

“So Hard was it to Release Princes whom Fortuna
had put in her Chains:”¹ Queens and Female Rulers
as Hostage- and Captive-Takers and Holders

Colleen Slater

HOSTAGE- AND CAPTIVE-TAKING² were fundamental processes in medieval warfare and medieval society in general. Despite this importance, however, only recently have these practices received significant scholarly attention, and certain aspects of these customs have been overlooked; in particular, the relationship of women to these practices, which has been explored by only one scholar, Yvonne Friedman.³ Friedman’s work on female captives, while illuminating, only focuses on women as passive victims of war; that is, as captives to be taken, sold, or traded. In fact, the idea that women could only be victims of hostage- and captive-taking is almost universally assumed in the scholarship. But some women from the highest echelons of medieval society figure in the story as a good deal more than passive victims. The sources are littered with examples that not only illuminate the importance of women and gender to the customs/practices associated with hostages and captives, but also how women used them to exercise power and independence militarily, politically, and socially. Able to take matters into their own hands, these women played the game of politics, ruled their own or their husbands’ lands, and participated in the active taking and holding of hostages and captives. Examining these women is essential not only for expanding our knowledge of the more general processes of hostage- and captive-taking and holding, but also for understanding how and why women were able (or unable) to navigate them. Women could be significantly involved in taking or holding hostages and captives, and this could in some cases be understood by contemporaries as an activity women were regularly able to participate in.

A study such as this one, however, has even broader implications.

The sources' acceptance of women's engagement in these roles and their representations of women managing men and exercising 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, these examples provide the means to examine women's participation in warfare, politics, and society in general. This paper's purpose at the most basic level is therefore twofold: first, to illuminate a few of the many examples of women—for the purposes of this argument, queens and other female rulers, in particular⁴—as hostage- and captive-takers and holders in order to suggest that women performed such tasks with some regularity; and second, to place such instances in their historical context 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 difficulty. While previous cultures like the Romans regularly featured hostage- and captive-taking customs in their literature and art,⁵ medieval hostage and captive exchanges and negotiations are rarely treated with any detail in the sources,⁶ so the practices surrounding the taking of hostages and captives must be extrapolated from infrequent and often conflicting references. Further, while there may have been certain "rules" that were supposed to be followed in taking hostages and captives, those rules were often fluid.⁷ As a result, deciphering where women might or might not have fitted into the social "ritual" of these exchanges is not always easy. This essay marks an exploratory attempt at doing so. It will propose that women could participate in all aspects of hostage- and captive-taking from receiving the formal submission of hostages and determining the fate of hostages and captives to participating in the strategic abuse of hostages and captives to further their political goals.

A brief outline of some of the practices involved is useful here in distinguishing the similarities and differences between the two types. Hostage-taking and giving was in many ways very much like a legal agreement in that such occasions usually represented the formal, public submission of one party to another. As a result, such acts required certain formalities and understandings of purpose and meaning between the two parties. Yet at the same time, these practices can illustrate just how complicated such exchanges and their meanings were. For example, hostage

exchanges had a built-in expectation of proper treatment, especially of nobly born hostages. 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.”⁸ At the same time, however, hostage-givers knew that their hostages could be mistreated 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. Such hostage abuse, however, could stiffen rebellion against the hostage-taker or be seen as a flagrant call for war, especially if the hostage was of a high social status,⁹ and thus abuse was not something to be considered frivolously.

Captive-taking presents even more problems because while it, too, was an issue of submission, it was done in the heat or aftermath of battle, making the process much less formal or regulated. Captive-taking also had a greater amount of implied and overt violence: hostages were given, but captives were taken, which gave captives less protection in the eyes of medieval society. This may explain why, despite cultural admonitions to treat captives with care and kindness, medieval captors could more easily abuse captives without fear of retribution or social stigma.

Although the modes of hostage-taking often changed to fit the particular situation, unlike captive-taking, some more concrete generalizations about the process can be made. The first is that there are two broad categories of causes for taking hostages: finite and indefinite.¹⁰ 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 in exchange for land. The evidence suggests that the first three causes had a relatively high success rate because “these [are] less subject to the pressure of changed circumstances,” while the last of the four—a hostage for the return of land—appears to have had a higher rate of renegeing on the part of the hostage giver.¹¹ 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.¹²

Hostages, however, not only had a legal function, but also had 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.¹³ The value of a hostage “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 medieval rulers could use to display their power to and over both their own native populations and foreign ones.¹⁴ Because of these elements, grants of hostages often involved parties outside the three immediately privy to agreement (the giver, the receiver, and the hostage him/herself).¹⁵ In this way, hostage exchanges became a community event.

Historians, however, need to be careful in unpacking the language of hostage exchanges in the sources, and to “distinguish between those occasions on which the receipt of hostages demonstrated tangible subordination and those which projected power.”¹⁶ Taking hostages was one way rulers could try to make themselves appear stronger and their enemies appear weaker than they were in actuality, and the language of the sources can sometimes make a situation appear much more cut and dried than it really was. They may, for example, imply that those giving hostages rendered themselves subordinate to the hostage-taker, where the reality of the situation sometimes reflected otherwise. Likewise, taking hostages was not always about prestige, submission, and superiority; it often had very practical elements such as providing an extra incentive for warring 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, several historians have suggested that hostageship was in fact a type of mutually shared social language between different ethnic groups. It was a way for foreign adversaries to communicate their objectives to each other, especially in terms of peace and trade. Hostages were thus “mutually recognized personification[s] of a guarantee of behavior, demonstrable of honourable intentions.”¹⁷ Even when trade was absent

or interrupted and peace broken, the exchange or provision of hostages was one way in which both parties indicated that they understood the rules of the game.

To Have and to Hold, from this Day Forth: Queens 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, and suggests several ways in which they fit into the processes of hostage- and captive-taking noted above. 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 wartime victor might. She also set out to establish her status as a ruler by determining the fate of her enemies. 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 Empress.¹⁸ 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."¹⁹ John of Worcester reports that many of Stephen's followers were also captured and thrown into prison.²⁰ 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 are instead 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.”²¹ 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 under her sway.”²²

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.²³ Frustrated, she put him in fetters and threw him in prison.²⁴ Orderic Vitalis also reports that she used 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.²⁵ In this she seems to have been acting in accordance with traditional customs for the treatment of captives, as outlined by Matthew Strickland. 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 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 not applauded.²⁶

John of Worcester’s chronicle reports yet more examples of Matilda’s active involvement in the taking and treatment of hostages and captives. 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 to those in Bristol.²⁷ He also describes 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.”²⁸ John does not specify who the “mouthpiece” was; he may have 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 attempted without her knowledge and consent, so it is possible she might have ordered such an action. Taking hostages and captives, then, seems to be a political tool that Matilda was not only aware of, but, like her male colleagues, very capable of using.

Both the *Gesta's* and John's accounts are hostile to Matilda, and her choice to treat Walter and these other unnamed men and women of England as she did must be read with care.²⁹ The importance of these stories here is that Matilda actively took up the responsibilities of managing hostages and captives herself, seeing them as a means to gain political concessions, speaking with them directly, and choosing their punishments. As suggested above, taking and determining the fate of hostages was often not only a display of tangible power, but also a means of presenting oneself as in a stronger position than one really was. Matilda, prior to and despite the defeat of Stephen, was in no way guaranteed acceptance as queen of England,³⁰ and while some of the sources seem to suggest that she was moments away from taking the throne, her situation was tenuous at best. As a result, she appears to have used these early submissions, captures, and expulsions as ways of presenting herself as a strong, capable ruler in control of England and quelling concerns about her ability to rule.

Nor were her actions during the civil war her only experience with deciding the fate of hostages and captives, which suggests that her

involvement in taking hostages and captives was not merely the product of her attempt to take the throne. At least one other case is known in which she performed this task. According to 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.³¹ Moreover, while her treatment of hostages is sometimes construed as cruel, there is no indication in the texts that the authors found Matilda's taking and dealing with hostages and captives an unusual activity for a woman.

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.³² Nor can this be dismissed as merely an instance in which, 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.³³ Her ability to actively participate in warfare and make strategic military decisions had already been proven numerous times during her husband's reign, so determining Robert's fate was not out of character for her.

Other women also took hostages and captives in military situations, a further indication that the Matildas were not simply functioning in a unique set of circumstances that allowed them to act outside the normal bounds of female behavior. Women were capable of taking and controlling hostages and captives for many reasons, one of the most

important being righting a wrong done to another. 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].”³⁴ 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 during Simon’s rebellion against her husband. The *Saint Albans Chronicle* reports that his arrest was her doing, and that when the barons asked for his release, they had to consult with her as well as the king.³⁵

Property and lordship disputes could also produce situations in which women took hostages and captives. Matthew of Paris, for example, reports that in 1253 Floris, younger brother of Count William II of Holland and Zeeland, was taken captive by Countess Margaret of Flanders when he refused to do homage to her for the counties of Holland and Zeeland, which his brother William had given him after William was elected king of Germany. Margaret held Floris in prison for two years until his release by her eldest son, John d’Avesnes.³⁶ 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 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 appears to have been false and a case of Eleanor’s rapacity in acquiring property during her lifetime,³⁷ 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 rather frequently, suggesting that such

a method may have been a more common choice rather than an extreme one. Women often acted as lords of lands in their own right or as regents for male kin, vigorously defending their rights in the same ways as their male counterparts. They did not hesitate to use hostages and captives if necessary. After the death of her husband King John of England in 1216 and her return to her native land in 1220, Isabel of Angoulême³⁸ became involved in several violent disputes over the lordship of land. It seems that her son King Henry III of England had wanted Isabel to act as a viceroy on behalf of his interests in the south of France, but Isabel intended otherwise, asserting rights to property in Cognac that had not been in control of the lords of Angoulême since the 1180s. During these disputes, she took several hostages, including the two sons of the recalcitrant Bartholomew de le Puy, in order to protect herself should Bartholomew attempt to harm her.³⁹ 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 Hugh 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 asked him to turn over her dowry, which included Niort, the castles of Exeter and Rockingham, and money left to her by King 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.⁴⁰

Women could also receive or extort hostages as a part of peace agreements. 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.⁴¹ 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.⁴²

Other women were more captive- or hostage-holders than takers. As suggested above, hostage-taking rituals often involved parties outside the hostage-taker, giver, and hostage themselves, and it was not 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.”⁴³ 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 sometimes played this role of the third party. The early example in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* of Ecgrith, 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.⁴⁴ Queen Matilda of Boulogne, in taking over the care of Robert of Gloucester in 1141, may also have been fulfilling this role. In 1265, Queen Eleanor of Provence’s son, Edward, gave her custody of Adam Gurdon, an important supporter of the baronial cause, during Simon de Montfort’s rebellion against Henry III.⁴⁵ Queen Isabel of Angoulême appears to have had control over several of her husband King John’s hostages during his reign.⁴⁶ During the same year, the son of William de Braose, was attached to the household of

Eleanor de Montfort, Simon de Montfort's wife, as a hostage in the spring and summer of 1265.⁴⁷

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 the 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 mistreatment of a hostage could spark conflict. Taking hostages and captives 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 in 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 and directed his care personally. 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.

When the queen finally did leave, he was kept "under open arrest," but was free enough to receive money from his men in order to buy "some

expensive horses.”⁴⁸ William’s depiction of the situation appears rosy, but it masks the political tension caused by Robert’s capture. Queen Matilda’s husband, King Stephen, was still imprisoned by Robert’s sister, the Empress, and the Queen’s careful treatment of Robert may have been designed not only to shame the Empress for her mistreatment of Stephen, but also to indicate that she understood mistreating Robert might push the Empress to treat Stephen worse or refuse to exchange the two men. These 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.

Contextualizing Queens and Female Rulers as Takers and Holders of Hostages and Captives

The evidence presented here suggests that royal women were capable of participating in taking hostages and captives. They actively took them and exercised control over their fates, determining by themselves and negotiating with others about their housing and transportation. They used hostages and captives as political tools to further their own aims and ambitions and those of their families. Royal women used hostages and captives to gain land and force rebellious lords into submission. They helped to maintain peace and stability in tricky political situations by caring for hostages and captives with respect, but they also abused hostages and captives to demonstrate power and control and to present an image of strength and leadership.

While this may appear to be a rather limited or simplistic conclusion, the implications are potentially far-reaching. Like many historians of women and gender, I tend to argue that what we see in the chronicles is only the tip of the iceberg. Although this particular study has included only royal women involved in hostage- and captive-taking practices, the sources indicate that women at all levels of society participated in these activities, which suggests that the practice was widespread in medieval society.⁴⁹ 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 such activities 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?”⁵⁰

Further, the hostage- and captive-taking practices of queens connect to and further expand larger themes of women’s history illuminated by scholars. First, the examples presented here provide even more evidence that women continued to exercise power throughout the Middle Ages. Here I follow the trend of feminist historians in recent decades who have argued against the concept of a women’s “Golden Age” in the early Middle Ages that was followed by worsening conditions for women in the later Middle Ages. This lachrymose assumption about medieval women’s lives in the later period was applied to women of all levels of society, especially queens, and was advocated by many notable historians,⁵¹ most famously Georges Duby.⁵² He repeatedly argued in various contexts that women after the early Middle Ages 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, and castles, and therefore power, and without it, scholars argued, women were helpless pawns. 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—according to this theory, women became victims of their families and a patriarchal society that feared and loathed them. At the heart of this argument is the assumption that misogyny and patriarchy completely dominated medieval society. As a result, scholars depicted women as dominated and abused by violent male warriors, married off young, given no rights, and too often destined to die painfully in childbirth.

But as Pauline Stafford has remarked, “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.”⁵³ More recent studies of medieval women’s lives have suggested 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, especially at the highest levels.⁵⁴ The examples presented here demonstrate that royal women’s participation in hostage- and captive-taking spans both sides of the “Golden Ages” divide, further evidence that these women continued to exercise power throughout the High Middle Ages and beyond. In large part this may be because, as Eleanor Searle has wisely 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 comrades.”⁵⁵ 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. Medieval men relied on medieval women, especially those in the highest echelons of medieval society, to help them rule their lands and gain new ones, share their dynastic concerns, and further their dynastic goals. When we stop assuming that women could not be a part of the power dynamics of the Middle Ages, that they could not assert themselves aggressively to protect themselves, their rights, their families, and their lands, their participation in activities like taking hostages and captives does not seem unusual or abnormal, but part of a larger trend of female participation in medieval power structures.

Moreover, the sources do not present a clean dichotomy—life was either wonderful or abysmal—but present complex images of medieval women’s lives. 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. . . . [I]n daily life, gender did not always make men aggressive and women defensive.”⁵⁶ Gender as a category and misogynistic medieval writings about gender and women should not completely dominate our understanding of these women’s activities because “gender was not always formal and ritualized, not always trapped in the rulings of canon law or the conventions of secular romance; it was one thread in the web of human relationships. Among real men and women it was forever various and individual.”⁵⁷ The hostage- and captive-taking activities of queens and female rulers can help scholars to continue re-evaluating the dominance of the negative approach to medieval women’s lives. These practices offer an as yet unopened window through which scholars can better see how they experienced and functioned within the world around them in a multiplicity of ways both as queens/female rulers and as women. We can no longer assume that women were not involved in activities like taking hostages and captives by using the faulty logic that those are not things that *women did* in the Middle Ages.

Second, the data gathered here 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.⁵⁸ Taking hostages and captives have almost always been discussed—implicitly or explicitly—as the sole prerogative of males of the medieval warrior classes, part of their duties as they struggled to expand and protect their wealth, power, and domains and in negotiations with each other. But as the evidence suggests here, this assumption needs to be re-evaluated because it allows no room for queenly female participants like those documented here. Earenfight’s reassessment of monarchy and rulership, however, helps create space for including royal women in these activities. As she notes, “queens and kings did not live in isolation.”⁵⁹ The public/private dichotomy has 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.”⁶⁰ Kings also 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.”⁶¹ Monarchy and kingship are not synonymous, and as Earenfight suggests, by using the term “rulership,” and eliminating the public/private dichotomy, historians can move toward an understanding of power at the top that includes those other than the king. 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. Their exercise of power came through their 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.’⁶² The evidence presented here suggests that the care of hostages and captives may be yet another, little discussed role for royal and elite women, 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. Dealing with hostages and captives appears to be yet one

more way queens share in the power and duties of rulership along with their male counterparts. Overlooking evidence such as that presented here therefore 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—and as a result, hostage- and captive-related activities—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. But this exclusion needs to be rethought. First, despite the modern labeling of taking hostages and captives as “male” or “masculine” because it was a public and war-time activity, women clearly took and held hostages and captives. Second, the detention of hostages and captives in the royal or lordly household, often under the care of women, makes the categorization of hostage- and captive-holding as either a “public” or “private” issue ambiguous at best. This further demonstrates that the “public/private” divide is no longer a valid conceptualization of relationships between royal men's and women's roles. The living conditions of hostages and captives, especially high-profile ones, often resembled those of glorified household guests restricted in their access to the outside world. This makes taking and holding hostages and captives both profoundly “public” and “private” at the same time, and therefore the women who cared for them function in both realms. The confinement, treatment, and exchange of hostages and captives often had profound public implications for other, less militaristic aspects of the state like the negotiation 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 and vice versa. But as the evidence here suggests, women were active participants in these customs, and their participation warrants discussion.

Furthermore, 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.⁶³ Scholars should not, therefore, neglect to take notice of women who perform what have in the past

been considered “non-traditional” or masculine activities or consider these women aberrant as a result. Women clearly moved between the so-called “public” and “private” realms with regularity, and those who perform “public” or “non-female” activities like taking and holding hostages and captives need to be considered alongside those women who perform more “traditional” activities. Furthermore, the whole process of dividing women into categories of those who acted within traditional bounds and those who did not needs to be reconsidered. As more and more types of activities performed by women are being discovered and analyzed by scholars, it becomes clearer that as noted above, we need to take a more nuanced and individualized approach to women’s lives. This is not to say that there were not some activities that were considered more appropriate for women by their medieval contemporaries and others that were considered less so. But we should keep in mind that the boundaries of what was considered appropriate might vary according to all sorts of factors such as age, rank, class, location, and the individual circumstances of a woman’s marital and natal families. The two Matildas serve as an excellent example of this; both women, the Empress and the Queen, took and cared for hostages, but each woman’s reputation was affected differently. The Empress was widely condemned for her treatment of hostages—in particular, King Stephen—and Queen Matilda praised, even by the opposing side, for her treatment of Robert of Gloucester. This suggests that the circumstances, not their particular gender or the action of taking and holding a hostage or captive *per se*, caused the different responses to their actions.

Furthermore, the role of queens in hostage- and captive-taking practices suggests that scholars need to re-evaluate their role—and more broadly, the role of women—in medieval warfare. Often written out of contemporary chronicle and historical sources by mostly male ecclesiastical authors focused on the deeds of men, kings, and God, women have been often overlooked by scholars in discussions of medieval warfare. 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.”⁶⁴ As a result, we are left with 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 sources depict only the tip of the iceberg—is not an easy decision. But these examples, when placed in context with each other and with other evidence of women’s wartime activities, are telling. 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.⁶⁵ They were the cause of war and actively instigated it, raised money for troops, provided soldiers and supplies, led soldiers to battle, went on campaign with their husbands, gave advice about battles and military tactics, inherited, owned, controlled, and built castles for military purposes, organized defenses during war, brought water for troops, and provided encouragement during battle, negotiated the end of hostilities and urged peace, and served as peace bonds by marrying their family’s enemies. Nor were these activities unusual or inappropriate. 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.”⁶⁶ 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 those resources and deploying them when required. Moreover, women were literally surrounded by the accoutrements of war and grew up with it as a part of their everyday lives. 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.”⁶⁷ Women’s active assistance to their male counterparts in hostage- and captive-taking and holding must be placed, therefore, within this context, as well. Women were knowledgeable—indeed, expected to be knowledgeable—about these sorts of activities.

Taking hostages and captives was an integral part of defending castles, running estates, and many of the other activities women engaged in not only for themselves, but also on behalf or in place of their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers.

What all this evidence indicates is that taking and holding hostages and captives was not the sole prerogative of men or warriors, nor were the women who performed these tasks abnormal or exceptional because these activities were related to warfare and therefore off-limits to the average medieval female. Such practices were the right of rulers regardless of sex or whether or not they participated in battles. Although these queens 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 conditions of their captivity, and the political and social implications of their confinement. Because these women were queens—women who shared with their husbands the rights and duties of rulership—they were considered capable of dealing with hostages and captives. Despite the fact that they probably never lifted a sword, the queens discussed here were capable *as women* of arranging for punishments, ransoms, and hostages. The ruling practices of medieval monarchies need 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.

Borough of Manhattan Community College-CUNY

∞ END NOTES

1. William of Malmesbury, *Historia Novella: The Contemporary History*, ed. Edmund King, trans. K. R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 119. Hereafter noted as HN.

2. A definition of what constitutes a hostage and captive is perhaps useful here. Adam Kostó, on whose definitions I rely, 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. He acknowledges, however, that the terminology sometimes slips, not only in the use of the words for hostage (*obses*) and captive (*captivus*) in the sources, but also in situations where authors do not clearly differentiate their subjects as members of either category, sometimes making the process of distinguishing hostages from captives difficult. Kosto, “Hostages during the First Century of the Crusades,” *Medieval Encounters* 9, no. 1 (2003): 3–31; 7; Kosto, “Hostages and the Habit of Representation in Thirteenth-Century Occitania,” in *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe: 950–1350*, ed. Robert F. Berkhofer III, Alan Cooper, and Adam J. Kosto (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 185; Kosto, “Hostages in the Carolingian world (714–840),” *Early Medieval Europe* 11, no. 2 (2002): 123–47.

3. 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: Lang, 1995); Friedman, *Encounter Between Enemies: Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

4. This is not to say that other women did not participate in these types of activities. Quite the contrary. Women at all levels of society appear to have taken hostages and captives, although most examples feature women from the knightly, lordly, or royal classes. The limitation to queens and female rulers here is more or less in place in order to keep the data at a manageable level.

5. For Roman hostage taking practices, see Joel Allen, *Hostages and Hostage-taking in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9ff. As Allen remarks, “It would be fair to say that Roman writers—historians and otherwise—were obsessed with hostages.”

6. As 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.” Likewise, 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 allusions in chronicles and wills." Friedman, *Encounters Between Enemies*, 78; James Brodman, *Ransoming Captives in Crusader Spain: The Order of Merced on the Christian-Islamic Frontier* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 1.

7. The most glaring example of this is the mistreatment of aristocratic hostages and captives. While the general rule was that noble birth protected a hostage or captive from violence and harsh treatment, noble hostages and captives were regularly abused when it suited the needs or desires of the hostage or captive taker. See below.

8. Annette Parks, "Living Pledges: A Study of Hostageship in the High Middle Ages, 1050-1300." (PhD diss., Emory University, 2000), 198-9; 201.

9. *Ibid.*, 199-219.

10. This argument follows Kosto's definitions as outlined in "Hostages in the Carolingian World," with some modifications to reflect more recent studies.

11. "Kosto, "Hostages in the Carolingian World," 135-6.

12. *Ibid.*, 136-7.

13. *Ibid.*, 137-8.

14. Ryan Lavelle, "The Use and Abuse of Hostages in Later Anglo-Saxon England," *Early Medieval Europe* 13, no. 3 (2006): 270-4; 295.

15. Kosto, "Hostages in the Carolingian World," 144-5.

16. Lavelle, "The Use and Abuse of Hostages," 274.

17. *Ibid.*, 290-2; Kosto, "Hostages during the First Century of the Crusades," 3-6.

18. *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans, K. R. Potter, intro and notes R. H. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 75. Hereafter noted as *GS*.

19. 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, Willielmus Peverel, Willielmus 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.

20. John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, trans. Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 3:292-3. Hereafter noted as *JW*.

21. *GS*, 76-77.

22. Ibid., 80.

23. Ibid., 118.

24. Ibid., 119.

25. Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 6:512-15.

26. "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." Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 196-9; quote from 199.

27. JW, 3:270-3.

28. Ibid., 3:274-5.

29. 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 horror of events, because they were so close to home.

30. Matilda had been named heir to the English throne by her father, Henry I, but despite several oath swearings during Henry's lifetime to guarantee her assumption of the throne, the barons of England had overlooked her at Henry's death. While the details are too lengthy to present here, much of this had to do with the fact that she was a woman and that she was married to the Duke of Anjou, whom the Anglo-Norman barons considered a deadly enemy.

31. Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 53; *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Michael Swanton (London Phoenix, 2002), 256. Hereafter noted as ASC.

32. *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: Clarendon, 1981), 101-26.

33. 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: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

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

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

36. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London, 1872-83) 6.

37. John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile: Queen and Society in Thirteenth-Century England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), 218-19.

38. Renowned for her beauty, Isabel became the second wife of King John of England at the age of 12 in 1200, despite the fact she was promised to another man (see below). She was much younger than John, so when he died, she was still in her twenties. She was also Countess of Angoulême in her own right, which made her potentially an extremely valuable bride. Between John and her second husband, Hugh, she had fourteen children, all of whom survived into adulthood. As an active meddler in medieval English and French politics, often to seek her own political advantage, many of the sources are not favorable to her, especially English ones because she and her second husband sided against her son, King Henry III of England in the territorial disputes between France and England.

39. Nicholas Vincent, "Isabella of Angoulême: John's Jezebel," In *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S. D. Church (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 1999), 206-7. A letter from her to Pandulf, the bishop-elect of Norwich, about this matter survives, which even goes on to accuse Henry III of helping Bartholomew against her. W. W. Shirley, ed., *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III* (London, 1866), 1:32-4; See also *The Letters of the Queens of England, 1100-1547*, ed. Anne Crawford (Dover, NH: Sutton, 1994), 52-3.

40. Harold Snellgrove, *The Lusignans in England, 1247-1258* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1950), 10-15.

41. 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: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 81-85.

42. Dmitri Starostine, "Hostage by Agreement and the Language of Dependence in the Eleventh Century: Mutation or Corruption?" in *Latin Culture in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Medieval Latin Studies, Cambridge, September 9-12, 1998*, ed. Michael W. Herren, C. J. McDonough, and Ross G. Arthur (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 2:389-91. Starostine incorrectly dates the rebellion, which did not start until 1216, and Theobald was not captured until 1218.

43. Lavelle, "Use and Abuse of Hostages," 284.

44. The circumstances in which Ecgrith 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." Ecgrith'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 Ecgrith 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. See Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People; The Greater Chronicle; Bede's Letter to Egbert*, trans. Bertram Colgrave, ed. and intro. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 288-90. Nennius's *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: Routledge, 1991), 90, 94-95.

45. Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 56.

46. Vincent, "Isabella of Angoulême," 207.

47. John Robert Maddicott, *Simon de Montfort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 326.

48. HN, 114-17.

49. The evidence for women's participation in hostage and captive-taking is far too overwhelming in sheer volume to cover in one article; thus the more limited topic here. The broader social and political context of women's participation in hostage- and captive-taking is the topic of my dissertation, and I have discussed the evidence for more widespread participation therein. Colleen Slater, "'Virile Strength in a Feminine Breast': Women, Hostageship, Captivity, and Society in the Anglo-French World, c. 1000-c.1300," PhD diss., Cornell University, 2009.

50. David J. Hay, *The Military Leadership of Matilda of Canossa 1046-1115* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 253-5.

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

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

53. Pauline Stafford, "Women and the Norman Conquest," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., vol. 4 (1994), 249.

54. 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. Furthermore, there are examples like the Queens Eleanor and Marguerite of Provence and Eleanor of Castile from the thirteenth century, who appear to not only have been powerful, but also respected by their kingly husbands. See Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*; Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).

55. 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: Boydell Press, 1989), 282.

56. 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: Ashgate, 2002), 176.

57. *Ibid.*, 178.

58. Earenfight is not the first to suggest this. Louise Olga Fradenburg, writing in 1992, suggested a similar idea: ". . . 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.” For her discussion in more detail, see Louise Olga Fradenburg, “Introduction: Rethinking Queenship,” in *Women and Sovereignty* ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 1-3.

59. 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.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

62. *Ibid.*, 14.

63. 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.” Hay, *Military Leadership of Matilda*, 70.

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

65. 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: Columbia University Press, 2002) as well as all the articles in *Gendering the Crusades* 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 *A Great Effusion of Blood? Interpreting Medieval Violence*, ed. Mark D. Meyerson, Daniel Thiery, and Oren Falk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Helen Solterer, “Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval

France." *Signs* 16, no. 3 (Spring, 1991): 522-549; Jean A. Truax, "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: Boydell Press, 1999); James M. Blythe, "Women in the Military: Scholastic Arguments and Medieval Images of Female Warriors," *History of Political Thought* 22, no. 2 (Summer, 2001): 242-69; Helen Nicholson, "Women on the Third Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History*, 23, no. 4 (1997): 335-49; 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: Boydell Press, 2006): 119-36.

66. Truax, "Anglo-Norman Women at War," 111. She also notes that, in this sense, women were very much like male clerics. *Ibid*, 124-5.

67. Hay, *Matilda of Canossa*, 7-8.