miracle story, Robert prayed to the Virgin Mary, who rescued him. After returning to his wife, both Robert and Mary helped others who had been captured by providing ransoms. Mary is also credited with petitioning the French king to release captives condemned to death.⁵ Joan, wife of John Pound, citizen and merchant of London, asked the Mayor of London to help ransom her husband, who had been captured by the captain of the castle of Savetyngge in Flanders. Beatrice, wife of Reginald Fuller, a tailor, paid 8 marks to William Knott, for help in the release of her husband and another man who had been captured by the French and imprisoned in Boulogne.⁶ Moreover, images of female participants in warfare continued to be popular in medieval literature throughout the High and Late Middle Ages,⁷ and Christine de Pisan, writing in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, advised women to be knowledgeable about military matters.⁸

Thus the examples found in the chapters of this study do not stand in isolation. The evidence presented here, while tentative, suggests that further consideration of later sources would find that women as hostages and captives, ransomers, and the other roles explored here were a part of a larger medieval trend of women's participation in these activities. The question of significance remains, however. What does it mean that women did these things? How many women involved themselves in

⁵ Michael Goodich, *Violence and Miracle in the Fourteenth Century: Private Grief and Public Salvation* (Cambridge, 1995), 141.

⁶ Barbara Hanawalt, *'Of Good and Ill Repute: Gender and Social Control in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1998), 91-2.

⁷ Sarah Westphal-Wihl, "The Ladies' Tournament: Marriage, Sex, and Honor in Thirteenth Century Germany," *Signs* 14.2 (1989): 371-98; Helen Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," *Signs* 16.3 (1991): 522-49; L.K. Stock, "'Arms and the Woman' in Medieval Romance: The Gendered Arming of Female Warriors in the *Roman d'Eneas* and Heldris's *Roman de Silence*," *Arthuriana* 5 (1995): 56-83.

⁸ "We have also said that she ought to...know how to use weapons and be familiar with everything that pertains to them, so that she may be ready to command her men if the need arises. She should know how to launch an attack, or defend against one." Christine de Pisan, *Treasure of the City of Ladies, or: The Book of Three Virtues*, trans. Sarah Lawson (New York, 1985), 129.

these matters, especially in comparison to men? If many, what does this mean? If few, do they even matter, or can scholars safely dismiss them as anomalies? Why is any of this important?

What is clear from the sources is that women who desired or were forced by circumstances to assume active roles in hostage and captive-taking roles were caught between a rock and hard place. They lived in a society that on the one hand promoted or encouraged such behavior, yet oftentimes limited a woman's freedom to excel or stretch the boundaries of participation once she assumed that role. Further, what was acceptable for one woman in one place or time was not always for another woman under different conditions. While this study has attempted to find patterns and categories with which to speak about women who might have fought or helped men fight, what has perhaps been demonstrated most effectively is that there were no "roles" that were always at all times acceptable for women to play, only ones like the "suffering mother" or the "virtuous Christian ransomer" that were accredited more legitimacy. While some sources seemed to accept and even praise women who suffered valiantly as a hostage or captive or could commend a woman who loyally ransomed a husband or son, others were quick to condemn women they perceived as overstepping their bounds or, as in the case of the Empress Matilda, acting in ways that were not acceptable for women. Medieval writers never appear completely comfortable with women in any capacity that brought them to the political forefront and made them active participants in the power structures of medieval politics even as those same power structures essentially required women to function within them.

Despite authorial reluctance to accept women in such roles, however, the topsy-turvy nature of warfare created opportunities for women. Because war almost always shaped and was shaped by politics locally, nationally, and internationally, it allowed women who were directly or indirectly involved in it access to power

networks and positions that they may not have had more regularly in their everyday lives. Medieval warfare, because it blurred the line between “public” and “private,” allowed women to expand their influence outside of the domestic realm, even if medieval writers looked askance. Women were stereotypically supposed to concern themselves with domestic issues such as raising the family and maintaining the household, but when a husband or son needed ransoming, the provision of ransom quickly became a family matter not only because it was a family member that was in trouble, but also because ransom money, except at the highest levels, came out of a captive’s or hostage’s private funds.

Yet at the same time, this blurring of boundaries left many medieval contemporaries concerned about the nature of women and whether they were truly capable of handling the burden that war required those who participated in it to bear. Domestic concerns and familial duty were natural to women, yes, and war was one of the more important contexts in which these issues legitimately arose, but war also required, among other things, strength, rational thought, and control of one’s emotional and sex drive. Where, then, did that leave women who were by definition supposed to be weak-willed, easily frightened, sexually wanton, and physically fragile? This was a question with which medieval society repeatedly grappled, and to which it found no consistent answer.

Nor can specific numbers ever be achieved because of the nature of the sources, which tended to exaggerate figures at best and at worse not mention them at all, and in general neglect discussions of women. Women probably never outnumbered men in any of these roles, and as a result it is impossible to argue that they achieved any sort of dominance in them or that they became the preferred ransomer, hostage, or captive overall. But this study has established that women did participate in the ransoming, giving, and holding of captives and hostages and did

become hostages and captives in numbers never before acknowledged by scholars. They created their own tactics for successful ransoming, and co-opted those of men. Additionally, as argued in the chapters above, there were cases in which women were favored not only as hostage and captive-holders and ransomers, but were also preferred in the more passive roles as well. While female hostages were often avoided out of concern for the violation of women, they may in fact have been preferred as captives, not only for the sale into slavery, but also because of their symbolic value as representative of their families and their nations.

Moreover, like many historians, I tend to argue that what we see in the chronicles is only the tip of the iceberg. I have been able to show not only elite women involved in hostage and captive-taking traditions, but also, where records exist, women at lower levels of society doing so as well, which suggests that the practice, feature was widespread in medieval society. Not only did medieval women probably participate in greater numbers than historians can ever know, but they are part of a long-standing tradition of female participation in warfare across time. Scholars need to stop seeing them as aberrant or merely exceptions to the rules. As David Hay has noted, “the more one looks outside one’s field of specialty, the more one realizes that every age seemed to have its anomaly, whether her name was Brunhild, Irene, Matilda, Joan or Elizabeth. At what point do these exceptions become so numerous that they can no longer be deemed exceptional?”⁹

Part of the problem is that in the past, like the subject of women’s participation in warfare, non-combatant roles have received very little attention from scholars. This is primarily because much of the scholarship on the subject has tended to define “warfare” in a very limited sense when it concerns women, and only generally discusses women actually fighting or specifically in siege warfare. But, as this study

⁹ Hay, *Matilda of Canossa*, 253-5.

has highlighted, medieval warfare incorporated all sorts of essential activities to support the physical fighting that took place, and without which, medieval warfare could not have happened. In other words, to participate in warfare one does not necessarily have to be a combatant. What is needed, in essence, is a different typology of “warfare” that allows for roles that make the beginnings, middles, and ends of wars possible. While scholars of medieval warfare have been willing to incorporate an expanded understanding of the social aspects of medieval war and its effects on medieval society, they often appear less than willing to extend this same consideration to the subject of women. But scholars need to recognize that women participated in warfare not only as occasional combatants, but also as lords with their own knights, commanders, defenders of castles, regents for husbands and sons, raisers of troops, raisers of money and provisioners of armies, strategizers, instigators of war, the motivation for war, and as diplomats, peace-inducing marriage brokers, and truce-makers.

Furthermore, scholars should be careful not to place artificial chronological limitations on their understanding of women’s participation in medieval warfare. While some restrictions are necessary for the manageability of the subject matter, as in this study, scholars should be reluctant to follow in the footsteps of Megan McLaughlin, who argued that women’s participation in warfare sharply declined after the year 1000 when military institutions increasingly became associated with the state.¹⁰ The examples provided here tentatively suggest that such a boundary, at least in terms of women as hostages and captives and women’s ransoming activities, is problematic at best.

Nor should we limit ourselves to thinking that the relevance of medieval women’s participation in warfare pertains solely to the Middle Ages. The examination

¹⁰ McLaughlin, 201ff.

of women's military participation in the past has important implications for today. On the one hand, evidence like that presented in this study should help to overturn the commonly held belief that in the Middle Ages women's only wartime role was as the passive victim of male violence. Women's active and sometimes very enthusiastic participation in warfare goes back further than previously assumed, and modern historians will need to ponder not only their actual participation, but the medieval debate about the whether or not women were indeed capable of fighting at all. The disconnect between the theoretical belief that women were incapable mentally or physically of fighting and the reality that they were not only required by circumstance, but actually expected to participate in warfare on a regular basis by their male counterparts was as much alive now as then. Giles of Rome, for example, writing in the thirteenth century, stated that, because women lacked "a cautious and foreseeing mind" and "a robust and strong body" they were incapable of participating in warfare, and that men, who possessed "virile and manly heart[s]," were more suited to combat. Nor was he alone in these arguments: Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, and Ptolemy of Lucca, among others, all shared similar views.¹¹ Scholars may tend to think that these ideas are outdated, but they remain prevalent in modern times. In 1995, for example, Newt Gingrich gave a series of lectures at Reinhardt College called "Renewing American Civilization," in which he discussed the place of men and women in the modern United States military. He argued that:

If combat means living in a ditch, females have biological problems staying in a ditch because they get infections and they don't have upper body strength. I mean, some do, but they're relatively rare. On the other hand, men are basically little piglets, you drop them in a ditch, they roll around in it, doesn't

¹¹ James M. Blythe, "Women in the Military: Scholastic Arguments and Medieval Images of Female Warriors," *History of Political Thought* 22:2 (Summer, 2001): 242-269.

The issue of the gender of military commanders that was of great concern in the Middle Ages can also be seen in the modern debate over General Janis Karpinski, who was commander of all military police troops in Iraq at the time of the 2004 Abu Graib incident. See Katrin E. Sjursen's enlightening discussions of the connections between this event and its medieval precedents. "Factoring Gender into Warfare: Women Commanders in the Middle Ages and Today" (forthcoming).

matter, you know.¹²

Gringrich used many of the same ones that Giles of Rome did in the thirteenth century: they both assumed that women's lack of physical strength was an impediment to their participation in warfare. And while Gringrich's comments may have created an outcry at the time from both men and women, he is far from the only person to have ever expressed such beliefs. Not only has similar logic been used by the US military itself to justify the exclusion of women from combat, but such views are pervasive in American popular culture:¹³ women do not fight, should not fight, and have never fought in the past because they are biologically and physically incapable of doing so. Exploring women's wartime participation, however, can begin to unravel these specious arguments. Furthermore, grasping the earlier stages of the debate on women and warfare may help deepen our understanding of the development of gender roles and their relationship to warfare across the *longue durée* as well as the continuation of the debate in the modern world.

Thus, this study suggests important connections not only between women and medieval warfare, but also women and modern warfare. Most importantly, however, let me repeat what I said in the Introduction: the women considered here demonstrate again that women in the Middle Ages participated in warfare in valuable and significant ways both as victims and as active participants. Moreover, even when they did not participate directly, women were central to the way that medieval society understood war and the way that warriors understood themselves, their honor, and their duty as men and soldiers. Medieval writers agonized about what it meant for women to pick up a sword or to be around and to influence those who did. While the

¹² Kenneth C. Clatterbaugh, *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society*, 2nd ed., (Boulder, CO, 1997), 31-2.

¹³ See *Female Soldiers: Combatants or Non-Combatants? Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Loring Goldman (Westport, Conn., 1982); and Linda Bird Franke, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York, 1993).

complete study of women and medieval warfare has yet to be written, this study has attempted to bring to light one aspect of medieval women's participation in order to suggest the necessity of the more over-arching perspective. Medieval women in particular, but women in general, have for too long been ignored in historical studies of war. This is not to suggest that they need take up equal page space as men. But it is essential that they be reinserted into the narrative. If scholars do not do so, they are missing a key piece of the puzzle.

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