

© Copyright by
Amy Michele O'Neal
May, 2008

PRAGMATISM, PATRONAGE, PIETY AND PARTICIPATION: WOMEN IN THE
ANGLO-NORMAN CHRONICLES

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department
of History
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Amy Michele O'Neal
May, 2008

PRAGMATISM, PATRONAGE, PIETY AND PARTICIPATION: WOMEN IN THE
ANGLO-NORMAN CHRONICLES

By: _____

Amy Michele O’Neal

Approved:

Sally N. Vaughn, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

Catherine F. Patterson, Ph.D.

Patricia R. Orr, Ph.D.

John A. Moretta, Ph.D.

John J. Antel, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Humanities and Fine Arts
Department of Economics

PRAGMATISM, PATRONAGE, PIETY AND PARTICIPATION: WOMEN IN THE
ANGLO-NORMAN CHRONICLES

An Abstract to the Doctoral Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of History

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Amy Michele O'Neal

May, 2008

PRAGMATISM, PATRONAGE, PIETY AND PARTICIPATION: WOMEN IN THE ANGLO-NORMAN CHRONICLES

This dissertation examines the chronicles written in England and Normandy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and explores how the writers of these histories perceived women. This study is meant to illuminate the lives of the women in the Anglo-Norman chronicles at every stage of life. While many modern books have addressed medieval women, they have attempted to deal with women more generally, looking at many areas and societies over hundreds of years. Other modern historians have focused on a few select women using evidence from the same Anglo-Norman chronicles used in this study. These historians, often times unintentionally, portray their subjects as extraordinary; this is simply not the case. Women like Adela of Blois, the Empress Matilda, and Queen Edith Matilda were the rule not the exception. The Anglo-Norman authors illuminate the lives of women at every stage of life and in every order of society. The chroniclers describe women who were wise and gave good advice, who were pious and showed it through patronage of the Church, and who were very active in society. This is their history.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Index of Tables and Charts	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction: Women in the Anglo-Norman Chronicles	1
Chapter 2: Antecedents and Models: the Bible, Mythology, and the Past	29
Chapter 3: Daughters: Girls and Young Women in the Family	67
Chapter 4: Wives: The Roles of Married Women	107
Chapter 5: Concubines: Wives Who Were Not Wives?	139
Chapter 6: Mothers & Stepmothers: Protection and Threat	157
Chapter 7: Widows: Most Helpless in Society?	189
Chapter 8: <i>Bellatores</i>: Women Who Fought	199
Chapter 9: <i>Laborares</i>: Women Who Worked	230
Chapter 10: Conclusion: Pragmatism, Patronage, Piety and Participation	252
Appendix I: The Muddled Case of William the Conqueror's Daughters	256
Bibliography	263

Tables and Charts

Table of Abbreviations

vii-viii

Abbreviations

<i>Adela of Blois</i>	Kimberley LoPrete, <i>Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord, c. 1067-1137</i> (Dublin: Four Corner's Press, 2007)
<i>ASC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> , edited and translated by Michael Swanton (NY: Routledge, 1998).
Dunbabin	Jean Dunbabin, <i>France in the Making, 843-1180</i> , 2 nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
Eadmer	Eadmer, <i>Historia Novorum in Anglia et Opuscula Duo De Vita Sancti Anselmi et Quibusdam Miraculis Ejus</i> , edited and translated by Martin Rule in the Roll Series, vol. 81 (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1965).
<i>EER</i>	<i>Encomium Emma Reginae</i> , edited by Alistair Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
<i>Empress Matilda</i>	Marjorie Chibnall, <i>The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother, and Lady of the English</i> (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).
Fauroux	<i>Recueil des Actes des Ducs de Normandie de 911 à 1066</i> , Edited by Marie Fauroux (Caen: Société d' Impressions, 1961).
<i>GND</i>	<i>Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumieges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert Of Torigni</i> in 2 vols.translated by Elisabeth M. C. van Houts. (New York:Oxford University Press, 1992).
<i>GPA</i>	William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Pontificum Anglorum</i> , translated by David Preest (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002).
<i>GRA</i>	William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Regum Anglorum</i> , vol. 1, edited and tranlated by R. A. B. Mynors and completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom. (Oxford: Clarendon

Press. 2006).

- GS** *Gesta Stephani, Regis Anglorum*, translated by K. R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).
- HH** Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, translated and edited by Diana Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
- Johns** Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).
- JW** John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, vol. 2 and 3, translated by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995-8).
- Matilda of Scotland** Lois L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003).
- RRAN** *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154*, edited by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913-69).
- Stafford** Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Woman's Power in Eleventh Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997).
- Strickland** Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queen of England from the Norman Conquest* in eight volumes (Philadelphia: J B. Lippincott Company, 1892).
- Women in Orderic Vitalis** Marjorie Chibnall, "Women in Orderic Vitalis" " in *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, vol. II, edited by Robert Patterson (London: Hambledon Press, 1990).
- WP** William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi of William Poitiers*, edited and translated by R. H. C. Davis & M. Chibnall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Chapter 1: Women in the Anglo-Norman Chronicles

This work in many ways is born out of the chroniclers who wrote in England and Northern France in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Women were an integral part of their society and fill the pages of their writings; yet, somehow these same women have been short-changed by later historians. By acting within the parameters of their family, these women accessed power, using their relationships to people within their family and community to expand their presence in the larger society. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers, like Orderic Vitalis, praise women at every stage of life and from every order of society.

This study is meant to bridge the gaps between general histories of medieval women and the more specific arguments from the biographies of a few select individuals or from shorter, more focused articles. While the Anglo-Norman chronicles have been used to piece together the lives of a few important women, they have rarely been examined in a more holistic manner to create a wider look at the place that women held in society as well as how these religious men viewed their subjects. While there are a few potential problems with using the Anglo-Norman Chronicles, they are largely un-mined sources that have waited until now to be used in reconstructing the history of the women within them.

The Chroniclers of the Anglo-Norman World

Since this work relies heavily on the writings of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, this chapter will discuss each of them individually and how they view women in their works. Even though the writers have certain things in common, each author has his own specific perspective of the world complete with specialized knowledge and biases. Once the reader has a better understanding of these religious men and their agendas, the words that they recorded will carry more and different meanings. While the chroniclers are most concerned with the important people and events around them, they include many topics from ordinary people and things to places and events worlds away.

Despite their differences in perspectives and biases, the chroniclers also have a number of characteristics in common. First and foremost, they are all religious men, clerks and monks. As such they had access to the best education and the time and energy to give over to recording the chronicles. Their writings were intended first as devotion to God and second to record history, participate in political interpretations, or to please their patrons in some other way. Their writings, just like their world, were simultaneously temporal and spiritual. Women are an integral part of the world that they record.

Orderic Vitalis

Orderic Vitalis is one of the most important sources for this work because of the sheer volume of his writings. First, he wrote a continuation of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*,¹ adding his own redactions to the original manuscript by William of Jumièges. Later, he wrote his most original and most thorough work, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a

¹ *Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni*, 2 vol.s, translated by Elisabeth M C van Houts (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

massive history which is available in six modern volumes. Born around 1075 in England, Orderic was an oblate who became a monk at St Évrout in Normandy around the age of 10, and he died there around 1141, the year in which he stopped writing.² Orderic records some autobiographical information, especially an account of his own childhood, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.³

While he focuses many of his writings on Normandy and its environs, Orderic Vitalis reports on events and people far and wide. Marjorie Chibnall states that the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,

remains one of the most valuable and readable of twelfth century historical works, fundamental to our understanding of feudal society, social custom, and monastic culture; and full of vivid, often penetrating portraits of the lives and characters of men and women, from kings and queens, lords and bishops, to simple knights, stipendiary soldiers, and even humble villagers.⁴

Orderic addresses the widest array of topics and is invaluable for the attention he pays to women, even seeming to record mere gossip on their lives.

Orderic has a very interesting attitude towards women. As a churchman, many of his writings are meant to serve as moral instruction, and he can be very judgmental of the actions of both men and women. Despite this his attitude towards women remains very positive. For example, Mabel of Bellême was often an enemy of St Évrout and she did many unsavory things in her life. While Orderic frequently castigates her, he also reports good things that she does. Sometimes, he seems to have a strange fondness for her even while describing her bad character:

² Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, 6 vol.s, translated by Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-83), I, 2-3.

³ He describes his childhood in several passages scattered throughout his work. For these descriptions, see: OV, I, 2-6, 22-8; III 6-8; VI 552-6.

⁴ OV, I, xvii.

This Mabel whom I mentioned was a forceful and worldly woman, cunning, garrulous, and extremely cruel. But she had a great respect for the man of God, Thierry, and though she was merciless to other men of religion she sometimes listened to him. So she brought her first-born son Robert of Bellême, whose name is now a byword for his cruelty to the wretched peasantry, to Thierry and Roger and the other monks at Séez that he might be washed in the holy font of baptism.⁵

While Mabel remains the villain in several episodes in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Orderic gives a measure of respect to even this *crudelis* woman and praises Mabel when her rare good deeds deserved such commendation. Orderic enables historians to reconstruct the lives of nearly a thousand women, but he is not the only prominent Anglo-Norman chronicler.

William of Malmesbury

William of Malmesbury also wrote at length producing numerous major works, including the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*⁶ and the *Historia Novella*,⁷ which are most important here. He also wrote a few works that were specifically focused on the Church.⁸ Since this work deals with secular women, these writings have not been included here. William was born around 1095 and wrote from Malmesbury although little else is known

⁵“*Praefata uero Mabilia multum erat potens et saecularis, callida et loquax nimiumque crudelis.*” OV, II, 48.

⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, vol. I, edited and translated by R. A. B. Mynors, completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁷ William of Malmesbury, *The Chronicles of William of Malmesbury*, translated by J. A. Giles (London: Bohn, 1968). This volume contains both the *Historia Novella* as well as an earlier translation of the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. The *Historia Novella* is used sparingly in this study because it is both short and in desperate need of modern editing and translation.

⁸ For these shorter, church histories, see: *The Early History of Glastonbury: an Edition, Translation, and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, edited and translated by John Scott (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1981) and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, translated by R. M. Thomson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

about him. He may have died around 1142, the date of his latest writings, although he may have lived long enough to make corrections to his manuscripts.⁹

William of Malmesbury began the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* with descriptions of the early history of the Anglo-Saxon kings based on Bede's writings, and he stopped writing around 1126.¹⁰ Despite being inspired to write by Queen Edith Matilda,¹¹ William of Malmesbury does not pay any special attention to women, even the queen herself. While the chronicler describes many women in the course of his work, quite a few of the women are unnamed. From the details he gives about them, their identity can be deduced; it is a mystery, however, why he chooses not to provide their names even when he certainly knew some of their identities. This is even more glaring an omission when he is describing women more contemporary to his writings. Like Orderic, William of Malmesbury is mainly positive towards women while still admonishing those who had strayed from the path of righteousness.

William of Malmesbury also authored the *Historia Novella* which is more narrowly focused on the years 1126 to 1142, the late reign of Henry I and early reign of Stephen; William of Malmesbury writes this shorter tract to explain the Empress Matilda's claims to and fight for the throne of England. William dedicated it to Robert of Gloucester, the powerful but illegitimate son of Henry I, who was not only the Empress Matilda's half-brother, but also her main supporter.

⁹ *HN*, vi-vii. For more information about his life and writings, see Rodney Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, revised edition (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003).

¹⁰ *GRA*, xxii-iii.

¹¹ *GRA*, 2, 6-8, and 14. Lois Huneycutt discusses Edith Matilda's relationship to William of Malmesbury and the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* in her biography. Lois Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 132-3.

Since the *Historia Novella*'s purpose revolves around the Empress Matilda, she has a unique position within the work. William of Malmesbury was clearly biased towards the empress and her cause, but he finds most of the other important women of the era, Matilda of Boulogne and Mabel, the wife of Robert of Gloucester, quite praiseworthy. Despite the presence of such powerful women, William of Malmesbury remains focused on Robert of Gloucester's role in the Anarchy. There are few women mentioned, but their names and connections are given unlike the women who appear in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. Admittedly, he knew more about these contemporary women as opposed to those women in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, whom he does not name nor give much information.

Henry of Huntingdon

Henry of Huntingdon wrote his *Historia Anglorum*¹² between 1129 and 1154, stopping and starting several times.¹³ Henry was a canon at Lincoln Cathedral and archdeacon of Huntingdon and dedicated his work to Alexander, bishop of Lincoln.¹⁴ The early portions of his work rely heavily on Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and other sections recall other authors, a fact which he himself acknowledges.¹⁵ Henry appears to have had access to materials that other chroniclers, like Orderic Vitalis, also used.¹⁶

In contrast to many of the other chroniclers, Henry of Huntingdon rarely mentions women and gives few details when describing them. At times, he seems even to minimize

¹² Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*, translated by Diana Greenway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

¹³ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England, c. 550-c1307* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 194.

¹⁴ HH, 2-6.

¹⁵ HH, 6.

¹⁶ Gransden, 199-200.

their presence. In discussing disputes between Henry I and his son-in-law, Geoffrey V of Anjou, Henry of Huntingdon writes, “Several times [Henry I] planned to return to England, but did not do so, being detained by his daughter on account of various disputes, which arose on a number of issues, between the king and the count of Anjou.”¹⁷ Henry of Huntingdon discusses Henry and Geoffrey, naming them in the passage, but here he introduces the Empress Matilda paying little attention to what role she might have played in the dispute between her husband and her father. He does not even name her. Despite this, his *Historia Anglorum* relates information about women that both corroborates the writings of others and also gives some additional information.

Eadmer

The *Historia Novorum in Anglia* by Eadmer focuses on the relationship between the Church and England’s rulers, most specifically the relationship that William Rufus and Henry I had with St Anselm.¹⁸ He mostly limits his writings to things that he has experienced firsthand, something which makes him unique among the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. Eadmer had been a child oblate at Christ Church, Canterbury and spent nearly his entire life there.¹⁹ His descriptions of the see of Canterbury, and especially the life of St Anselm, are extensive, although he gives less detail about other secular matters. Despite these shortcomings, he still provides one of the most complete accounts of the reign of William Rufus.

¹⁷ HH, 490.

¹⁸ Eadmer, *Historia Novorum in Anglia et Opuscula Duo De Vita Sancti Anselmi et Quibusdam Miraculis Ejus*, edited and translated by Martin Rule in the Roll Series, vol. 81 (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1965). This study also makes use of the later English edition: *Historia Novorum in Anglia*, translated by Geoffrey Bosanquet with a foreword by R. W. Southern (Philadelphia: Dufour Press, 1965).

¹⁹ Bosanquet’s *Historia Novorum*, viii.

Since Eadmer is most concerned with church history, women do not figure as prominently in his *Historia Novorum* as in the other works discussed here; however, Eadmer is the only source to deal exhaustively with the subject of Henry's marriage to Edith Matilda and the inquiry into the status of women who had fled into nunneries at the time of the Norman Conquest. Even if he mentions women infrequently, his praise of Edith Matilda is glowing.

William of Poitiers

William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi* is incomplete but what remains covers the years from 1047 to 1068.²⁰ William served as a chaplain to William the Conqueror before sitting down to write his account in the 1070's.²¹ Because of the years covered, the emphasis is on William's role as duke of Normandy rather than on his time as king of England. His work is thorough and even serves as a basis for Orderic's writings on William as duke of Normandy.²² William of Poitiers uses Dudo of St. Quentin and William of Jumièges' earliest version of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* as sources for his own writings although all of the authors were probably relying on some of the same oral histories as well.²³

Since the *Gesta Guillelmi* is limited to between 1047 and 1068, the most prominent women discussed are members of William the Conqueror's family: Emma of Normandy, the source of the Conqueror's claims on England; his wife, Matilda of Flanders; and his daughters. It can be assumed that William of Poitiers would have

²⁰ William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, edited and translated by R. H. C. Davis & M. Chibnall (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

²¹ WP, xv-xvi.

²² Most of the biographical information historians have gained actually comes from Orderic's writings. WP, xvi.

²³ JW, III, xxvii-xxviii.

described Herleve, the Conqueror's mother, but those portions of the manuscript are lost. Although William of Poitiers describes few women other than these, his writings are an important source for understanding the Conqueror's family. Much like Henry of Huntingdon, William of Poitiers is very matter of fact when describing these women. For example, when William returned to Normandy after the conquest of England, he found all was well, "for its government had been carried on smoothly by our lady Matilda, already commonly known by the title of queen, though as yet uncrowned."²⁴ Very few details of her regency are given although he is complimentary of her. The *Gesta Guillelmi* is not the only text to have been damaged; portions of the *Gesta Stephani*, *Regis Anglorum* have also been lost.

The author of the *Gesta Stephani*, *Regis Anglorum*

While historians do not know the name of the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, *Regis Anglorum*,²⁵ the account is important and useful for this study. The author gives an account of King Stephen's reign and is clearly slanted in favor of the king. It is also clear that he is a churchman. There are a number of Stephen's clerical supporters who could be the author. R H C Davis posits that the author is Robert of Lewes, an abbot and later bishop of Bath and Wells.²⁶

The biggest challenge with this source is its incomplete nature, as mentioned above. The chronicle must have originally contained descriptions of Stephen's time in

²⁴ WP, 178.

²⁵ *Gesta Stephani*, *Regis Anglorum*, translated by K. R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

²⁶ R. H. C. Davis, "The Authorship of the *Gesta Stephani*," in *English Historical Review* (Harlow, England: Longman, Green, & Co), vol. 77 (1962), pp. 209-32. Despite his impressive evidence, no one is quite confident enough to definitively attribute the work to Robert of Lewes.

Normandy in 1137,²⁷ the election of Theobald as archbishop of Canterbury,²⁸ Stephen's capture at the Battle of Lincoln,²⁹ and other events although none of these accounts have survived. Despite the missing sections of the manuscript, this is the most complete record of Stephen's reign and is therefore indispensable when studying England between 1135 and 1154, the time referred to as the Anarchy.

It has been assumed that since the author of the *Gesta Stephani* attacks the Empress Matilda, that the work is inherently misogynistic. This is an oversimplification, however, as the author is frequently positive of other women, especially King Stephen's queen, Matilda of Boulogne. When the Londoners begged the Empress Matilda not to raise taxes, the author does not mask his contempt: "The countess would not grow more merciful since she started with no pity."³⁰ Compare this to a passage elsewhere in which the author praises Matilda of Boulogne: "the queen, a woman of subtlety and a man's resolution, sent envoys to the countess."³¹ He castigates the empress as an enemy of Stephen's and not merely because of her gender.

John of Worcester

John of Worcester's *A History of the Kings of England*³² describes the years from 1067 to 1141, which includes some of the same years covered by the *Gesta Stephani*. While his work was previously attributed to Florence of Worcester, it is now known that John is the true author. In addition to John's writings there are anonymous additions to

²⁷ *GS*, 31.

²⁸ *GS*, 47.

²⁹ *GS*, 73.

³⁰ *GS*, 82.

³¹ *GS*, 81.

³² John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, volume II and III, translated by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995).

his manuscript.³³ John of Worcester was a contemporary observer of many of the events he describes, writing around 1140.³⁴ He uses other sources as the basis for his writings, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, but frequently elaborates or breaks away from those sources recording additional information.³⁵

Somewhere between Orderic's incredible detail and gossip and the sparseness of Henry of Huntingdon, John of Worcester's chronicle frequently mentions women but does so in a more matter-of-fact manner: "King Henry gave Mary, the queen's sister, in marriage to Eustace, count of Boulogne."³⁶ Since he was a contemporary observer, he adds much to our knowledge of events and people. Although it is more difficult to gauge his views of women, he is not judgmental or misogynistic.

The authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*

As mentioned above, there are a number of authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*. The work was begun by William of Jumièges writing in the 1050's. His writings were mainly based on the work of Dudo of St. Quentin although he added material from the reigns of the Norman dukes, Richard II, Richard III, Robert and William, often changing the text markedly. After its completion, the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* was redacted by at least four unknown monks who made minor changes to the manuscript over the next sixty years.³⁷ Orderic Vitalis redacted the manuscript again between c. 1109 and c. 1113 expanding the text in a few areas, especially the reigns of Robert and

³³ JW, III, xv.

³⁴ JW, III, xix.

³⁵ JW, III, xx-xxi.

³⁶ JW, III, 102.

³⁷ GND, I, xx.

William, and editing the text in others.³⁸ Robert of Torigni redacted the text again in the 1130's. He added genealogies as well as a history of his abbey of Le Bec.³⁹

While it is difficult to access the different attitudes of these various authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, they frequently mention women and are positive in their representations of them. Much of their focus is genealogies, and their attention to Duchess Gunnor and her family has allowed later scholars, such as Eleanor Searle, to reconstruct the predatory kinship of the dukes of Normandy.⁴⁰

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*⁴¹ gives descriptions of each year's most remarkable events beginning in the first year A.D. and ending in 1154. It is probable that the chronicle has its origins in the ninth century although it certainly captured oral histories from earlier centuries and recorded later events as they occurred.⁴² The chronicle is also written in Anglo-Saxon, while nearly all the rest of the sources used here are in Latin. There are a number of versions of these annals, which were compiled by many authors in various monasteries, although the E text or *Peterborough Chronicle* is the most complete version.⁴³ The different manuscripts often vary in wording, although the content is very similar. Because there are multiple authors from different areas and different times, the chronicle has a variety of points of view, although all are biased against the Normans.

³⁸ Orderic's changes are known as Redaction E. *GND*, I, xxi.

³⁹ Robert's changes are known as Redaction F. *GND*, I, xxi.

⁴⁰ Eleanor Searle. *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴¹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, edited and translated by Michael Swanton (New York: Routledge, 1996). Each citation lists not only the year in which the information was recorded but also which version of the text that information comes from.

⁴² *ASC*, xviii.

⁴³ The various versions of the annals were kept at Winchester [A], Abingdon Abbey [B and C], Worcester [D], Peterborough [E] and Canterbury [F]. There is also a fragment, known as H, that includes just a few leaves describing 1113-4 that is difficult to categorize.

While this is a challenge, sometimes two versions of the same event show distinct and opposing biases, a rare gift to historians.

For the purposes of this study, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has been used sparingly. This has been done for two reasons: first, only the later part of the chronicle was produced during the period of this study. The Anglo-Norman writers certainly read and incorporated parts of these earliest, Anglo-Saxon texts. For this reason, these early portions have been examined for comparison, but have not informed the conclusions of this study. Only the later portions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, certainly produced in the eleventh and twelfth century, have been used in the analysis of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers' treatment of women.

Secondly, this study has not used annals. While invaluable, the descriptions from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and other annals are often short and lacking in details; certain years' events are described in just one sentence.⁴⁴ The authors focus on the facts including very little analysis or opinions on these important events. Furthermore, there are so many annals, many of which remain unpublished, that a survey of these annals lies outside the framework of this study.

For the portions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which are Anglo-Norman, the text remains the most localized; the authors are very rarely concerned with events outside of England. This lack of detail and analysis can be most frustrating when studying women. Often the entries for year after year have little or no mention of women. It is also very difficult to glean from the sparse analysis how the authors viewed women. Despite these

⁴⁴ As an example, the entire text of 994 says simply that "Here Archbishop Sigeric passed away and Aelfric, bishop of Wiltshire, succeeded to the archbishopric." ASC, A, 994.

shortcomings, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is invaluable as a source of comparison with the other Anglo-Norman authors because it represents a non-Norman viewpoint.

Charter Evidence

While this study focuses on the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, occasional use has been made of other types of sources. Throughout the Anglo-Norman period, charters record the legal transfer of lands and other important rights and privileges from one party to another. Sometimes the chroniclers include important charters within the narrative of their works.⁴⁵ Most of the charters, however, were in the hands of the individuals or institutions that were affected by the charters. A number of collections of charters have been made and published over the last century or so. One of the most important of these is Marie Fauroux's collection of charters of Normandy from 911 to 1066.⁴⁶ Another collection, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, currently has four volumes which includes the charters of the Anglo-Norman rulers of England: William the Conqueror, William Rufus, Henry I, and King Stephen.⁴⁷

The charters frequently provide historians with details that chroniclers might gloss over. For example, chroniclers might discuss women without naming them. As legal

⁴⁵ For a simple example, see OV, III, 152-4 which records gifts given to St Évrout by Foucher, son of Gerard.

⁴⁶ *Recueil des Actes des Ducs de Normandie de 911 à 1066*, edited by Marie Fauroux (Caen: Société d'Impressions., 1961).

⁴⁷ *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154*, edited by H W C Davis and R J Whitwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913-69). The four volumes include: vol. 1- *Regesta Willelmi Conquistoris et wilhelmi Rufi*, edited by H. W. Davis; vol. 2-*Regesta Henrici Primi*, 1066-1135, edited by Charles Johnson and H.A. Cronne; vol. 3-*Regesta Regis Stephani ac Mathildis Imperatricis ac Gaufridi et Henrici Ducum Normannorum, 1135-1154*, edited by H. A. Cronne and R. H. C. Davis; and vol. 4-*Facsimiles of original charters and writs of King Stephen, the Empress Matilda, and Dukes Geoffrey and Henry, 1135-1154*, edited by H.A. Cronne and R.H.C. Davis. Also see, *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-87*, edited by David Bates (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). David Bates has reedited the charters of William the Conqueror and found new charters that were not included in volume 1. R H C Davis also found new charters for Stephen's reign which he included in an appendix to the 3rd edition of his biography: R H C Davis, *King Stephen, 1135-54*, 3rd edition (New York: Longman, 1990).

documents, charters are very precise with the names of women, their relationships to others within the document, and descriptions of the lands, other objects, and rights being granted as part of marriages and gifts to the church. Charter evidence, either from within the chronicles or from other collections like Fauroux, has been used here in order to reinforce the words of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. They are of particular importance to the reconstructions of marriages and women's patronage of the church. A number of modern authors have worked with these charters previously in order to describe the landed power of the Norman and Anglo-Norman nobility, both men and women.⁴⁸ It is not the intention of this study to cover this same ground, but rather to let some of these charters better inform the analysis of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers.

While the *Domesday Book* is not a collection of charters, it can be used in much the same way as the charters to give detailed accounts of lands and especially the value of those lands.⁴⁹ After William's conquest of England, the king ordered a survey to be prepared of all of his lands in England. It lists the name of those who had held the lands prior to the Conquest and at the time of the survey as well as some descriptions of the lands, their uses, and its value. In recording the people who held lands, the survey also elaborates on the relationships between landholders. Because of its unique nature, the *Domesday Book* can be invaluable in reconstructing relationships between people and their lands, much like charter evidence. Once again, it is not the intention of this study to recapitulate the works of others on patterns of women's landholdings.

⁴⁸ Emily Zack Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) and Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

⁴⁹ *Domesday Book* translated and edited by John Morris (Chichester: Phillimore Press, 1975). The *Domesday Book* appears in 38 volumes which include the survey, broken down by county, as well as an introduction and comprehensive indexes by John Morris.

Other Types of Evidence

There are a number of other letters, epitaphs, poems, sermons, and accounts that further elaborate on the lives of women. While this study remains focused on the Anglo-Norman chronicles, these other types of evidence are used throughout to create a fuller portrait of the women who appear in the chronicles. A few poems and epitaphs, like charter evidence, are imbedded within the chronicles although most have been gathered from independent sources.⁵⁰ Since these sources are used sporadically throughout this study, footnotes have been used to not only cite these sources, but also to give some background of the origins, biases, uses as well as potential problems with each particular source.

Potential Problems with Women in the Anglo-Norman Chronicles

One might question how much medieval spiritual men might truly be able to tell modern historians about secular women; however, women were a part of their lives in a number of key ways. First, some of the writers were not monks and while serving the church came into frequent contact with women. Second, even if religious men did not have wives, every one of them had a mother with whom he spent at least part of his life. Many religious men had close relationships with their mothers and also their sisters, if they had any.⁵¹ Women were an important part of their lives.

⁵⁰ As an example, correspondence still exists from a number of Anglo-Norman women. These letters can be found in a number of different collections. A recent website erected by Joan Ferrante of Columbia University has attempted to post as many letters as possible, edited and translated into English. See: <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/>.

⁵¹ Possibly the most detailed description of a relationship between a monk and his mother remains Guibert of Nogent's writings. Guibert's mother was a constant presence in his life and there is nothing to suggest that other mothers of monks were not a frequent part of their sons' lives. Guibert of Nogent, *A Monk's Confession: the Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, translated and with an introduction by Paul J. Archambault (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.)

Furthermore, monks were never as secluded from secular society as they sometimes might claim to be or may even have desired. Women were allowed within even the most isolated monasteries: “Only the monks and their servants live in the dark recesses of Thorney and serve God faithfully in security. No woman sets foot on the island unless she comes to pray, and none is permitted to remain there on any pretext; by the foresight of the monks, women are utterly forbidden to live within nine miles.”⁵² Notice that even in this most isolated area, where there were strict rules about the presence of women, they were still allowed, even expected, to come to pray and indeed must have been regular visitors.

Many women served as patrons of the church as an expression of their piety. For this reason, monks sought out powerful and pious women and cultivated relationships with them. These were important and necessary relationships that clearly brought the monks into regular contact with women and gave them intimate knowledge of these women’s lives. Women’s patronage will be discussed at greater length below.⁵³

Another assumed problem is that monks might shy away from bawdy topics or be in some way prudish. This is really not the case; to give one simple example, Orderic Vitalis has no compunction about discussing the pillow talk between Adela and Stephen of Blois and how Adela used all her feminine wiles to convince Stephen to go back on crusade.⁵⁴ All of the chroniclers are quite frank when talking about illicit sex, especially

⁵² OV, VI, 150. It is worth note that Thorney is not literally an island, but rather is set apart from the surrounding countryside by thickets of thorns and small streams. The thorns gave the monastery its name and provided for a certain amount of separation which the monks craved. Chibnall notes that Orderic Vitalis had first-hand experience with Thorney, having visited the monastery. Refer to note 6, OV, VI, 151.

⁵³ See below, especially Chapters 4 and 8.

⁵⁴ OV, V, 324.

about mistresses and concubines.⁵⁵ The chroniclers also describe all sorts of vice and sin, often in somewhat delicious and salacious detail. While judgment is usually not far behind, the monks recognize the fallibility of mankind and even other religious men and women. People were frequently judged for doing the wrong things but there is little talk of hellfire and brimstone. In fact, since the Anglo-Norman chroniclers were writing in order to give moral instruction, they were even more likely to mention the vices in all their scandalous detail.

There is also an assumption that religious men and their writings are inherently misogynistic. This argument is frequently tied to ideas that these men could have little understanding of secular women and is just as untenable. A number of recent works have analyzed the misogynistic trend of medieval writers across space and time. Alcuin Blamires has written two books that argue that while there are certain medieval writers who forged misogynistic patterns that most writings did not unquestionably follow those patterns.⁵⁶ John Baldwin argues a similar thesis while looking more specifically at the texts written around the year 1200 in Northern France.⁵⁷ It will be clear throughout the rest of this work that while Anglo-Norman chroniclers could be harsh and unforgiving towards women at times they were, however, more likely to praise women.

Modern Historians of Women in the Anglo-Norman World

While there are many histories of medieval women, a thorough study of secular women in the Anglo-Norman world has not been done. Historians during the nineteenth

⁵⁵ For a full discussion of mistresses and concubines, see below Chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) and *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: an Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). This anthology is a collection of texts translated and edited by Blamires.

⁵⁷ John W. Baldwin, *The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).

and early twentieth centuries mostly neglected the role of these women in history. While historians have focused more on women beginning in the mid-twentieth century, most research on medieval women either remains very general or is focused on a few individuals, all members of the upper nobility.

Agnes Strickland paid some of the first real attention to Anglo-Norman women although she was focused purely on writing short biographies of the English queens for her book, *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest*.⁵⁸ Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century in order to glorify Queen Victoria, Strickland's work is important although not as scholarly by modern standards. She gives rather thorough descriptions of each of the women, although Strickland is just as focused on salacious gossip as she was on reliable facts. Her footnotes are also few and far between, much to the frustration of later historians trying to retrace her research and thereby differentiate between fact and gossip. Strickland was certainly not the last to write biographies of the queens of England. More recently, Norah Lofts and others have written similar collections of biographies of the queens of England although none of these collections are as extensive as Strickland's multi-volume set.⁵⁹

Aside from these compilations, there are numerous biographies of individual queens and members of the royal family. A few important examples include Pauline

⁵⁸ Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queen of England from the Norman Conquest* in eight volumes (Philadelphia: J B Lippincott Company, 1892).

⁵⁹ Lofts' collection is updated but shorter and less detailed than Strickland's. Norah Lofts, *Queens of England* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1977). Other examples are Edward Black, *Royal Brides: Queens of England in the Middle Ages* (Sussex: The Book Guild, 1987) and Petronelle Cook, *Queen Consorts of England: The Power Behind the Throne* (New York: Facts on File, 1993). Cook's book has biographies of the queens from William's queen, Matilda of Flanders, through George V's queen, Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, who is obviously long past medieval.

Stafford's *Queen Edith and Queen Emma*,⁶⁰ Marjorie Chibnall's *Empress Matilda*,⁶¹ Kimberley LoPrete's *Adela of Blois*,⁶² Lois Huneycutt's *Matilda of Scotland*,⁶³ and a recent collection of essays on Eleanor of Aquitaine.⁶⁴ Many of these women have previously been the subject of popular histories, but each of the works above is truly critical and takes a more systematic approach to their subjects. Even these important women have had to wait until recently to be thoroughly treated. Between popular works and these more scientific approaches, it becomes clear that these women were not shrinking violets but very active in their families and society as a whole.

Despite these biographies, the lives of most of the women described by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers have remained hidden, and there is a widely held perception that these elite women must have been exceptional. Because popular culture believes that "well-behaved women seldom make history,"⁶⁵ their behavior must have been aberrant for their lives to have been recorded. This idea spawned numerous books on medieval women and is especially true with particular individuals, such as Eleanor of Aquitaine,

⁶⁰ Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma & Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh and Twelfth Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

⁶¹ Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1991).

⁶² Kimberley LoPrete, *Adela of Blois, Countess and Lord, c 1067-1137* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007).

⁶³ Lois Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003).

⁶⁴ Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, ed, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003). There are dozens of popular biographies on Eleanor of Aquitaine, but this collection is the most recent of the more scholarly works on this queen.

⁶⁵ This was originally the quote of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich taken from a 1976 article describing women in colonial Puritan New England through information left in their funeral sermons. The phrase has gained a life of its own since then and can be found on bumper stickers, t-shirts, and even makes an appearance as the motto for a number of women's groups. The phrase is now a title for a new book by Ulrich that looks at women's history and the new approaches that are being used in order to reconstruct the lives of women, whether behaving badly or well, from the time of the Renaissance up to the present. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (Knopf Publishing Group, 2007). It is clear that despite the author's intention of writing the history of well-behaved women, the phrase has developed a life of its own.

who seemed to really ‘stick it to the man’ by rebelling against not one, but both, of her husbands.⁶⁶

Many general histories of medieval women touch on some of the subjects described by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. Books on women’s history have become very popular since the late 1970’s. There are numerous histories written by both popular authors or by historians, although nearly all of them try to deal with women throughout Europe over numerous centuries.⁶⁷ By dealing with such long expanses of time, even the most diligent of historians can give only the shallowest attention to individuals and the differences that occurred between women of various backgrounds and time periods. Some of the popular histories were important because they were so widely read and broke new ground even though they were quickly outdated.

There were also numerous attempts to put together collections of essays on medieval women. Once again, these collections were important starts but they merely shined a light on seemingly random spots, here and there, dealing with women from disparate times and lands.⁶⁸ Some, like those discussed above, tried to discuss medieval

⁶⁶ One of the best examples of this trend is Vicki Leon’s *Uppity Women of Medieval Times* (Berkeley: Conari Press, 1997). Here a new catch-phrase has been spawned. The author claims to be a descendent of the ‘uppity’ Adeliza of Louvain and invites readers to join the Wild Women Association. According to the book, the “Association’s primary purpose is to rediscover and write our fabulously unruly foremothers back into history.” Leon, 248.

⁶⁷ Some examples of these would be the histories written by the Gies, a husband and wife team who wrote a number of books commonly read by a wide population and used as reference by many historians even though the books offered few details and were not footnoted. Frances and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and Family in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper Collins, 1987) and *Women in the Middle Ages* (New York: Crowell, 1978). See also, Margaret Wade Labarge, *A Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) and Helen Jewell, *Women in Dark Age and Early Medieval Europe, c. 500-1200* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007). Jewell’s work is more scholarly than that of the Gies or Labarge.

⁶⁸ The most important of these collections, primarily because it was such an early attempt but also because it was such a successful one, is that edited by Susan Mosher Stuard, *Women in Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976). More recently, see Mary C. Erler and Maryanne

women as a whole.⁶⁹ Mostly, they showed what was possible in a variety of both subjects and methodologies while barely scraping the surface of the work that needed to be done. Even when they are more specific, few of these collections deal with the women mentioned by the Anglo-Norman chronicles.

A number of authors have, to a certain degree, taken medieval women out of the context of their society and their families. Shulamit Shahar's *Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages* is a popular history of medieval women that pays little attention to how these women functioned in society.⁷⁰ While her title was meant to point out the importance of women in society, being on par with the other three orders, she sacrifices the inclusivity of women's lives. Women were an important part of each of the three estates, and can in no way be separated from their positions within the three estates. Medieval people had a number of ways in which they envisioned and broke down the various components of their society, and in each, women were an important and inseparable part in every sector of society.⁷¹

Similar to these collections, some of the most important information on medieval women comes from articles that focus on specific issues. While one always hopes that

Kowaleski, *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁶⁹ David Herlihy, *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978-1991* (Oxford: Bergahn Books, 1995). Herlihy was a very important historian of thirteenth and fourteenth century Italy. While the majority of his essays focus on this area of expertise, some of the essays dealt with medieval women from other times and places. To be fair to Herlihy, these essays were collected posthumously and, had he lived, he certainly would have filled some of these very holes.

⁷⁰ Shulamit Shahar, *Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, a revised edition (London: Routledge, 2003). The book first appeared in 1983, has been revised several times, and remains very popular. Obviously, no history of women can be devoid of context, but in her rush to describe the importance and power of women, she does not properly place them with their male counterparts.

⁷¹ For alternate cosmologies, see John Baldwin, "Five Discourses on Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Northern France around 1200" in *Speculum*, vol. 66, no 4 (October 1991), 797-80.

these articles would have been expanded into later books,⁷² this is not so in many of the cases. As an example, Marjorie Chibnall wrote “Women in Orderic Vitalis” which began a study on some of the women mentioned by Orderic and how he perceived them.⁷³

While the article is outstanding, it is short and only opened the topic.

Recently there have been more attempts to look specifically at medieval women in England and Normandy. These works were built on the foundations of others and show more mastery of the subject. This includes the works of Helen Jewel,⁷⁴ Henrietta Leyser,⁷⁵ and Jennifer Ward.⁷⁶ While not trying to approach medieval women as a homogeneous topic, their writings remain general. Ward in particular is also more geared towards women after 1200, when sources are more plentiful.

A number of historians of England and Normandy who do not specifically deal with women’s history have also made more of an effort to include gender and women in their works. For example, Charlotte Newman and Judith Green have both looked at the nobility in England and Normandy.⁷⁷ Neither author has a specific chapter on women, but there are extensive discussions of marriage and the transfer of lands through marriage as well as patronage, topics in which women figure prominently. These two authors are

⁷² *Adela of Blois, Empress Matilda, and Matilda of Scotland* all began as articles by Kimberley LoPrete, Marjorie Chibnall, and Lois Huneycutt, respectively.

⁷³ Marjorie Chibnall, “Women in Orderic Vitalis” in *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, vol. II, edited by Robert Patterson (London: Hambledon Press, 1990), 105-122.

⁷⁴ Helen Jewell, *Women in Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

⁷⁵ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995).

⁷⁶ Jennifer Ward, *Women in England in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Press, 2006). Ward has written a number of general works on English women in the Middle Ages. For more examples, see the Select Bibliography in the back of this work.

⁷⁷ Judith A. Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Charlotte A. Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: the Second Generation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

merely examples of a growing trend. Until more work has been done on women, it is difficult to include women in histories of medieval England and Normandy.

In contrast, one area of study has been dealt with extensively: the relationship between aristocratic women and land in England and Normandy. Because of charter evidence and the *Domesday Book*, land remains one of the easiest ways to reconstruct noble women in England and Normandy. By exploring the relationship between land and power, authors have easily shown that women not only controlled land but the power associated with that land. Despite the evidence and the depth of study, this is also one of the most disputed topics, especially in the era before the Conquest of England in 1066. For example, Eleanor Searle and Jean Scrammel have hotly debated the relationship between noblewomen and land and power in pre-Conquest Normandy.⁷⁸

The most recent foray into this type of scholarship has been made by Susan Johns, who has published a thorough description of how aristocratic women used lands and patronage to create and wield power.⁷⁹ Johns explores the roles of noblewomen as lords in an effort to clarify the relationship between women and their lands, showcasing the incredible abilities of these noblewomen. Despite her title, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and*

⁷⁸ There were a series of articles written back and forth on this topic: Jean Scrammel, "Freedom and Marriage in Medieval England," *The Economic History Review*, new series, vol. 27, no 4 (November 1974), 523-37; Eleanor Searle, "Freedom and Marriage in Medieval England: An Alternate Hypothesis," *The Economic History Review*, new series, vol. 29, no 3 (August 1976), 482-486; Scrammel, "Wife-Rents and Merchet," *The Economic History Review*, new series, vol. 29, no 3 (August 1976), 487-90; Searle, "Seigneurial Control of Women's Marriage: the Antecedents and Function of Merchet in England," *Past and Present*, no 82 (February 1979), 3-43; Paul A Brand, Paul R Hyams, and Rosamond Faith, "Seigneurial Control of Women's Marriage" in *Past and Present*, no 99 (May 1983), 123-48; Searle, "Seigneurial Control of Women's Marriage: A Rejoinder," *Past and Present*, no 99 (May 1983), 148-60. Also see Searle's book, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁷⁹ Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). Since much of the current debate about women and land is focused on how these relationships began and developed, Johns' research shows definitively where these trends came to rest in the Angevin period. It is therefore an important work but does not really engage previous debates.

Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm, Johns writes about women in the late twelfth century and early thirteenth. Most of her study is focused on women during the reigns of Henry II, Richard, and John, although she does discuss Anglo-Norman women as background. As with other historians, this is most likely a result of the more numerous sources for the thirteenth century. Where appropriate, her work has been incorporated in this study.

This work looks only at secular women in the Anglo-Norman chronicles and not religious women. A study that includes both religious and secular women in any amount of detail would be simply massive, and much has been written on the religious women in England and France.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the chroniclers seem more interested in secular women, recording religious women only as a part of a religious house or in hagiographical writings.

Pragmatism, Patronage, Piety and Participation: Women in the Anglo-Norman Chronicles

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers intended their writings to instruct as much as to keep a record of the past. Medieval historians depict women from the past, both real and fictitious, as models for contemporary readers. In the second chapter, this study will begin examining how the chroniclers viewed women by looking at the antecedents the Anglo-Norman chroniclers called upon to remind their medieval readers of what it meant to be a woman. The writers carefully chose when and how to use the antecedents,

⁸⁰ Some examples include: Diana Wood, ed, *Women and Religion in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2003); Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women*, vol. II (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000); Sharon Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth Century England* (University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

reminding readers of the wisdom, piety and activity of women in the past, whether real or mythical.

Beginning with chapter 3, this work will examine the roles that daughters played within their families. Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe daughters who were chaste, pious, and obedient. To prepare for their futures, many daughters were educated, and the family also put each daughter on a future path by either finding her a place in a nunnery or by finding her a suitable marriage. Once married, daughters continued to owe allegiance to the family into which they were born while providing kinship ties to the family into which they had been married.

Chapter 4 explores the many and varied roles that women held once they had married. Most women became more active both in and outside the home upon their marriage; there were few limitations on women as long as they were acting to meet the needs of their families. Wives acted as helpmates for their husbands, but they also frequently acted independently and in the stead of their husbands.

Anglo-Norman chroniclers write extensively of concubines. These writers understood that extramarital sex was a part of society even if less than praise-worthy behavior. Chapter 5 analyzes the many passages in which Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe concubines and mistresses. While some concubines simply provided extramarital sex, many concubines fulfilled much the same roles as wives. Concubines were especially important to the family of the Norman dukes and the later English kings, where these women provided the heirs and other children who were invaluable in creating power and kinship ties.

Producing children was a one of the most important roles of being a wife, and so merits its own chapter here. Chapter 6 focuses on how mothers educated young children and watched over their rights until adulthood, perhaps even serving as regent in the absence of a father. The job of mother did not end at childhood, however, as many mothers continued to advise and otherwise promote the needs of their grown children. The Anglo-Norman chronicles provide numerous examples of the archetypal evil stepmother, and her appearance further informs ideas of the expectations of how mothers should relate to their children.

Chapter 7 examines the roles of widows. While it has been assumed that widows either remarried or joined a nunnery, the situation is more complicated. Anglo-Norman chroniclers do describe widows remarrying sometimes multiple times. Even though some widows did join a nunnery, they often spent years in society before retiring late in life. Widows frequently served as regents for young children, as well.

Chapter 8 examines the *bellatores*, the women who fought. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers expected the *bellatores* to be pragmatic, pious, and to participate thoroughly in the world around them. Most of these women wielded a great deal of power and influence, which allowed them to shape their world to some degree. They showed their piety by patronizing the Church. While these actions might be expected of royal women, even women who were not as elite behaved in much the same ways.

Much of this work has been focused on the *bellatores*, but Chapter 9 examines the women of another order, the *laborares*, or those who work. These women are the hardest to uncover. All of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers include descriptions of these women, although the focus was on others. These women have to be rescued from the periphery.

Despite this, there is enough material to round out a portrayal of their lives. It is clear that some of the same characteristics were highly desirable in these women as well as their counterparts in other orders: piety, wisdom, obedience, and the skills to do their jobs ably.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers have a unique window into the lives of the women they describe. Women were an integral part of their society, and yet few modern historians have examined their writings in a more holistic manner. The biographies of a few important women paint a picture of exceptional behaviors, but a more thorough investigation shows that women at every stage of life and from every order exhibited some of the same characteristics and behaviors.

Chapter 2: Antecedents and Models: the Bible, Mythology, and the Distant Past

Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently used the past to remind their readers that throughout human history events repeated themselves. God punished the wicked and blessed the virtuous in the past, the present, and the future. It was important to emulate the positive exemplars and avoid the negative. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers' pages are strewn with women from the Bible, Greek and Roman mythology, and historical figures from a past just beyond the reach of memory. Regardless of whether or not the chroniclers conceptualized these figures as real or mythological, all of these persons and their stories served the same purpose: to remind the reader of the patterns of history and the correct or incorrect behavior of proper Christians, male and female alike.

This work is focused on how the Anglo-Norman chroniclers used these antecedents throughout their works to explain to and instruct their readers. It is also important to remember that medieval readers carried what they read and the lessons learned out into the practical world, just as the authors carried their world into their writings. This is the most valuable tool for modern readers to use in understanding the workings of the Anglo-Norman world and how these authors created a record of how they saw it.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers expected potential readers to have a working knowledge of Bible stories, mythology, and lore that floated around society, catching an

ear here and there. Many of the antecedents were merely used as touchstones to remind readers of something about which they already had some knowledge and to fit that knowledge into an instructive construct. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers explained in more detail other antecedents so that readers could have better understood how one aspect of these stories fitted into the chronicler's wider aims.

The Bible was one of the most widely read and most important works to any medieval chronicler or reader and, therefore, it provides some of the most important antecedents. Stories from the Bible were known to all Christendom as they were told orally, extensively depicted in almost every church, and even some secular buildings, and were repeated in many works of literature aside from the Bible itself.

Women from the Old Testament

A number of women from the Old Testament show up repeatedly throughout the writings of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. Many of these women's stories can only be found in the Apocrypha. While the Old Testament describes thousands of women, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers carefully chose certain women in order to reflect the various chroniclers' ends. There are also some noteworthy women who are not mentioned; it can be as important who the chroniclers chose not to include as those they did.

Eve: the First Woman

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers rarely refer to Eve, the first woman, the first sinner, and the temptress, and her absence is as telling as if the writers had included long discussions of her. Contrary to popular assumptions, religious men did not view all women as either virginal Marys or sinful Eves.

Since the Anglo-Norman chroniclers spend little time on the origin of man, it might seem natural that Eve was frequently absent. The writers discuss Adam or original sin, however, without even mentioning Eve. Orderic Vitalis gives a brief description of “Satan, who deceived the first man through the serpent and is always envious and restless.”¹ Orderic shows the famous serpent tempting Adam, *not* Eve, as it is recorded in Genesis, to eat of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. It seems odd for Orderic to blame Adam without mentioning Eve.

Even more interesting, Orderic uses this passage as part of his introduction to a description of a synod held by Geoffrey, archbishop of Rouen, in November of 1119. The first canon passed by the synod and discussed by Orderic was one which forbade married clergy.² It seems like a very logical place for Orderic to have not only mentioned Eve but to have compared this first sinner and temptress to the wives and concubines of the clergy. Evidently, Orderic is not so quick to lay the blame for original sin at the foot of womankind.

Eadmer also brings up Adam without Eve. While discussing the trials and tribulations of the church under William Rufus, the author begs the readers to “remember the blessed Job, how he overcame the devil in the place of dung and avenged Adam whom the devil had overcome in the Garden of Eden.”³ While Eadmer was addressing and trying to motivate men of the church, it seems more appropriate here for him to have kept the discussion more male-centered and to reflect the praises of one man against the failures of another in order to motivate a contemporary male audience. However, it is odd

¹ OV, VI, 290.

² OV, VI, 290.

³ Eadmer, 61.

that this brief recapitulation of events not only omitted Eve but placed all blame for original sin squarely on Adam's shoulders.

Miriam: Sister and Helpmate?

Henry of Huntingdon wrote briefly about Miriam, the sister of Moses. Miriam had a leadership role among the Israelites as they fled Egypt for Canaan, the proverbial land of milk and honey. The Bible refers to Miriam as a prophetess, and there are numerous stories of her throughout the early books of the Old Testament as she moved in and out of the narrative.⁴ In each of these stories, the Bible shows her as an active leader who was consulted by others.

Despite this, Miriam was not always steadfast, and it is this lapse that Henry of Huntingdon chose to stress in his chronicle. Henry recorded that Moses was a “shining example of humility” who even “shed tears for the slanderous Miriam, and always labored in prayer for those who wished him ill.”⁵ Here the author refers to the book of Numbers where Miriam was struck with leprosy after jealousy incited her to speak out against Moses and gossip about his Cushite wife.⁶ Both the Bible and Henry ignored that Aaron, the brother of Moses and Miriam, also spoke with Miriam against Moses. There was no mention of Aaron's punishment in the Bible, and Henry actually praised Aaron for “having joined with his brother in offering sweet smelling incense to God his protector and avenger against his enemies”⁷ in the same passage in which he castigated Miriam. Henry's misogynistic attitude mirrors that of the Bible.

⁴ Exodus 2: 4-9, 15: 19-21; Numbers 12: 1-15; Micah 6:4.

⁵ HH, 4.

⁶ Numbers 12:1-15.

⁷ HH, 4.

This brief passage is one of the few instances of misogyny in the writings of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers and should therefore be explained at more length. Although Henry's view of Miriam is negative, it sprang rather directly from her story in the book of Numbers where God is harsher on Miriam than her male counterpart. Henry of Huntingdon writes about Miriam, Moses and Aaron in the introduction of his history, and therefore, the author is not using her as an antecedent here but rather has included her in the history of the world up to more contemporary events. None of the other Anglo-Norman chroniclers discusses Miriam historically or uses her as an antecedent, casting her in either a positive or negative light.

Esther: Queen and Advisor

Esther's power, like Miriam's depended on the power of men around her; Esther was the Jewish queen of Ahasuerus, a Persian king.⁸ Life in the palace of such an important king and conqueror meant Esther had to compete with a number of royal advisers in order to gain prominence and eventually protect her people, the Israelites, from persecution and possible extinction. In the end, she outmaneuvered her political rivals and saved the Israelites using only her wits and her feminine wiles. Throughout the Book of Esther, various qualities are stressed over and over again: her resourcefulness, her willingness and courage to take action, and her loyalty to her family, her people, and her king.⁹

Orderic Vitalis and Henry of Huntingdon both briefly mention Esther using her as both a historical figure as well as an antecedent for Christian behavior. Henry of

⁸ He is also referred to as Artaxerxes by Orderic: OV, V, 358. Translators of the Bible frequently label him as Xerxes. See the Book of Esther in the Old Testament.

⁹ Her story is told in the Book of Esther in the Old Testament.

Huntingdon includes the rulers over the Israelites as part of a letter to Henry I of England that was meant to be an addendum to his *Historia Anglorum*. According to Henry of Huntingdon the letter is “about the succession of the most powerful kings who have existed throughout the whole world down to the present time.”¹⁰ Here, Henry rather curtly lists the rulers over the Israelites and includes Esther in the list: “Ahasuerus, the consort of Queen Esther, 40 years.”¹¹ The mention of Esther here is purely cursory, giving little information. Despite this, Henry describes Ahasuerus as Esther’s consort, instead of the other way around. By doing this, the author stresses the importance of Esther and deemphasizes Ahasuerus, who was also not a Hebrew.

Orderic discusses Esther as both a historical figure and an antecedent who represents a pattern whereby God aids those who remain faithful to him during adversity or captivity. After discussing the exploits of the Norman crusaders in the Holy Land, Orderic laments at the capture of the Christian prince, Bohemond, during the crusade. Orderic places Bohemond’s captivity in a wider context: “Merciful God, who created all things and knows how to chastise his servants for their sins, likewise miraculously helps suppliants and those who humbly call upon him, and, working even through their enemies, encourages them with a hope of better things.”¹² The chronicler then gives examples, citing fourteen different Old Testament heroes by name who had been aided by God while in captivity, Esther among them. Orderic continues his discussion of God’s

¹⁰ HH, 502.

¹¹ “Assuerus Hester regine sponsus annis quadraginta.” HH, 522.

¹² OV, V, 358.

rewards by comparing Bohemond's abettor, the Muslim princess Melaz, to the Biblical Judith.¹³

Judith: Heroine of Circumstance

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently refer to Judith, using her as yet another example of a woman who took action to save her people. During a war between the Israelites and a group of Canaanites under the leadership of Holofernes, the enemy general came across Judith and her family. She provided hospitality to the general, allowing him to sleep in her tent; however, instead of leaving him to sleep peacefully, she beheaded him. Both the Apocrypha and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers praise Judith's actions, which may seem extreme, and stress that her actions brought an end to the war and years of peace for the Israelites.¹⁴

Orderic discusses Judith twice in his works, both times as part of his comments on Bohemond's capture while on crusade. After listing various heroes whom God had aided while they were captives, Orderic reports,

But God our King, who saves those who put their trust in Him, is powerful to hear the pleas of his spouse, the Church; he aided the captive duke and his comrades by means of the wit and help of the daughter of his enemy, as formerly he aided his thirsting people in Bethulia by the courage of the brave widow, Judith, when she cut the throat of proud Holofernes.¹⁵

Orderic then begins an account of how Melaz, the Muslim daughter of Bohemond's captor, had helped the crusaders in their time of suffering. Orderic uses Melaz and Judith to represent the power of God through women who exhibit both wit and

¹³ OV, V, 358.

¹⁴ Her story is told in the Book of Judith, part of the Apocrypha.

¹⁵ Once again, Orderic is describing Melaz when he writes of "the daughter of his enemy." OV, V, 358.

courage, whose actions bring about the will of God. Both women were uniquely placed to be of service to God's chosen warriors.

Orderic reinforces the above account in his next volume. In this passage, the crusaders were once again in peril. Orderic records the speech that Ralph, the bishop of Jerusalem, delivered to the inhabitants of the holy city while Baldwin I was being besieged at Montferrand.¹⁶ While Ralph tried to incite people to rescue the besieged Baldwin and his followers, he mentioned Judith's example:

'The Lord, who brought swift help to the men besieged in Bethulia through a woman is with you. By the hand of the widow Judith he cut off the head of the proud Holofernes, brought confusion on the Assyrians and, as a father, refreshed the thirsty people, gave them both victory and rich spoils, and exalted them above all nations round about... Think of these things, and many like them among the works of God, and go into battle trusting in the power of God.'¹⁷

Obviously, Orderic recreates a speech he never heard and chose, once again, for Judith to represent the savior of the besieged or captive. The author reinforces her role as God's instrument of action. Orderic also plays up her position as a widow. As will be discussed below, Anglo-Norman society viewed widows as the most powerless women in their society.¹⁸ If God could give power to a widow, no crisis was impossible for those who had faith in God's power.

Deborah: Military Leader and Prophetess

The Bible contains another active role model, Deborah.¹⁹ Deborah led various tribes of Israel against the people of Canaan. She and her followers won the day, and their

¹⁶ For more context on Ralph's speech, see OV, VI, 494-502.

¹⁷ OV, VI, 500.

¹⁸ See below, Chapter 6.

¹⁹ Her story is told in the fourth and fifth chapters of Judges in the Old Testament.

victory set up forty years of peace for the Israelites.²⁰ Deborah also held court and was identified as a prophetess among the Israelites, like Miriam above.²¹ Like Judith, she achieved military victory, although Deborah did not wait for the enemy general to fall into her hands; she directly sought a military solution.

Once again, Henry of Huntingdon includes Deborah among his list of Israelite leaders in his letter to Henry I: “Deborah, the prophetess of the tribe of Ephraim, together with Barak, chief of the tribe of Naphtali, ruled the Hebrews for forty years with spirit and manly skill. For she humbled Jabin, king of Canaan, and clouded his splendor, having killed Sisera, the commander of his army.”²² Henry of Huntingdon is straightforward in his assessment although here, unlike with Esther, he does elaborate somewhat. He calls her a prophetess, not just a leader, and Henry stresses she had ruled with spirit and manly skill. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently use these adjectives and others to discuss women in power.²³

It is useful to compare Henry of Huntingdon’s descriptions of Deborah and Esther with his passages about the only two other female rulers in his lists. He also wrote about Semiramis: “In those times [the era of Abraham], first the mighty King Ninus and afterwards his wife, Semiramis, ruled the Assyrians.”²⁴ Semiramis does not appear in the Bible although she can be found in a number of sources to which Henry may have had

²⁰ Judges 5:31.

²¹ The Bible calls her a prophetess and leader or judge of the Israelites as well as the wife of Lappidoth. Judges 4: 4-5.

²² HH, 508.

²³ See discussion below, Chapter 8.

²⁴ HH, 506.

access.²⁵ Her identity remains unclear and greatly depends on the source. Henry of Huntingdon is quite sparse in describing her, much like he was with Esther; they are foremost the wives of kings.

Henry of Huntingdon's description of the rule of Athaliah gives more detail like that of his report on Deborah's. Henry writes: "Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah, [ruled Judah] six years, who killed all the members of the royal house of Joram, except Joash alone who escaped her, but finally she herself died by treachery."²⁶ Henry casts a negative light on Athaliah although she was hardly deserving of praise. After the death of her son, Ahaziah, Athaliah had all his male heirs slain so that she could continue to rule and to worship Baal. The Bible condemned her rule because of that pagan worship. Eventually, one of her grandsons, who had been saved against all odds, slew her and brought Judah back to worshipping God.²⁷ Just like the Bible's portrayal of her, Henry of Huntingdon's portrayal of Athaliah remains negative.

In the case of each of these female rulers, Esther, Deborah, Semiramis and Athaliah, Henry of Huntingdon is rather brief and remains focused on their place within the prominent rulers of the past. Henry records little here that gives either his impression of their rule or that can be linked up with contemporary women. When the author does give more detail about Deborah and Athaliah, Henry follows the impetus of the Bible when deciding to either praise or criticize the women.

Susannah: the Victim of False Accusations

²⁵ Passages about Semiramis are found in a number of sources to which Henry of Huntingdon may have had access. See Paulinus Minorita's *Compendium*, Eusebius' *Chronicon*, Orosius' *Historiae Adversus Paganos*, Justinus' *Epitome Historiarum philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, Valerius Maximus' *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium*.

²⁶ HH, 514.

²⁷ The story of Athaliah is told in 2 Kings 8:18; 11: 1-21.

The story of Susannah is relatively short; despite comprising an entire book in the Bible, it has only a single chapter. Susannah was the beautiful and faithful wife of Joachim. The book that bears her name explains how Susannah had been accused falsely of taking a lover, but God turned the tables on her accusers as a reward for her having retained faith in Him.²⁸

Orderic Vitalis links Susannah's plight with others who had been falsely accused. Robert Malartesis accused Bricstan, a man so faithful that he was about to take the cloth, of taking money from the treasury of Henry I. Matilda of Flanders, acting as regent during William the Conqueror's time in Normandy, had Bricstan arrested and "after many underserved contumelies had been heaped upon him, he was unjustly condemned like Susannah."²⁹ Bricstan was imprisoned in London around 1116. Just as God had delivered Susannah, Bricstan was miraculously liberated from the jail with the help of St Benedict, St Ætheldreda, and St Sexburga.³⁰

Egla, wife of King David

Orderic Vitalis briefly mentions Egla, one of the wives of King David, making comparisons between her and contemporary women. Egla appears only briefly in the Bible as one of the mothers of David's six sons.³¹ Orderic compares Egla to Queen Urraca of Spain in that both died in childbirth.³² Orderic had heard rumors from distant

²⁸ Her story is told in the Book of Susannah, part of the Apocrypha.

²⁹ OV, III, 350.

³⁰ Orderic related the miracle in detail. OV, III, 350-8. See the discussion of St Benedict, St Ætheldreda, and St Sexburga below in the section of Virgin Mary.

³¹ 2 Samuel 3: 5; 1 Chronicles 3: 3.

³² OV, VI, 408.

Spain and records them here even though they were likely false.³³ His information on Egla came from flimsy accounts as well.³⁴

Women from the New Testament

The Anglo-Norman writers are more likely to discuss Old Testament women than those in the New Testament, even though the authors include women from the New Testament. The clear exception to this is the Virgin Mary, who appears as frequently as any other woman, antecedent or not, in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. The other antecedents from the New Testament are the sisters accompanying Jesus while he was teaching, Mary and Martha.

Mary: Virgin Mother and Revered Intercessor

It is not surprising that Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, appears most frequently in the Anglo-Norman chronicles and occupied the most varied positions in these writings. As opposed to other Biblical women, Mary was in many ways omnipresent in medieval society: she was constantly depicted in art and architecture, and she also served as an intercessor between the secular world and the spiritual, even more than other female saints who could have served as intercessors as well. Furthermore, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe numerous instances where Mary appeared in visions to medieval people. Her role as an intercessor also allowed her to be a part of both a distant past as well as an Anglo-Norman contemporary present, a unique position for a woman who lived nearly a millennium before the chroniclers were writing.

³³ OV, VI, 408-9, note 3.

³⁴ The author of the Pseudo-Jerome misidentified Egla with another of David's wives Michal, who according to 2 Samuel 6:23 'had no children until the day she died.' This was interpreted to mean she had died in childbirth. See OV, VI, 408-9, note 3.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers were recording their histories during a time of great expansion for the Cult of Mary.³⁵ While the cult has earlier origins, during the twelfth century, there was a new piety that focused on the humanity of Christ. This new piety also exalted the Virgin Mary.³⁶ As John of Worcester made clear, “who has ever put his faith in Mary and been let down by her? No one, I say, no one.”³⁷

John of Worcester describes visions of Mary more than any of the other Anglo-Norman chroniclers. Most of these visions illustrate Mary’s role as intercessor and guardian of the faithful. One man and one woman, both lay, underwent the ordeal of hot iron “for different offences.”³⁸ Both were healed “by the intervention of God and through the merits of the holy Mother of God ever Virgin, and of our patrons Oswald and Wulfstan.”³⁹ Here John stresses the virtues of Mary while simply listing the other intercessors. Mary had power as an intercessor because of both her merits, ever virgin, as well as her position as mother of God.

John of Worcester writes over and over of the importance of the Virgin Mary as well as her ability to help those who were faithful. When describing Abbot Benedict of Tewkesbury, John writes, “this servant of God was completely devoted to the most

³⁵ The Cult of Mary is merely mentioned here. Rachel Fulton traces the early origins of the cult as well as its culmination around 1200 in her book, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (Columbia Press, 2005). See also, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus As Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³⁶ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1995), 196.

³⁷ JW, III, 222.

³⁸ John of Worcester does not state their offence. JW, III, 190. In order to complete the ordeal, the accused would have had to carry a hot iron. If their wounds did not heal, the accused were guilty of their crimes. If the wounds healed, the accused were proven to be telling the truth, For more information on ordeals, see Robert Bartlett’s *Trial by Fire and Water: the Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

³⁹ JW, III, 190.

blessed and glorious mother of God. Chanting the hours every day, he would either celebrate on a festival or hear a mass in her honour.”⁴⁰ Abbot Warin of Worcester had a dream in which a voice announced that Benedict had died. When Warin described his dream to another monk, the monk felt that “this vision had been brought about through the power of God and of that of his sweetest Mother.”⁴¹ Warin traveled to Tewkesbury and found that Benedict had indeed died.

Later in his chronicle, John of Worcester describes the citizens of Worcester calling upon the saints and Mary for protection during the Anarchy: “there were frequent reports that Worcester would soon be devastated by its enemies, despoiled of its goods, and consumed by fire.”⁴² After much discussion and anxiety, the citizens “rushed in their wretchedness to the protection of the most high God the Father and His most blessed Mother, and to entrust themselves and all theirs under God’s protection to the guardianship of the Worcester bishops, the confessors St Oswald and the blessed Wulfstan.”⁴³ The Anarchy was a period of political upheaval as Stephen, the nephew of Henry I, gained the throne and attempted to maintain it despite the struggles of Henry’s daughter and supposed heir, the Empress Matilda. The fighting between the two cousins created tension, and here, Worcester’s citizens were caught up in the conflict.

While God, Mary, Oswald and Wulfstan had effectively protected the two people undergoing ordeals, the city of Worcester’s fate was less conclusive. The empress’ forces

⁴⁰ JW, III, 222.

⁴¹ JW, III, 224. Michael, a monk of Tewkesbury had a vision at the death of Abbot Godfrey of Winchcombe. An entire throng of holy virgins appeared. It became clear that Godfrey and Benedict were received in heaven by “the empress of queens and savior of souls in the company of the distinguished attendants of the most exalted King and her most blessed and most sweet offspring.” JW, III, 224-6.

⁴² JW, III, 272.

⁴³ JW, III, 272.

laid siege to the city in November of 1139 and did set parts of it on fire. As King Stephen's army approached, however, the empress' forces withdrew never to return again. The church, having hidden their wealth, weathered the siege relatively unscathed, and all were clearly relieved that the empress' army never returned.⁴⁴ The intercessors had protected the city and its church to some degree if not completely.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers also credit the Virgin Mary with aiding people in another conflict. When Rollo had laid siege to Chartres, forces under Richard, duke of Burgundy, tried to attack him from the rear.

Rollo and his men offered fierce resistance until Bishop Antelm and an armed force unexpectedly appeared from the town carrying the tunic of Mary, holy mother of God, and set on Rollo attacking him in the rear. At length Rollo, realizing that he and his men were facing death, decided to yield to his enemies for a while rather than continue fighting to his men's destruction.⁴⁵

Rollo's army seemed invincible and was stopped only when he agreed to a more lasting peace with Charles the Simple a few months later. William of Jumièges credits Mary, through her tunic, not the power of their army, with guaranteeing a victory for the Franks: "Rollo therefore gave in, not to the Burgundians but to divine power."⁴⁶

There is a similar tale from William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* in which the image of Mary serves King Arthur well: "at the siege of Mount Badon, relying on the image of our Lord's Mother which he had fastened upon his arms, he attacked nine

⁴⁴ JW, III, 272-6.

⁴⁵ GND, I, 62. This information is also given in the chapter headings: "how Bishop Antelm during his fierce resistance unexpectedly appeared from the town carrying the tunic of Mary mother of God and attacked him [Rollo] from the rear." GND, I, 30. This version of the story is retold by later chroniclers; see Wace, 27-8.

⁴⁶ GND, I, 30.

hundred of the enemy single-handed, and routed them with incredible slaughter.”⁴⁷ Once again, Mary had the power to assure military victory.

Mary most often appears in dreams or visions, frequently giving warnings or leading and protecting the recipients as they move through other worlds. Mary appears to both men and women alike. William of Malmesbury describes Mary’s warnings about the heretic Berengar of Tours:

This [the heresy] was foretold, they say, by Fulbert, bishop of Chartres, who once, when he was ill, had a vision that he was cured by Mary, the mother of our Lord, with milk from her breasts. When he was at death’s door and was receiving many visitors, deep into the throng surrounding him, said with all force he could command that Berengar must be thrown out, asserting that a monstrous demon stood beside him, corrupting many people to follow him with winning gestures and alluring whispers.⁴⁸

Here Mary warned Fulbert and his visitors, but she also protected and healed Fulbert. William links her healing power to her power to nourish, with milk from her breasts.

Just a few paragraphs later, William of Malmesbury relates a tale of Mary’s appearance to a young Jewish boy. The boy, knowing nothing about the Christian sacraments,

happened to have gone into a church when playing with a Christian boy of his own age, and saw a child [Jesus, as sacrament] on the altar being torn limb from limb and distributed individually to the people. When in his childish innocence he told this to his parents as the truth, they thrust him into an oven in which a fire was burning behind closed doors, from which many hours later he was rescued by Christians with no damage to his body or his clothes or even his hair; when asked how he escaped the flames of the devouring fire, he replied: ‘That lovely lady

⁴⁷ *GRA*, 26.

⁴⁸ *GRA*, 518.

whom I saw sitting on a throne, and whose son was divided among the people, stood all the time at my right hand in the furnace, driving off the threatening flames and the rolling smoke with her robe.⁴⁹

In this case, Mary's powers as a guardian and intercessor extends even to help a non-Christian. The tension that existed between Christians and Jews is clearly evident in this passage, setting villainous Jews against virtuous Christians. William of Malmesbury writes a canned speech for the Jewish boy in which Mary appears like an icon, enthroned and in robes.

Orderic Vitalis similarly uses the Virgin Mary in his writings. While Orderic describes the Crusaders in the Holy Land, Orderic records the visions of a priest who had gone into St Mary's church in Antioch in order to pray for relief as the crusaders were besieged by Muslim armies: "the Lord Jesus with a throng of saints appeared to him [the priest] as he half dozed, and complained of the fornications committed by the Christian troops."⁵⁰ Jesus expressed anger over the crusaders' use of prostitutes, and the priest fell to his knees asking for mercy for the crusaders. "Then the blessed Mary, Mother of mercy, and St Peter, chief of the apostles, fell at the feet of the redeeming Lord as he threatened, and with their devout intercessions for the sufferings of the Christians, softened his wrath."⁵¹

Their exhortations continued. "When they had made their plea the most holy one gave way to the prayer of his mother and the apostle, and, with a more serene countenance, commanded the priest to rebuke all the people publicly and invite them to

⁴⁹ *GRA*, 520.

⁵⁰ *OV*, V, 98.

⁵¹ *OV*, V, 100.

make full reparation by penance.”⁵² In return, God would send help. The priest announced his visions to the people of Antioch. According to Orderic, St Peter also appeared to Peter, a clerk from Provence during the same siege.⁵³ Eventually, the siege was miraculously lifted.⁵⁴

Orderic links Mary’s behavior towards her son, interceding with and advising Him, to other contemporary women. Elsewhere in Orderic’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the Anglo-Norman chronicler records Gytha’s efforts to advise her grown son, a very emotional Harold Godwineson. By ignoring his mother’s advice, as well as the advice of his brother and friends, Harold made a critical and costly error.⁵⁵ In the siege of Antioch, Mary, like Gytha, led a group seeking intercession. Jesus, unlike Harold, tempered his emotional response with the wisdom in his mother’s words and made a decision that represented compromise.

There are a number of similarities within these reports of visions regardless of the author. Mary frequently appeared along with a number of other saints although her position was always more prominent; she was mentioned after Jesus and before Peter and the local patron saints. Her role within the visions was to serve either as a guardian of the faithful or as an intercessor between this world and the next. In each vision, Mary’s appearance was iconic; there was a power in her name, and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers could have expected their readers to immediately relate their knowledge of

⁵² OV, V, 100.

⁵³ In this vision, the apostle Peter was not an intercessor but rather a simple messenger. He served to remind the priest, and by proxy, the people of their need to repent. OV, V, 100-2.

⁵⁴ OV, V, 110-6.

⁵⁵ See discussion below, Chapter 7.

her image to what the chroniclers had written. In fact, her image was powerful enough to turn the tide of war.

Other saints, male and female, made occasional appearances to others. For example, St Benedict, St Ætheldreda, and St Sexburg helped to free Bricstan, a man falsely accused of thievery. The saints “appeared to the suppliant [Bricstan]. He indeed, terrified by the unaccustomed brightness of the light which heralded the coming of the saints, covered his eyes with his hand.”⁵⁶ Not only did the saints appear to him, but they miraculously broke the chains that bound the ever-faithful Bricstan.⁵⁷ In this aspect, the Virgin Mary was not unique. However, she appears much more frequently in the Anglo-Norman chronicles than other saints, male or female, and she had much more scope and power than these others.

Mary and Martha: Sisters and Parallel Models

Aside from the Virgin Mary, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers most frequently allude to the sisters, Mary and Martha, whose story appears in the gospel according to Luke.⁵⁸ Martha had invited Jesus into her home where he began to teach to his apostles. Martha’s sister Mary listened to Jesus’ teachings instead of helping her sister serve the many guests. When Martha complained and tried to get her sister to return to the kitchen, Jesus said that Mary had chosen the correct path.⁵⁹

Many times the Anglo-Norman authors use the story of these sisters to remind the audience, men and women alike, of the importance of spiritual matters over the temporal ones. At other times, it is aimed particularly towards women, especially women who

⁵⁶ OV, III, 352.

⁵⁷ Orderic relates the miracle in detail. OV, III, 350-8.

⁵⁸ Luke 10: 38-42.

⁵⁹ Luke 10: 41-42.

were choosing or had chosen to serve the church, either as patronesses or as nuns. Some of the best examples of these parallel antecedents appeared in the works of Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury.

Orderic uses Mary and Martha to describe the life of St William, a noble in Charlemagne's empire in the early ninth century. Because St William chose to join a monastery at the height of his political power, Orderic describes his accomplishments, both secular and religious. "After the duties of Martha and being busy about many things, he delighted with Mary in perpetual contemplation."⁶⁰ A few pages later, Orderic links St William with Gerold of Avranches, abbot of Tewkesbury, a knight who had chosen the religious life while in his prime. Later, when Robert the Breton falsely accused Gerold in King Henry's court, the abbot "satisfied with a good conscience, spontaneously resigned the government of the abbey into the king's hand, and having borne the labours of Martha sought once more the better part of Mary in the solitude of the cloisters at Winchester."⁶¹

While singing the praises of St Dunstan, William of Malmesbury writes that he was "a man of great influence in the world and of much grace in the eyes of God, who showed himself a Martha in one field and a Mary in the other."⁶² Elsewhere, William eulogizes Bishop Peter of Poitiers.⁶³ After describing his religious traits for a number of lines, the author relates: "Still Mary, busy Martha—both he lives,/ Martha on man intent and on Heaven Mary./ Thus God within him reigns; without, his neighbor,/ For God he

⁶⁰ OV, II, 224.

⁶¹ OV, II, 228 and note 3 which dates his actions to 1109.

⁶² GRA, 240.

⁶³ GRA, 784-6. Peter died in 1115.

longs for, and his neighbour serves.”⁶⁴ In both instances, the Anglo-Norman chronicler stresses that these men had found a balance between the temporal and the spiritual.

In eulogizing Peter of Poitiers, William of Malmesbury emphasizes the importance of this balance, using a second set of parallels and sisters, Rachel and Leah, the wives of Jacob.⁶⁵ To conclude his poem, he writes: “Rachel he loves, for Leah content to labour; / Both wives our second Jacob well deserves./ One’s harvest rich he loves, the other’s bloom:/ Though Rachel’s fair, Leah’s is the fruitful womb.”⁶⁶ While the tale of Rachel and Leah does not exemplify the temporal versus the spiritual, the two sisters do represent opposites who found balance.

Greek and Roman Myth

There were only occasional references of women from Greek and Roman myth in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. The Christian authors were not as familiar with these pagan women and occasionally confused them. When the Anglo-Norman chroniclers discuss women from Greek and Roman myth, they only occasionally use them as antecedents. Most frequently, the authors put these women into historical contexts.

Io, Dido, and Rhea Silvia

Henry of Huntingdon includes brief descriptions of Io, Dido, and Rhea Silvia in his letter to Henry I of England. As mentioned above, this letter had been intended to give

⁶⁴ *GRA*, 786.

⁶⁵ The story of Jacob gaining his wives, both daughters of Laban, can be found in Genesis 29: 6-30: 26. In these passages, Jacob fell in love with the younger daughter Rachel at first sight. Laban forced Jacob to work for him for seven years in order to win her hand. At the end of those seven years, however, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, the older sister. Discovering the trick, Jacob worked an additional seven years for Laban in order to marry Rachel. Because Jacob did not love her, God blessed Leah with numerous sons. Rachel had Jacob’s love but was barren for the early years of her marriage to Jacob. Both sisters also forced Jacob to marry their maidservants. Out of these four wives, Jacob had twelve sons who begot the twelve tribes of Israel. William of Malmesbury earlier mentioned Leah as one of the three great matrons of the Israelites. The other two were Sarah and Rebecca. *GRA*, 672.

⁶⁶ *GRA*, 786.

the king a list of previous world leaders. Henry includes all three women although he records little else. Henry writes that Inachus' "daughter was Io, whom the Egyptians honor under the different name of 'Isis.'" ⁶⁷ While it is intriguing that Henry confuses the two very different myths, the author adds no further information.

Little can be gleaned from the passages concerning Dido or Rhea Silvia either. "Carthage was founded, according to some, by Carcedo the Tyrian. According to others, it was first founded by Dido." ⁶⁸ Henry did not even try to explore Dido's relation to the city or other legends. There are a few other women whom the Anglo-Norman chroniclers linked to the foundation of cities. These include Queen Bebbra whose name formed the base for Bamburgh in England, ⁶⁹ Julia, daughter of Julius Caesar, whose name was contorted into Lillebonne in France, ⁷⁰ and Gaeta, the nurse of Aeneas, who lent her name to a town in Apulia. ⁷¹

In the case of Rhea Silvia, only her relationships to other males were noteworthy. "Remus and Romulus were born of [Rhea] Silvia, niece of Amulius. By an unknown father, whom they supposed to be Mars." ⁷² The Anglo-Norman chroniclers make no attempt in either case to give any real detail or to use either Dido or Rhea Silvia as antecedents. These Greeks and Romans may have been important to the history, particularly of an area, but the Anglo-Norman chroniclers do not focus on the morals or behaviors of these pagan women.

⁶⁷ HH, 506.

⁶⁸ HH, 512.

⁶⁹ A number of Anglo-Norman chroniclers make this link: JW, III, 76 and HH, 630. Both obtained the information from Bede, 230 and 262.

⁷⁰ OV, VI, 280.

⁷¹ OV, II, 60.

⁷² HH, 516.

The Amazons and other Fierce Fighters

William of Jumièges begins his account of the Norman dukes with a description of the Goths, whom he felt were the early forebears of the Normans. William describes the fierce women in the midst of a passage on the fierceness of the Goth men:

The wives of these Goths who were later called Amazons, taking their husbands' long absence very ill, shook off their marriage bonds, took up arms, and appointed as their leaders two queens, bolder than the rest, Lampeto and Marpessa, whose right breasts had been burnt off to enable them to use their bows; they attacked the whole of Asia and subdued it to the yoke of their burdensome rule for more than one hundred years. But enough about them.⁷³

The passage is brief but imparts quite a bit of information. According to this version of events, the Amazons had been abandoned by their husbands and now shook off their marriage bonds. Despite going to drastic lengths, throwing off marriage, maiming their bodies to gain better performance, and attacking all of Asia, these women had long-lasting control of far-off lands. Their husbands had been away from home, fighting to gain Scythia, a smaller area in Northern Europe, a world away from their wives.

Orderic also uses the Amazon queens. While reporting on the hostilities between Helwise of Évreux and Isabel of Conches, Orderic said of Isabel:

In war she rode armed as a knight among the knights; and she showed no less courage among the knights in hauberks and sergeants-at-arms than did the maid Camilla, the pride of Italy, among the troops of Turnus. She deserved comparison with Lampeto and Marpesia, Hippolyta and Penthesilea, and the other warlike Amazon queens, whose battles, in which they held in check the kings of Asia and subdued the Asian peoples by force of arms for fifteen years are described by Pompeius Trogus and Virgil and other writers of

⁷³ *GND*, I, 14 and see note 3 where van Houts argues that William of Jumièges based this legendary history on Jordanes' *Getica*.

histories.⁷⁴

Orderic offers more details and draws a stronger and more direct comparison than William of Jumièges. In another passage, Orderic calls Juliana of Breteuil, “the unlucky Amazon,” when her crossbow bolt narrowly missed killing her father.⁷⁵ Juliana had hoped to kill her father in order to exact revenge and save her own life.⁷⁶

A number of passages describing female warriors implicitly relate back to the Amazons, unlike the explicit examples above. Later in his history, William of Jumièges described the Anglo-Saxon fear of not just the Norman men but also their women. The Anglo-Saxon warriors explained to King Æthelred the Unready that, “we fought till our defeat against the ferocious people of just one region. They consisted not only of fierce male soldiers but also of female warriors who crushed the heads of their boldest enemies with the carrying-poles of their waterjugs.”⁷⁷ The Anglo-Norman chronicler projects an irrational fear onto the Anglo-Saxon warriors, showing William’s own bias against them. He makes it appear that the Anglo-Saxons were weak and would give any excuse to their leader for not conquering the Normans.

The Furies

The Furies made numerous appearances in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. The Furies are a female personification of vengeance found in both Greek and Roman myth. They are usually mentioned together as a single force, although Henry of Huntingdon

⁷⁴ OV, IV, 212-4. Also refer to the notes on OV, IV, 214-5, for the relevant passages in Virgil (note 1) and Pompeius Trogus (note 2 and 3), respectively.

⁷⁵ OV, VI, 214.

⁷⁶ The full tale appears in OV, VI, 210-14. Also see discussion below, Chapter 3

⁷⁷ *GND*, II, 14.

does mention one of them, Megaera, individually.⁷⁸ While the Furies represented vengeance to the Romans, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers use the Furies to represent a wide variety of anger, unrest and generally out-of-control feelings; however, the Furies are only employed to describe the Normans and not other groups.

William of Jumièges uses the Furies as part of the impetus behind Rollo's invasion of Normandy. The information appears in the title headings not in the more detailed text: "How after Rollo, inflamed by furies, had destroyed France in a frenzied attack."⁷⁹ There is no further mention of the Furies even when William described Rollo's actions in greater detail in the text itself.

Henry of Huntingdon compares Robert of Bellême, a powerful Norman noble, to a number of frightful creatures while assailing his character: "he was a Pluto, a Megaera, a Cerberus, or something even more fearful to describe."⁸⁰ Megaera is the only Fury who appears individually. Henry refers to the Furies again in an epigram, "Again on the love of virtue, by allegory."⁸¹ In this passage, Henry writing philosophically not historically compares the passion of love with "the torches of the Furies."⁸²

Orderic mentions the Furies numerous times while describing the Anarchy, the time of unrest after the death of Henry I: "the worst of the Furies, finding a place for herself in the hearts of the wicked, was let loose and once again goaded and incited men to ruin themselves and their followers by rebellion."⁸³ The infighting between King

⁷⁸ For Henry of Huntingdon's use of Megaera, see below.

⁷⁹ *GND*, I, 30.

⁸⁰ *HH*, 602 and note 50.

⁸¹ *HH*, 816-24.

⁸² *HH*, 820.

⁸³ *OV*, VI, 328.

Stephen and the Empress Matilda caused many problems. Elsewhere, Orderic waxes poetic on the causes of the Anarchy:

On the first day of December died King Henry;
Heavy sorrow oppresses every part of this country;
Every man now seeks to plunder the goods of others
And abandon himself to unbridled lawlessness.
See how hellish furies drive on mortals!
They take up arms, incite to war, distribute javelins;
The Normans abandon themselves to robbery and pillage.⁸⁴

Orderic uses the Furies a third time to describe Normandy's reaction when Robert of Gloucester joined the Empress Matilda's campaign early in the Anarchy.

"Consequently many of his adherents rose in rebellion against the king; driven by the Furies they created havoc in regions round them and thoroughly devastated the country."⁸⁵ In each of these cases, Orderic applies the metaphor of the Furies to the Normans and their actions during the early years of the Anarchy. He never uses it for those in rebellion in England. The rebellious and rowdy Normans and the Furies are inextricably linked.

Carmentis Nicostrata

Carmentis Nicostrata appears in Roman myth as an oracle or nymph who invented the alphabet. William of Malmesbury mentions her: "Carmentis is said to have invented the Latin alphabet."⁸⁶ The Anglo-Norman chroniclers employ her as a metaphor for learning and knowledge much as they use the Furies above. While describing his own childhood education, Orderic writes, "Siward, an illustrious priest, taught me the letters

⁸⁴ OV, VI, 452.

⁸⁵ OV, VI, 518.

⁸⁶ GRA, 384.

of Carmen Nicostra for five years, and instructed me in psalms and hymns and other necessary knowledge.”⁸⁷

The Mythical Foundations of Early Britain

Henry of Huntingdon includes a number of tales about the early, mythical history of England, in which a number of women make important appearances. In a letter to Warin the Breton, Henry of Huntingdon describes the “flourishing kingdoms that existed from Brutus down to the time of Caesar,” a history which Henry had uncovered while visiting the abbey of Le Bec.⁸⁸ It is unclear which work or works he may have consulted or how much his history may have been influenced by his own ideas or oral legends; however, in all cases, what appears in the letter reflected Anglo-Norman ideas. Each of the women in his letter to Warin will be dealt with separately below, appearing in the same order that they originally appear in Henry’s work.

Diana, Patron of Brutus

One of the first legends recorded by Henry of Huntingdon features the Roman goddess Diana and her role in the early founding of Britain. According to this tale, Brutus was the great grandson of Aeneas, the mythical founder of Rome. After accidentally killing his father in a hunting accident, Brutus was exiled from Italy and made his home in Gaul:

At last, journeying in a far-off county, he offered a sacrifice and sought an oracle from Diana, with these words:

O mighty goddess of the forest glades, terror of the woodland boars,
Tell me what lands you wish us to inhabit.

⁸⁷ The translation here is my own since Chibnall neglects part of the passage in her English translation: “Illic Siguardis insignis presbiter per quinque annos Carmentis Nichostratæ litteras docuit me, ac psalmas et hymnis aliisque necessariis instructionibus mancipavit me.” OV, VI, 552.

⁸⁸ HH, 558. This version of the founding of Britain differs from what Henry of Huntingdon wrote earlier within the *Historia Anglorum*. Compare with HH, 24-26.

The goddess replied:

Brutus, beneath the setting sun, beyond the realms of Gaul,
Lies an island in the ocean, completely surrounded by the sea.
Go there; for it will be a perpetual dwelling-place for you;
It will become for your sons a second Troy.

Trusting the oracle, Brutus approached this island which was
named Albion.⁸⁹

This mythical founding of a second Troy links the heroes of Greek and Roman myth with the foundations of contemporary England, giving Diana a prominent role. It is the goddess who gave wise advice and who protected the prince when the Romans rejected him. Brutus had respect for a fierce goddess, who was the terror of the woodland boars. While Henry usually merely mentions other antecedents, here he clearly portrays the Roman goddess in both an active and positive light. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently portray women as both wise and also as advisors. Henry's description of Diana fits with his other depictions of women.⁹⁰

Henry of Huntingdon had already written a version of this story within the main text of the *Historia Anglorum*, and in this earlier version, Diana is not present. There are fewer details in the earlier text and no real explanation of why Brutus chose to leave Gaul.⁹¹ Henry's efforts to give his reader more detail seem to explain the inclusion of Diana here although the documents he purportedly viewed at Le Bec may have also inclined him to discuss her here.

⁸⁹ HH, 560.

⁹⁰ See below, Chapter 4.

⁹¹ Compare with HH, 24-26.

Gondolovea: Repudiation and Revenge

In his letter to Warin the Breton, Henry of Huntingdon continues the story of early Britain by describing the reign of Brutus' son Lucrinus, who was slain by his wife, Gondolovea. This tale is yet another part of early history that Henry included in his letter to Warin the Breton: "When Lucrinus had reigned in great power for ten years, his wife Gondolovea killed him with an arrow in battle, because he had put her away. So Gondolovea punished her husband's offence of adultery."⁹² The trouble began when Lucrinus put aside Gondolovea and took up with her handmaiden "whom none was more beautiful of face or more pleasing of appearance."⁹³ These actions appear to have set off a civil war in which Gondolovea took control of the kingdom. "After killing her husband, Gondolovea reigned for fifteen years, in the time of Samuel and Homer. After her, Maddan, her son, reigned."⁹⁴

Henry of Huntingdon's treatment of Gondolovea is rather curious. In somewhat typical fashion, the chronicler is brief and reserves judgment, either positive or negative, of Gondolovea's actions. Despite this, Henry chose not to portray Gondolovea as a murderess or a usurper; her actions seem justifiable if not praiseworthy. The author charges Lucrinus, on the other hand, with the offence of adultery. The last few lines recall the listings of rulers that Henry of Huntingdon included in his previous letter to Henry I on the succession of kings. None of the rulers here, Lucrinus, Gondolovea, nor Maddan, appear on this earlier list of rulers. It can be conjectured that Henry of Huntingdon found

⁹² HH, 560.

⁹³ HH, 560.

⁹⁴ HH, 560-2.

this story amongst the histories at Le Bec, although it is also possible that it reflects oral histories.

The Daughters of King Leir: the Value of a Daughter's Love

Henry of Huntingdon relates the story of King Leir and his three daughters as part of his early history of Britain included in the letter to Warin the Breton. "Lacking male issue, he made his three daughters the heirs of his kingdom."⁹⁵ When Leir asked each in turn how much they loved him, the two eldest gushed. The youngest Cordeilla, simply replied, "'you are worth as much as you possess and that is how much I love you.'"⁹⁶ Offended, "the king angrily turned away his face."⁹⁷ He gave the two eldest daughters promising husbands, dividing up Britain as a dowry for each, while Cordeilla was banished, although she found refuge in Gaul and married King Aganippus. The two elder daughters and their husbands conspired to throw out King Leir. Without a kingdom or his daughters' true love, he fled to Gaul and Cordeilla.

Once in Gaul, Leir had to plead his case to his youngest daughter and her powerful husband:

'Your sisters who spoke grandly of their love for me have cruelly banished me from the realm. I beseech your kindness that as they have dishonoured their fine words with cruel deeds, so you may embellish and beautify with good deeds the moderate words you spoke of your love for me. And let it be to your everlasting credit that as they returned evil for good, you pay back good for evil; and at least do not deny me food and clothing.'⁹⁸

Cordeilla and her husband were moved by his speech and invaded Britain killing the other sisters' husbands and returning Leir to his rightful rule. "When Leir had died of

⁹⁵ HH, 562.

⁹⁶ HH, 562-4.

⁹⁷ HH, 564.

⁹⁸ HH, 264.

old age, Cordeilla reigned after her father for five years. But her two nephews... captured her by trickery and shut her up in prison. There, savagely cast down by so great a change in fortune, she took her own life with courage worthy of a man.”⁹⁹

Henry of Huntingdon uses this legend as both an account of early rulers and a morality tale. Compared to the story of Gondolovea above, the chronicler spends much more ink on Cordeilla, praising her moderation and courage. Early in the tale, Leir and the older daughters are very emotive and seem to wear their hearts on their sleeves. In sharp contrast, Cordeilla appears reserved and keeps her comments short. Henry of Huntingdon admires her moderation and the truth of her answers to her father. She shows a certain wisdom beyond her years in answering her father’s question.

During her banishment, she avoids self-pity and, with God’s help, builds a new life with a marriage to a foreign king. While her father banishes Cordeilla for her response, “God, who is present in learned thoughts, stirred up the mind of Aganippus.”¹⁰⁰ Others recognize her goodness. When her father later comes to her seeking refuge, Cordeilla accepts him back into her life unconditionally and offers him not simply shelter but invades England to regain what Leir had lost. Eventually Cordeilla’s behavior influences her father: as King Leir learns and tells her, “Words said in moderation should always be valued.”¹⁰¹

Henry of Huntingdon sets Cordeilla’s positive attributes into sharp contrast with the behavior of the others. Not only is her father shown to be too emotional, but her sisters move from duplicitous to greedy and traitorous. The nephews continue the

⁹⁹ HH, 564.

¹⁰⁰ HH, 564.

¹⁰¹ HH, 564.

treachery begun by their parents, and Henry especially emphasizes this in the behavior of their mothers. After Cordeilla's suicide, this treachery continues when one of the boys murders the other in order to control all of Britain.¹⁰² Her last downfall illustrates the 'trickery' of her nephews and not a punishment. Henry of Huntingdon stresses that by taking her own life, Cordeilla shows the courage worthy of a man.

Dummallo's Queen: Mother and Mediator

Henry of Huntingdon continues to discuss the early rulers of Britain when describing the rule of Dummallo and his unnamed queen. While his rule was fairly unremarkable, at Dummallo's death, things became much more difficult. One of the sons, Belinus, claimed the throne only to be challenged by his brother, Brennus. According to Henry, Brennus simply wanted his share of the kingdom which had been shamefully withheld by Belinus. Eventually, Belinus "was moved by his mother's tears to make peace with his brother."¹⁰³

Even though the details are lacking, it is clear that this mother and queen behaved appropriately when she interceded with one son on behalf of the other. Her son respected her enough to make peace. Her role as advisor and intercessor recalls the behaviors of the Virgin Mary discussed above. In this case, the queen also acted as a peacemaker within her own family, a role that was common for Anglo-Norman women.¹⁰⁴

Guinevere: Queen and Adulteress

In the letter to Warin, Henry of Huntingdon also relates an early version of the legend of King Arthur, a version that includes Arthur's queen, Guinevere. In this story,

¹⁰² HH, 564.

¹⁰³ HH, 568.

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion of Matilda of Flanders who kept the peace between her son, Robert Curthose, and her husband, William the Conqueror, below Chapter 7.

Arthur, having become king of all of Britain, wanted to control Rome as well. He journeyed to Rome, but “he left the kingdom and the queen in the custody of his nephew Modred.”¹⁰⁵ While on his journey, “a messenger told him, ‘Modred, your nephew, has put your crown on his own head... and has married your wife.’”¹⁰⁶ King Arthur rushed back to Britain to fight Modred. Although he was able to defeat Modred, Arthur was mortally wounded in the process.¹⁰⁷

Guinevere’s role in this version of the legend is relatively passive in contrast to the other women in the letter to Warin. Modred had been given custody of her as well as the kingdom. It is even unclear if Guinevere wanted to marry Modred or if she had simply been stolen just like Arthur’s crown. Henry does not go into details about how Guinevere came to be Arthur’s wife or even her beauty, a quality frequently mentioned in later versions. There is also no mention of what became of her in the events leading up to or after the battle between Modred and Arthur.

Early Frankish Queens

Both the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* discuss a number of the early Frankish queens. Modern historians know these women existed and can pinpoint many of their lives’ events; however, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers capture both the facts and the lore surrounding such distant events.¹⁰⁸ Orderic Vitalis wrote much

¹⁰⁵ HH, 578.

¹⁰⁶ HH, 578.

¹⁰⁷ HH, 578.

¹⁰⁸ For more information on these Frankish queens, see Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1981) and Dick Harrison, *The Age of Abbesses and Queens: Gender and Political Culture in Early Medieval Europe* (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 1998).

of what appears in both works about Brunecildis, Fredegonde, and Bathilde, all Frankish queens in the sixth and seventh centuries.¹⁰⁹

Orderic briefly outlines some of the events of the reigns of the Frankish kings, especially as it concerned the early history of his monastery at St Évrout, and, in his account, Brunecildis was a major political player in the Frankish kingdom. She was a daughter of a Visigothic king who later married Sigebert, becoming queen of the Franks.¹¹⁰ The couple had a number of children: “Childebert the king and Ingonde, wife of Hermingeld king of the Visigoths and martyr, and Bertha, wife of Æthelberht king of Kent, and Bova, who was dedicated to God as nun.”¹¹¹ According to Orderic, Sigebert was then slain by his brother, Chilperic, and “Childebert, who was a mere boy, ruled the kingdom with his mother Brunecildis, holding it valiantly for twenty-five years.”¹¹² It is unclear from Orderic’s account how long Brunecildis may have served as a regent for her son who may have only been seven at the time of his father’s death.

Childebert’s reign ended, however, when his cousin, Chlotar the Great, killed him in turn. Childebert left behind young sons, Theodeberht and Theodoric, to rule, and once again Brunecildis served as regent. “Chlotar the Great, son of Chilperic, attacked them repeatedly for about twenty years. Finally he slew King Theodeberht in war, and cruelly caused the aged Brunecildis to be bound to the tails of wild horses, so that the mighty

¹⁰⁹ Chibnall notes that Orderic appears to have used and perhaps misunderstood a number of sources in describing these queens, including Bede and Flodoard. See OV, III, 280-1, note 2.

¹¹⁰ OV, III, 280-2.

¹¹¹ OV, III, 282.

¹¹² OV, III, 282.

queen, from whom Pope Gregory had sought favour as the Acts of the Popes and his register bear witness, was torn to pieces.”¹¹³

Orderic shows a great deal of respect for Brunechildis and her role as regent. To build up her importance, Orderic includes the information about her relationship to Pope Gregory and titles her mighty queen. It is clear that Orderic feels she had deserved more respect than Chlotar had shown her because of that relationship, as well as the fact that she was aged. Orderic does not judge the behaviors of either Brunechildis or Chlotar beyond these simple comments. Elsewhere, in a brief digression into the life of St Columbanus, Orderic states, “after his banishment by the impious Queen Brunechildis he [Columbanus] moved to Italy.”¹¹⁴ Despite her previous ties to Gregory the Great, Orderic calls her impious because of her role in this banishment. Neither Orderic nor the other Anglo-Norman chroniclers discuss her elsewhere.

Orderic also writes of the impious actions of Chilperic’s wife, Fredegonde. Orderic related: “Praetextatus, a martyr for Christ’s name, died by the mandate of Queen Fredegonde.”¹¹⁵ A few paragraphs later, Orderic seems to implicate others in a plot: “he [Maurice, the first Greek emperor of the Romans] ruled undeservedly, for it is said that he betrayed his master Praetextatus, who was murdered at the command of Fredegonde, wife of King Chilperic.”¹¹⁶ Despite her role in the killing of a martyr, Orderic makes little judgment of her actions and in fact, spent little ink on the details of the story, and he does not mention her again.

¹¹³ OV, III, 282. For her contact with Gregory the Great, refer to Chibnall’s note 2.

¹¹⁴ OV, IV, 334.

¹¹⁵ OV, III, 58.

¹¹⁶ OV, III, 60.

Bathilde, a seventh century queen of the Franks, appears briefly in the chronicles of Henry of Huntingdon, Orderic Vitalis, and William of Malmesbury. Henry gives the least amount of information: “Clovis fathered three sons by Bathilda his saintly queen—Clothair, Childeric and Theodoric.”¹¹⁷ This brief report is part of a longer list of genealogies tracing the descendents of French kings. While much more information is available on her life, the other Anglo-Norman chroniclers focused on her royal patronage of religious houses. William of Jumièges and Orderic both briefly mention her in connection with the founding of Jumièges.¹¹⁸

Orderic also relates a story about the attempts of a Frankish king and queen, possibly Bathilde, to move the relics of the church of Notre-Dame-du-Bois in order to found a new house. Clerks traveling with the couple were miraculously unable to remove the relics.¹¹⁹ After the frustrated king ended his supplications, the queen:

took a vow, saying, ‘If almighty God will give us the power to lift up unharmed these holy things which we have laid down, I will have a noble church in honour of his Mother built in this place.’ When she had spoken these words the clerks laid their hands on the holy things, but to no purpose. Then the queen, greatly grieving, wept and said, ‘I know that my sins have made me unworthy to look upon the servant of God. Nevertheless if, through the intercession of this holy man, God the creator of all things will have mercy on us and permit us to take up these sacred relics, I will have a marble altar made at my own expense and brought to the holy man.’¹²⁰

The clerks were able to move the relics much to the relief of the rulers and their subjects including the future saint Évrout himself. There were three days of celebrating, and the king and queen granted ninety-nine estates to Évrout. “The queen, mindful of her

¹¹⁷ HH, 478-80.

¹¹⁸ GND, I, 18 and OV, III, 62, respectively.

¹¹⁹ OV, III, 284 and note 3 which gives the name of the church.

¹²⁰ OV, III, 286.

vow, had a noble church built in honour of Mary the virgin mother of God on the hill between the river Charentonne and the wood, and sent a marble altar to the venerable man [Évrout] as she had promised.”¹²¹

According to Orderic, this rededicated church became one of fifteen monasteries, the names and histories of which “have all been lost during the varied changes of four hundred years, under the many princes who have ruled over Gaul.”¹²² The story above represents “what I as a boy heard from the older monks.”¹²³ While Orderic does not name her here or elsewhere, Chibnall asserts that “the most likely name would have been Bathilde.”¹²⁴ Regardless of her identity, Orderic portrays the queen as a pious woman who patronized the church both with her husband and in her own stead. She served as an antecedent for later royal women who were similarly expected to be pious and to give generously to the church.¹²⁵

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers use the antecedents, whether from Greek and Roman myth, the Bible, or a past just out of memory, to form exemplars for their readers. The historians saw patterns in history constantly repeating and expected their readers to learn from these patterns. Using tales, including ones with which readers may have already been familiar, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers stress attributes, such as wisdom, piety, activity and loyalty, as well as models, such as intercessors, patronesses and advisors that would serve their readers well. The next chapters trace many of these same

¹²¹ OV, III, 286. This passage again refers to the church of Notre-Dame-du-Bois which was restored instead of the royal couple making a new foundation.

¹²² OV, III, 284.

¹²³ OV, III, 284.

¹²⁴ OV, III, 284, note 2.

¹²⁵ For the discussion of the piety and patronage of women, see below Chapters 4 and 8.

attributes and models as the chroniclers describe them in the women of their contemporary society.

Chapter 3: Daughters: The Role of Girls and Young Women in the Family

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers repeatedly mention women in their roles as daughters, wives or mothers. For lay women, these were the most basic roles, tied to the life cycle, and each had its own set of expectations. Daughters needed an education and a good marriage. The education they received was both formal and informal, meant to train a daughter to be pious, obedient and well-equipped to handle life outside of the home in which she grew up. Marriages could have been peace-weaving or alliance-building and frequently brought power, prestige and kinship ties to both families.

Daughters are rarely mentioned outside of their mother's ability to produce them and as their potential as brides, but the chroniclers do provide some basic ideas of what a good daughter should be or should do. These ideas came from society and were reflected and reinforced by the writings of the chroniclers. It should surprise no one that daughters should be obedient and pious, but there was also an expectation that women should be trained for the roles they would later occupy.

Modern historians have argued that medieval parents were not as close or affectionate to their children as modern counterparts, because they would not invest energy and love into a child who might die young;¹ however, this is preposterous and

¹ This is an infamous argument made by several historians, including Lawrence Stone in *The Family, Sex and Marriage, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). Philippe Aries argues that medieval families did not recognize childhood as a separate stage of development in his book, *Centuries of Childhood: a*

runs counter to the evidence. Medieval parents loved their children and made decisions about their futures even if early death was a reality. To give a brief example, Matilda of Boulogne, queen of King Stephen, dedicated lands to St Katherine's in London in honor of their two children who both died before reaching the age of two or three.²

Formal and Informal Education of daughters

Young girls needed an education in a number of skills in order to raise a woman capable of serving herself, the family she was born into, and the family she married into throughout her life. This education included practical skills, a moral education, and a more formal education. Although it is rarely mentioned, important tasks such as learning to run the household would have been learned through example, as daughters watched their mothers in action.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers often praise women who were wise and who were able to be pragmatic when serving their families. Frequently the authors link the intelligence of women with other positive attributes. The chroniclers use phrases like: "wise and beautiful;"³ "giving wise or prudent counsel;"⁴ or occasionally other words like "shrewd," "persuasive," or "clever."⁵ Part of this intelligence would certainly have

Social History of Family Life (translated by Robert Baldick, New York: Random House, Inc, 1962). This is similarly absurd in light of the importance of education as argued below.

² *RRAN*, III, #512.

³ Orderic uses this phrase to refer to Juliana (OV, III, 342) and Matilda of Anjou (OV, VI, 330).

⁴ See descriptions of these noblewomen: Avise of Auffay (OV, III, 256); Hildeburg (OV, III, 342); Margaret of Maine (WP, 64); Empress Matilda (*GND*, II, 246).

⁵ See descriptions of these noblewomen: Duvelina, a very wise woman (*femina magna prudentia*, *GND*, II, 268); Adela of Blois, wise (*sagax*, OV, V, 324); Adela of Flanders, wise (*sagax*, WP, 32); Helwise of Evreux, clever and persuasive (*sollersent et facunda*, OV, IV, 212); Margaret of Maine (WP, 64); Edith Matilda and Margaret of Scotland, learned (*scientie*, *GND*, II, 216); Mabel of Bellême, shrewd and witty (*sagax atque faceta*, *GND*, II, 118); Empress Matilda, known for her wisdom (*prudentia*, *GND*, II, 244); Sibyl of Conversano, renowned for her wisdom (*sapientia*, *GND*, II, 222).

been pragmatic, learning how to run a household, but certainly also included a more formal education in the liberal arts.

There are numerous passages in which various Anglo-Norman chroniclers discuss parents who were looking after the education, both moral and formal, of their daughters. “Edward [the Elder, king of Wessex] had brought up his daughters in such wise that in childhood they gave their whole attention to literature and afterwards employed themselves in the labors of distaff and the needle that thus they might chastely pass their virgin age.”⁶ William of Malmesbury describes Queen Edith as “a woman in whose bosom there was a school of all the liberal arts, though she had bad judgment in worldly matters.”⁷ Edith had been educated at the nunnery at Wilton.⁸

A formal education during the eleventh and twelfth centuries included learning the *quadrivium* and the *trivium*. The *quadrivium* included the study of geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy, while the *trivium* focused on grammar, logic and rhetoric. While many have assumed that men were more likely to receive such a formal education, Georges Duby argues against this in the twelfth century: “All the evidence shows that [female] participation in the learned culture was more precocious, more extensive, than that of males in the secular aristocracy.”⁹ Duby and others remain focused

⁶ *GRA*, 200. Edward the Elder had eleven daughters by his three wives: Ælfflaed, Æthelflaed, Æthelhild, Eadburg, Edfflaed, Ælfgifu, Eadgifu (I), Eadgifu (II), Eadgyth, Ealhild, and Edith. The first five entered the holy life while the remaining six were given noble marriages in England, France, and Ottonian Germany.

⁷ *GRA*, 352. Roger of Wendover parrots this description of Edith, *RW*, 325. William of Malmesbury does not explain why he believes her to have ‘bad judgment’ although it would certainly have much to do with her choices to remain loyal to the family into which she was born, the Godwines. For more information, see Pauline Stafford’s *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women’s Power in Eleventh Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

⁸ Stafford, 259.

⁹ Duby implies that girls were more dedicated to the books while boys had to learn martial arts and other skills that took them out of a formal learning environment. Georges Duby, “The Culture of the Knightly

on the aristocracy, and there is little or no evidence of a formal education for *laborares*, the order of those who work.

There was a long tradition of daughters receiving education in monasteries or nunneries. As Henry of Huntingdon reflects, “at this time [the seventh century reign of Anna, king of East Anglia,] indeed, the nobleman of England used to send their daughters to be educated in the monasteries at Brie, Chelles and Andely-sur-Seine,” in France.¹⁰ St Margaret was highly educated and an avid collector of books.¹¹ As she neared death, she ordered that her daughters, Mary and Edith Matilda, later wives of Eustace III of Boulogne and Henry I of England respectively, “were cared for by the nuns [of Wilton] for a long time and educated both in letters and in good morals.”¹² According to Edith Matilda’s biographer, Lois Huneycutt, Goscelin of Canterbury describes “a school at Wilton for girls who were not necessarily intended for the cloister.”¹³ From Edith Matilda’s writings, it is clear that the queen was familiar with the Bible, the liturgy, patristic and some classical authors.¹⁴ Elsewhere, Robert of Torigni comments on the learning of St. Margaret and Edith Matilda: “how holy and how learned in secular and spiritual matters both queens were is made abundantly clear in the books about their lives.”¹⁵

Later royal women were similarly educated. Orderic describes not only Matilda of Flanders’ genealogy but also that she “was endowed with fairness of face, noble birth,

Class: Audience and Patronage,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, edited by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D Lanham (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1991), 258.

¹⁰ HH, 192.

¹¹ *Matilda of Scotland*, 131.

¹² OV, IV, 272.

¹³ *Matilda of Scotland*, 18-19 and note 52.

¹⁴ *Matilda of Scotland*, 131.

¹⁵ *GND*, II, 216. This is a reference to the *Vitae Sanctae Margaretae*. William of Malmesbury also echoes this description of their education. *GRA*, 754.

learning, beauty of character, and – what is and ever will be more worthy of praise— strong faith and fervent love of Christ.”¹⁶ Matilda’s daughter, Cecilia, had as tutor Arnulf of Chocques, later patriarch of Jerusalem.¹⁷ While Arnulf may or may not have taught Cecilia’s sister, Adela of Blois was certainly highly educated and could read and write Latin.¹⁸ Matilda of Boulogne was educated at Bermondsey Abbey in England.¹⁹

Sometimes the education was informal rather than formal. As discussed above, Edward the Elder’s daughters were not only taught literature, but also work with distaff and needle. Embroidery appears to be another practical skill that daughters acquired in childhood. Anglo-Norman chroniclers in particular attribute this skill to Anglo-Saxon women. “On high festivals, although he wore robes interwoven with gold, which the queen had worked for him at great expense, he showed moderation, neither falling short of his royal majesty nor yet displaying pride.”²⁰ Clearly, the embroidery Edith did on the robes was not simply something done in boredom or as a hobby; the work was worthy of praise, and William of Malmesbury is quick to say that Edward did not wear the robes in order to show off but rather as part of a reasonable royal display.

Despite these passages, the chroniclers pay only passing attention to the education of either men or women; however, it is clear that education was expected and not something special possessed by a rare few. Despite this, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers

¹⁶ OV, II, 224.

¹⁷ Arnulf of Chocques testified to a charter as Cecilia’s tutor. See Chibnall’s note 1, OV, V, 176 and notes 1 and 4; *GND*, II, 53. Cecilia was an oblate and it is unclear if the other daughters of Matilda and William the Conqueror had the same or other tutors.

¹⁸ *Adela of Blois*, 30-1.

¹⁹ Strickland, vol. I, 205.

²⁰ “*In precipuis festiuitibus, quanuis amicitur uestibus auro intextis quas regina sumptuosissime elaborauerat, ita temperans erat ut nec maiestati suae deesset nec tamen supercillium attolleret, magis Dei de his munificentiam quam mundialem gloriam mente uersans.*” *GRA*, 404. The use of the verb *elaborare* implies Edith did the work herself and did not just order the work done,

do mention women as educated or having knowledge in numerous passages.²¹ William of Malmesbury complains about the lack of education in one of the illegitimate daughters of Henry I. When this daughter, alternatively known as Maud or Sibyl, died within a few years of marrying Alexander, king of the Scots, “[Alexander] did not waste many sighs on her, for she was wanting, it is said, in correctness of manners and charm of person.”²² Obviously education included a wide variety of aspects from an education in the liberal arts, to practical skills, and even a moral education.

Piety of Daughters

As can be clearly seen from the above, a moral or religious education was a large part of a proper upbringing, and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently praise the piety of young girls. William of Poitiers describes the piety of Agatha, one of William the Conqueror’s daughters: “She was in every way worthy of such a parent and shone with such virtues and zeal in her love for Christ that although an unveiled girl, she could stand as an example to queens and nuns.”²³ There are no other virtues mentioned except her piety. There seems no higher compliment the monk could pay to the young girl.

Elsewhere, William of Poitiers described how William the Conqueror looked after the pious education of all of his daughters: “Likewise his children learnt Christian piety from infancy, thanks to the careful provision he made for them.”²⁴ William of Poitiers placed William the Conqueror’s piety within the context of his children’s. “From a tender

²¹ The women whose education are mentioned include: St Margaret (*GND*, II, 216), Adela Capet (*GND*, II, 52), Sichelgaita of Salerno (*OV*, IV, 30), Osburh (*GRA*, 192), Mary of Scotland and Edith Matilda (*OV*, IV, 272 and *GND*, II, 216), Edith Matilda (*GRA*, 754-6), Matilda of Flanders (*OV*, II, 224 and *GRA*, 542), Queen Edith (*GRA*, 352-4), Empress Matilda (*GND*, II, 218), Odeline of Maule (*OV*, III, 182), Eadgyth (*GRA*, 200) and Æthelflaed of Mercia (*GRA*, 211).

²² *GRA*, 726.

²³ *WP*, 96. For further discussion of Agatha, see Appendix I.

²⁴ *WP*, 82.

age he took part devoutly in religious services, often joining in the celebration of them in the company of a religious community of clerks or monks. To old men this youth shone as a fine example for the daily assiduity with which he attended the sacred mysteries.”²⁵

Other writers discussed the piety of young girls as well. Avice of Auffay’s epitaph, quoted at the beginning of this work, also discusses her behavior in childhood stressing her piety above other attributes. In particular, Orderic writes that she attended religious services daily.²⁶ It should surprise no one that Orderic, or any of the other churchmen, praises her piety above all else, especially since Avice of Auffay was a patroness of Orderic’s monastery, St Évrout.

When Margaret of Maine was betrothed to Robert Curthose, William of Poitiers writes about her constant prayers to God: “the pious girl was so inflamed by His saving fire and so desired Him that she devoted herself to prayer, abstinence, mercy, humility, and indeed to all good works, vehemently wishing never to know any marriage except to him.”²⁷ Margaret died before reaching a marriageable age and was buried at Fécamp.²⁸

Obedience of Daughters

Daughters who did not respect or obey their parents clearly distressed the chroniclers. The authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* remind their readers of the Biblical commandment that calls for children to “honor thy father and thy mother.”²⁹ Whether daughters were adults or children, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers believe that

²⁵ WP, 80-2.

²⁶ OV, III, 256.

²⁷ WP, 62-4

²⁸ WP, 64; OV, II, 118; GND, II, 202. All of these passages stress her piety prior to death.

²⁹ GND, II, 68. The text is paraphrasing Exodus 20:12.

they should be obedient. In fact, the chroniclers most frequently complain about the disobedience of adult daughters.

Obedience was important even between parents and adult children. In 1134, the Empress Matilda fell ill and announced her wish to be buried at the monastery of Le Bec much to the dismay, as the story goes, of her father. Henry I wanted his daughter to be buried among her Norman ancestors at Rouen. Thought to be in mortal danger, Matilda sent messengers back and forth to her father arguing that Le Bec was a better and more pious choice for her burial. Robert of Torigni proclaims in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*,

O Woman of admirable virtue and prudent counsel, who spurned worldly pomp.... Convinced by the devotion of an empress and the prudence of a daughter, the father, who himself used to surpass others by his virtue and devotion, yielded and granted her wish and request to be buried at Le Bec.³⁰

Henry I had a strong idea of what was the proper behavior for his adult and married daughter. Through her convincing, Henry decided that both his daughter's wishes and piety, not politics or ancestry, were more important.³¹

A number of passages describing Juliana of Breteuil, another daughter of Henry I, best illustrate the disobedience of daughters. Juliana's husband, Eustace, broke the peace and began a rebellion against Henry I. When Juliana refused to turn over the castle of Breteuil, Henry I marched there and "laid siege to the castle in which his defiant daughter had shut herself up."³² Juliana "saw danger on every side and did not know what to do;

³⁰ *GND*, II, 246. This story is only known through Robert of Torigni's redactions. *GND*, II, 246, note 2.

³¹ The Empress Matilda did not die until September 10, 1167 but was buried before the high altar at Bec. *The Empress Matilda*, 190-1.

³² The siege of the castle took place in February of 1119. *OV*, VI, 212.

she knew for certain that her father had arrived in a fury against her and would not raise the siege he had begun until he had triumphed.”³³

Juliana asked for an audience with her father with the intention of murdering him and thus ending the siege. When they met,

...she had a cross-bow ready drawn for the purpose and shot a bolt at her father, but failed to injure him since God protected him. The king immediately had the castle drawbridge destroyed, so that no one could enter or leave. Juliana, seeing that she was completely surrounded and that no one was at hand to help her, surrendered the castle to the king, but could find no means of persuading him to allow her to leave freely. Indeed by the king’s command she was forced to leap down from the walls, with no bridge or support, and fell shamefully, with bare buttocks, into the depths of the moat.³⁴

Obviously, negotiations had not gone well. Juliana had to flee to her husband at Pacy and explain to him how she had lost the castle.³⁵ Juliana made the poor decision to kill her father as a means of negotiating. Although Henry did allow her children to be blinded, Orderic has no sympathy for Juliana. While Henry does take the surrender of the castle, he cannot abide his daughter’s disobedience and disrespect, both that she held the castle against him and, even worse, that she tried to kill him. Her actions are all the worse because she is both a disobedient daughter as well as a disobedient vassal. The penalty for this disobedience was dishonor and shame.

Orderic Vitalis almost revels in the disgraceful details of the story and certainly uses it as a moral warning to his readers: “the castle moat was full to overflowing with winter rains and the frozen waters naturally struck numbing cold into the tender flesh of the woman when she fell. The unlucky Amazon got out of the predicament shamefully as

³³ OV, VI, 212.

³⁴ OV, VI, 212-4. See discussion above in section entitled Obedience of Daughters.

³⁵ OV, VI, 214.

best she could.”³⁶ Orderic also uses a number of antecedents to stress Juliana’s attributes. Here he has compared her to the Amazons,³⁷ and next, he uses Bible verse to stress his horror at Juliana’s actions: “as Solomon says, ‘there is nothing so bad as a bad woman.’”³⁸

Wardship and Hostages

Daughters were not always raised by their parents but could be raised by other families. Families were frequently broken up by deaths, travel or even politics. During the eleventh and twelfth century, rules of wardship, legal guardianship, were not established. Usually various interested parties, whether an overlord or a mother, raised orphan children, looking out for their best interest.³⁹ When St Margaret of Scotland died, she left her daughters, Mary and Edith Matilda, in the care of their aunt, as mentioned above. The girls were raised not only by their aunt, abbess of Romsey, but also by the nuns residing there.

Bertrada of Montfort was an heiress orphaned by the death of her father, Simon of Montfort. At that time, Bertrada was given into the care of her aunt Helwise, countess of Évreux.⁴⁰ It is frequently the case that historians get more of a glimpse at wardship at the time of the marriage, and this is the case with Bertrada of Montfort. Orderic describes at some length the marriage negotiations that took place between Bertrada’s intended, Fulk IV of Anjou, and her guardians. Helwise and William of Évreux arranged the marriage. It

³⁶ OV, VI, 214.

³⁷ For a discussion of the use of the Amazons by the various Anglo-Norman chroniclers, see below, Chapter 2.

³⁸ OV, VI, 212. Here Orderic is paraphrasing Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Sirach 26:19.

³⁹ Emily Zack Tabiteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 61.

⁴⁰ OV, IV, 184.

is clear by the care with which the negotiations took place that the count and countess took Bertrada's welfare seriously.⁴¹

Sometimes it was not death that separated families, however. For example, when Ralph of Gael and his wife Emma went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they left behind a daughter called alternatively Itta or Amice.⁴² The Anglo-Norman chroniclers are silent on her until later when Henry I arranged for her marriage to Robert of Leicester.⁴³ Once again, the wardship of Itta is most visible at the time of marriage.

After the death of Arnold of Échauffour around 1064, the family was in ruin and the fate of his children was in doubt. "Their mother took refuge with her brother Eudo, steward of the duke of Normandy."⁴⁴ The children, at least two boys and two girls, Petronilla and Geva, were in essence abandoned, and "being forced to dwell in the houses of others, as I have already related, had to endure hardship and want from infancy."⁴⁵ Eventually, one son, William, sought his fortune first at the French court and later in Italy. The other children entered monasteries.⁴⁶

Daughters were sometimes raised by the family of their intended husbands. This happened most frequently in the case of early betrothals:

Count Baldwin [IV] of Flanders, wishing to betroth his son to royal offspring, asked Robert, king of the French, to give his daughter [Adela] in marriage to his son Baldwin [V]. When he had been granted her, he took her from her father's palace while she was still in her cradle, brought her to his own house, where he educated

⁴¹ For a full discussion of these marriage negotiations, see below in the section entitled Marriage.

⁴² *GND*, II, 226. It is unclear who raised the girl although there is some implication that it was her uncle, William of Breteuil. See also, *OV*, VI, 294.

⁴³ *OV*, VI, 330. Itta/Amice was previously betrothed to Henry I's illegitimate son Richard, but Richard died before the marriage occurred. This, as well as the fact that she was an heiress, probably assured that Henry I had an interest in negotiating her marriage. See also *OV*, VI, 294 and *GND*, II, 226.

⁴⁴ *OV*, II, 124.

⁴⁵ *OV*, II, 124.

⁴⁶ *OV*, II, 124-8. For a full discussion of Petronilla and Geva, see below in section entitled Marriage.

her with diligent care until she was old enough to marry.⁴⁷

Notice that Baldwin not only took custody of his future daughter-in-law, but that he was also charged with her education.

The Empress Matilda's first marriage provides another example of the betrothed going to live with the family of her intended: "In that year, King Henry gave his daughter Matilda in Marriage to Charles, son of Henry, emperor of the Germans. Burchard, bishop of Cambrai, received her from her father and escorted her to her husband."⁴⁸ Matilda was betrothed in 1109 to Henry V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, when she was only seven. The couple was not married until 1114, when she was still but twelve years old.⁴⁹ In this case, Henry V was twenty years older than his child-bride, and he, not his father, oversaw her care and further education.⁵⁰

At the same time, Henry I was raising the young wife of his other child, Prince William. Matilda, the daughter of Fulk V of Anjou, had been betrothed to William at a young age, and the couple was married when she was approximately twelve years of age. According to Orderic, "the king [Henry I] brought her up as his own child."⁵¹ Henry continued to keep her at his court even after the death of Prince William on the wreck of the White Ship in 1120.⁵²

⁴⁷ *GND*, II, 52. The authors begin this section with an "at that same time" which would imply that the betrothal took place around the time that Hugh of Bayeux was holding the castle of Ivry against Duke Robert of Normandy between 1028 and 1032. However, this could refer to the marriage not the betrothal. The betrothal must have occurred before the death of Robert II of France in 1031.

⁴⁸ *OV*, VI, 166-8.

⁴⁹ Henry V is alternately called Charles Henry. *OV*, VI, 80-1, note 3 and 167, note 3

⁵⁰ Henry IV died in 1106. Henry V was born in 1081 and became emperor in 1105.

⁵¹ *OV*, VI, 330.

⁵² For a full discussion of their betrothal and marriage, see below in section entitled Marriage.

Hostages are another example of daughters being raised by others even while their parents lived. Politics of the era necessitated frequent use of hostages either in the short term or for longer periods of time. The following story of Henry I holding Eustace of Breteuil's daughters as hostages illustrates this as well as showing the potential dangers of using children as hostages.

[Henry I] attempted to bind him [Eustace] in closer ties of loyalty by giving him the son of Ralph Harenc, the custodian of the castle,⁵³ as a hostage and receiving in return Eustace's two daughters, who were his own granddaughters,⁵⁴ as hostages. However, Eustace ill-treated the hostage he received. On the advice of Amaury of Montfort... he put out the boy's eyes and sent him back to his father... The angry father went to the king and revealed the ill treatment of his son. The king was deeply moved by it and handed over his two granddaughters so that he might take vengeance immediately. Ralph Harenc took Eustace's daughters with the permission of the angry king and avenged his son by cruelly putting out their eyes and cutting off the tips of their nostrils. So innocent childhood alas! Suffered for the sins of the fathers, and the feelings of both parents were roused by the suffering and maiming of their offspring.⁵⁵

Orderic does not write any more about the two daughters of Breteuil so their ultimate fate remains unclear.⁵⁶ Orderic also briefly mentions how the two daughters of Robert Guiscard became hostages in the Byzantine Empire, although he does not go into much detail.⁵⁷

Oblates

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers also describe daughters who were oblates following in a long tradition of young girls who entered the service of God and were

⁵³ There was some dispute over the castle of Ivry at this time which had led Henry I to question Eustace's loyalty to him. Ralph was Henry's man not Eustace's. *OV*, VI, 210.

⁵⁴ Eustace of Breteuil had married Julianna, an illegitimate daughter of Henry I. The couple also had at least two sons, William and Roger. *GND*, II, 250. It is unclear why the daughters were chosen as hostages and not the sons without knowing more about the children, not only Eustace's but also Ralph's.

⁵⁵ *OV*, VI, 210-2.

⁵⁶ Rebellion broke out between Henry and Eustace as a result of their injuries. Part of this rebellion is discussed below, see Chapter 4.

⁵⁷ *OV*, IV, 12.

raised in the church. This tradition dates back to the Anglo-Saxons. As Henry of Huntingdon writes, “King Anna [of East Anglia] had sent his younger daughter, Æthelburh, and his wife’s daughter, Saethryth, to serve God at the monastery of Brie. Although foreigners, both were made abbesses of Brie as reward for their virtues.”⁵⁸ Anna was not the only seventh century Anglo-Saxon king to dedicate a daughter to God: “Earconberht [king of Kent] also sent to Brie his daughter Earcongota.”⁵⁹

William the Conqueror had one of his daughters, Cecelia, dedicated to the church at a young age. Orderic relates, “she had been brought up and carefully educated in the abbey of Caen, and there dedicated to the holy and undivided Trinity... she fulfilled the duties of her calling for fifty-two years after her father offered her to God.”⁶⁰ Cecilia was given to the church of Holy Trinity at Caen during its dedication in 1066.⁶¹ Since her parents were married around 1053,⁶² she could not have been more than twelve and was most likely much younger. She took the veil in 1075 having reached adulthood.⁶³

Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently mention oblates. There was a tradition of Anglo-Saxon oblates that went back centuries. William of Malmesbury briefly describes a few in his *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*: the eighth century princesses, Frideswide,⁶⁴ Cynethryth and Cyneswith,⁶⁵ as well as the tenth century princess, Eadburh.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Saewarh was the daughter of Anna’s queen, Saewara, by an unknown first husband. Brie is a nunnery in France. HH, 192

⁵⁹ HH, 192.

⁶⁰ OV, III, 10.

⁶¹ Fauroux, #231, page 446.

⁶² The marriage date is questionable. For a full discussion of the dating, see below, Appendix I.

⁶³ OV, III, 8 and footnote 5 on 8-9.

⁶⁴ GPA, 212-3 and see notes 1 and 2.

⁶⁵ GPA, 214.

⁶⁶ GPA, 115-6.

Richard of Coulances and his wife Adela, patrons of St Évrout, had eleven sons and four daughters. “Two of these were vowed to God in childhood: John was sent as an oblate to Saint Évrout, and Adela became a nun in the abbey of Holy Trinity at Caen.”⁶⁷ Mary, the daughter of King Stephen and Matilda of Boulogne, was also an oblate. Mary entered the convent at Stratford, then Lillechurch, and eventually Romsey. A group of nuns from St Suprice in Brouges entered with her, becoming the princess’ attendants.⁶⁸

Marriage

The ultimate role most daughters fulfilled was that of bride, and their marriage could serve a wide variety of purposes. Marriages were almost always arranged by parents or some other sort of guardians. Some people assume that since women had little choice in whom they married, that this must have been a moment of great oppression of women. However, marriages were very rarely about love, and men did not have much input into whom they married either. Most marriages represented a uniting of two families and their shared interests. Sometimes brides and grooms were chosen while they were still young. In this case, the couple was simply betrothed until they had reached marriageable age. Other times, the betrothal and marriage occurred while they were adults.

Since marriages were meant to bind families together, the betrothal of even the youngest girls illustrated the intentions of the family and served to tie the two families in

⁶⁷ OV, III, 230.

⁶⁸ This account is not found in the chronicles but is known strictly from charter evidence. Matilda issued a charter granting Higham to Strafford at the time that Mary moved to Lillechurch. The charter gives some background information on Mary as an oblate although it does not explain the reasons behind the move or give information about her age. *RRAN*, #221. This charter was confirmed by Stephen, #223, and Eustace, #222. Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, also confirmed the charter, which appears in its entirety; see Avrom Saltman, *Theobald Archbishop of Canterbury* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 379-80.

some way although this tie was not complete until the marriage. King Stephen hoped to build strong ties with Waleran of Meulan, an important noble who had helped Stephen gain the throne of England in 1135. Stephen continued to seek out Waleran's service and needed his help in order to retain what little control Stephen had of Normandy. "At this time [1136] King Stephen betrothed his infant daughter, then two years old, to Waleran, count of Meulan, and the count returned to Normandy."⁶⁹ This daughter, Matilda, lived for only a few years after the betrothal, so no marriage ever occurred. There would have been a rather large disparity in age between the two had she survived. Although Stephen retained the friendship and service of Waleran, the king lost all control over Normandy very soon after this.

Marriages strengthened the relationship between the two families that had begun by betrothals. After their betrothal around 1030, Baldwin V of Flanders and Adela, as mentioned above, married. It is unclear exactly when they were married, but they had a number of children together before their deaths in 1067 and 1079, respectively: Robert the Frisian, Baldwin VI of Flanders, Arnulf, Odo, archbishop of Trier, Henry, a clerk, Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror, and Judith.⁷⁰

There are other examples of strong marriage alliances. After the death of Harold Godwineson at the Battle of Hastings, Waltheof, earl of Northumbria and Huntingdon, was left masterless. Rather than face exile, "and after a voluntary surrender [to William], he was granted the king's niece Judith in marriage and honoured with his personal

⁶⁹ OV, VI, 456.

⁷⁰ OV, II, 280. These are simply the children that survived to adulthood. It is quite possible that there were also a number of children who were either stillborn or died young.

friendship.”⁷¹ The marriage was meant to not only show that Waltheof was now William’s loyal and trusted man but was also intended as a reward for Waltheof’s change of sides.

Sometimes this kind of offer was refused: “the king [William I] had so great an affection for [William of Grandmesnil] that he offered him the hand of his niece, the daughter of Robert count of Mortain, hoping in this way to bind the youth to him by the signal honour of kinship. But the proud young knight thought nothing of the king’s proposal and for frivolous reasons went to Apulia.”⁷²

Orderic does not seem to think much of the youth’s decision to reject William’s offer and seek his fortunes elsewhere.⁷³ Orderic implies the decision was disrespectful as well as ill-conceived. Later Orderic says that “misfortune dogged them [i.e. William and his brothers] so that not one of them except Robert lived to old age or enjoyed peaceful prosperity for very long.”⁷⁴ When William went to Apulia, however, he served Robert Guiscard and found opportunity there. William married Guiscard’s daughter Mabel, gaining with her not only a powerful alliance but also lands including fifteen castles in Apulia.⁷⁵ Clearly, William was not as cursed or as ill-advised as Orderic would like his reader to think.

Frequently, marriages could fix even the most strained of relationships. After the murder of Gilbert of Laigle in Normandy by Geoffrey’s men,

⁷¹ *GRA*, 468. Earl Waltheof later rebelled against William. For his actions, he was imprisoned and eventually executed. See below, this chapter.

⁷² *OV*, IV, 338.

⁷³ As his older brother had gained their father’s lands and title, William of Grandmesnil needed to seek his fortune elsewhere. *OV*, IV, 338.

⁷⁴ *OV*, IV, 340.

⁷⁵ *OV*, IV, 338.

Geoffrey count of Mortagne, considering that his men had committed a serious crime and had sown the seeds of terrible troubles for his land by murdering such a warlike baron, made peace with his nephew Gilbert of Laigle [II],⁷⁶ and gave him his daughter Juliana in marriage... So the wise count took prudent precautions for the welfare of his subjects and heirs when with the sweetness of a marriage alliance he stifled the evil that had been sown so that multiple crime did not proliferate from the root of evil and put out new worse shoots continually in future generations. The alliance between the two lines of cousins has remained unbroken up to now, and unruffled peace binds them in amity for the general good.⁷⁷

Even the murder of a family member and an important noble could be smoothed over with an important marriage alliance. Note that the alliance between the two families had lasted from around 1090 until at least the late 1130's when Orderic was writing his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. The marriage had proven to be a long term solution to a tense situation.

Sometimes multiple marriages were used to either build a web of allegiances or to tie two families together even more strongly. Waleran of Meulan itched to rebel against Henry I and so began making provisions to do so. "To arrange for the lawful marriage of his three sisters, and at the same time to strengthen himself against all his neighbors, he had given the ladies in marriage to three of the leading castellans, who have vassals and fortresses and great riches."⁷⁸ Adelina was married to Hugh of Montfort. Two other unnamed sisters were married to Hugh of Chateaufort-en-Thimerais and William Lovel,

⁷⁶ Gilbert, son of Engulf of Laigle, was the uncle of this second Gilbert. The second Gilbert claimed the lands of Laigle through this uncle. To make it even more confusing, Gilbert and Juliana had a son named Gilbert who later inherited Laigle. OV, IV, 200 and notes 3 and 4.

⁷⁷ The marriage appears to have taken place around 1090 shortly after the murder of Gilbert's uncle, Gilbert. OV, IV, 200.

⁷⁸ OV, VI, 332.

castellan of Ivry.⁷⁹ Waleran was not the only of Henry's nobles to use marriages to empower themselves at Henry's expense.⁸⁰

The marriages of a set of brothers and sisters could provide a double tie between two families. William the Conqueror, while still duke of Normandy, wanted to form an alliance with Maine. He betrothed his son, Robert Curthose, to Margaret of Maine. Margaret's brother, Herbert II of Maine, was betrothed to one of William's daughters.⁸¹ Neither marriage actually occurred because of the premature deaths of all the betrothed except Robert Curthose. This series of marriages laid the groundwork for future, Norman claims on the county of Maine.

Another example involves the families of Tosny and Montfort. Orderic writes that Ralph of Tosny, "carried away his uterine sister, Agnes, the daughter of Richard, count of Évreux, and gave her in marriage to Simon of Montfort. In return he himself received Isabel, Simon's daughter, as his wife."⁸² Orderic does not explain why Ralph had to carry away his sister nor does he describe any backlash from the incident. The two families remained tied together.

The marriage of heiresses had wider implications since this marriage carried not only kinship ties but landed wealth. For example, when Amice/ Itta married Robert of Leicester, he received not only her hand but "Lire, Glos, Breteuil, and most of the lands

⁷⁹ OV, VI, 332. For more information on these marriages, see Geoffrey H. White, "The Career of Waleran, Count of Meulan and Worcester, (1104-66)," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., vol. 17, (1934), 24. Waleran had two other full sisters, both named Isabel, who were not a part of these plans. The first married Roger of Warwick; the second was a concubine of Henry I. See OV, VI, 332-3, note 3.

⁸⁰ Several other frontier lords were making marriage alliances with French lords thereby affronting Henry I. For more information, see OV, VI, 332, note 2.

⁸¹ OV, II, 116 and 304; WP, 62-4. Also see Appendix for discussion of which of William's daughter may have been betrothed to Herbert.

⁸² OV, III, 128. Isabel of Conches is discussed below.

which William fitz Osbern had possessed in Normandy.”⁸³ There are many marriages that carried lands both big and small. When the future King Stephen married Matilda of Boulogne in 1125 he gained extensive lands in both England and France, including the Honour of Boulogne, which was centered in Essex, and the French counties of Boulogne, Guînes, and Thérouanne as well as parts of Lens.⁸⁴

This practice of using heiresses to transfer property was an important part of legitimizing land transfers after William’s conquest of England. Eleanor Searle describes the mechanism in depth. She claims that granting a marriage to Anglo-Saxon men was a means of accepting these men into the power structure of the conquering Normans. “If marriage meant acceptance and meant property rights, it was an important thread weaving the peace among an interdependent group.”⁸⁵ The pattern also worked in reverse: Anglo-Saxon women who were married to Norman men legitimized land transfers from the conquered to the conquering. “Marriage was one of the few ways of legitimately effecting a property transfer.”⁸⁶ If necessary, legitimate Anglo-Saxon male heirs were skipped over so that the lands would be carried through the marriage of daughters into the hands of Norman conquerors.⁸⁷

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries primogeniture was not set in stone, and there are a number of examples of daughters who became heiresses, despite having living

⁸³ The marriage took place shortly before 1125. *GND*, II, 226; other discussions of the land inherited can be found in *OV*, VI, 294 and 330. For more information on Itta/ Amice, see above in section entitled Wardship and Hostages.

⁸⁴ For an extensive discussion of the lands she inherited from her father Eustace III of Boulogne, see Amy O’Neal, “Matilda of Boulogne: The Makings of a Queen,” (MA thesis, University of Houston, 2000), 42-55.

⁸⁵ Eleanor Searle, “Women and the Legitimation of Succession at the Norman Conquest” in *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, edited by R Allen Brown, vol. 3 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1980), 163.

⁸⁶ Searle, 164.

⁸⁷ Searle gives a few examples. Searle, 164-5. Also see examples below.

and adult brothers. In these cases, the brothers were disinherited by their fathers or lords, and the sisters went on to marry and carry those lands to another family. Conan III of Brittany had a son Hoel and two daughters. Conan disinherited his son and gave the county to his daughter Bertha.⁸⁸ It is unclear why the two daughters did not co-inherit, although there is no other mention of the other daughter. Her obscurity and the missing inheritance could be explained by either her early death or her entrance into the church.

The case of the castle of Moulins-la- Marche is even more astounding. William the Conqueror, while still only duke of Normandy, passed over Guitmond's eight living sons, giving Guitmond's daughter Alberada the castle. William then married Alberada off to one of his loyal men, William, the son of Walter of Falaise. This was done in order to punish Guitmond for betraying William by giving the castle over to Henry I of France.⁸⁹ While William could have just given the castle to his loyal follower, it remained important that there still be some sort of blood tie in order to help legitimize the transfer of property. Alberada was that tie.⁹⁰

The chroniclers gloss over these instances, often ignoring the brothers although historians know that these brothers existed. Orderic does not even hint at Guitmond's eight sons. They are known only through charter evidence.⁹¹ Chibnall notes that "in this frontier region where ducal power was less strong, family claims evidently had some

⁸⁸ *GND*, II, 250 and note 3.

⁸⁹ This transfer appears to have occurred in 1050. *OV*, III, 132 and *WP*, 42, note 2.

⁹⁰ Once Alberada had borne William two sons, the marriage was annulled on grounds of consanguinity. William continued to hold the lands which were eventually inherited by their son, Robert. *OV*, III, 132 and note 1.

⁹¹ See Fauroux, # 117, pages 280-1. Fauroux dates the charter between 1040 and 1050, and it is signed by Guitmond, his wife Emma, and all eight sons.

weight... but to some extent the duke's will was still to be reckoned with.”⁹² In the case of Brittany, the authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* do refer to Hoel, but interestingly they do not address his being disinherited. Part of this assuredly is because Anglo-Norman chroniclers were not as interested in the doings of Brittany on this point or may have had incomplete knowledge.

The Question of Love

While marriages had little to do with love in this era, love is not completely missing from the Anglo-Norman world; the chroniclers could be quite romantic even before the birth of the romance. There is never a simple case of love, however. William of Malmesbury says that William fitz Osbern went to Flanders in order “to satisfy his passion for a woman.”⁹³ The lady in question was Richildis of Hainault who had been widowed by Baldwin VI of Flanders. She was ruling the county for her two young sons. Baldwin had left the two boys in the wardship of Philip I of France and William fitz Osbern. “William gladly took up the position in hopes, by undertaking to marry Richildis, of winning a more distinguished name for himself.”⁹⁴ When rebellion broke out in Flanders, William, “who had surrendered entirely to his passion for the woman,” rode into Flanders and was soon after killed in an ambush by Robert the Frisian.⁹⁵ Throughout the long passage, William of Malmesbury hints at love as well as making it clear that this passion was also about ambition.

Elsewhere, when Orderic describes the reasons behind the marriage of Bertrada of Montfort and Fulk IV of Anjou around 1090, he says it is simply love. Orderic gives Fulk

⁹² OV, III, 133, note 1.

⁹³ William of Malmesbury uses the phrase, “pro feminea cupidine.” *GRA*, 474.

⁹⁴ *GRA*, 474.

⁹⁵ *GRA*, 474.

a long speech in which he asks for Bertrada's hand: "if you will do for me one thing on which my heart is set, I will subdue the Manceaux for you and help you at all times, as your faithful ally. I love Bertrada... Give her to me as my wife, I ask you, and I will always keep faith in what I have promised you."⁹⁶

Orderic also clearly lays out the reasons for a marriage alliance between the two families and what each side has to gain from it; these reasons have little to do with passion or love. Bertrada was under the wardship of her aunt Helwise, countess of Évreux, and her husband William. The count responds to Fulk's offer of marriage, "the truth is that you are solely concerned with your own interests and think nothing of mine. You wish to use my niece as a pawn to secure the county of Maine for yourself and you propose to take away my inheritance from me."⁹⁷ William was also concerned that Fulk had two previous wives who were living although he had repudiated them.⁹⁸ This was more than simply a moral preclusion since it meant that Fulk had broken previous promises. William would only agree to the marriage if Fulk promised to not only subdue the Manceaux but in addition to restore Bavent, Noyon-sur-Andelle, Gâce, Gravençon, Écouché, and other estates that had belonged to William's uncle, Ralph Tête d'Âne to Évreux, as well as restoring lands to William's nephew, William of Breteuil.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ OV, IV, 184.

⁹⁷ OV, IV, 184.

⁹⁸ Fulk IV le Rechin had at least four wives, if not five. Along with Bertrada, he married a daughter of Lancelin of Beaugency, Ermengarde of Bourbon, and Orengarde of Châtelaillon. He may also have married a daughter of Walter I of Brienne. At least two of these women were alive but repudiated at the time of his marriage to Bertrada. OV, IV 184-6 and 186, note 3.

⁹⁹ OV, IV, 184 and note 1.

“Afterwards the count of Anjou jubilantly received the girl he desired, and married her.”¹⁰⁰ Orderic once again mixes sentiment with practicality. Fulk did briefly subdue the Manceaux but did not fulfill the rest of his promises.¹⁰¹ The marriage lasted only four years, however, although it was not Fulk who repudiated his final wife; Bertrada eloped with the king of France, yet another example of marriage for love.¹⁰²

Nowhere is there more sentiment than in descriptions of the marriage of Gisela and Giroie: “While on his way to the duke, Giroie stayed with Thurstan of Montfort with whose daughter Gisela he fell in love when he saw her by chance at a meal and successfully besought her noble parents for her hand.”¹⁰³ There are no other negotiations or lands mentioned in connection with the marriage. The couple remained married and had seven sons and four daughters.¹⁰⁴

When King Stephen was negotiating a peace between himself and David of Scotland, “Henry, the son of King David of Scotland, favoured the agreement; he loved Adelina, the daughter of William earl of Surrey, and asked for her hand in marriage. Bound by such a close tie, he was whole-heartedly in favour of the pact with the Normans and the English.”¹⁰⁵ When a peace was agreed upon, the way was clear for the couple to marry.

According to Eadmer, when Henry I “fell in love with her [Edith Matilda, it] set the tongues of very many wagging and held back the two from embracing one another as

¹⁰⁰ OV, IV, 186.

¹⁰¹ OV, IV, 186.

¹⁰² OV, IV, 260. For a fuller discussion of Bertrada’s elopement, see below Chapter 4.

¹⁰³ *GND*, II, 110.

¹⁰⁴ OV, II, 22 and *GND*, II, 110. The description above from the *GND* is a part of Orderic’s redactions. The Giroie’s were the earliest patrons of St Évrout, Orderic’s monastery. Part of his romanticizing surely comes from this relationship with the family.

¹⁰⁵ OV, VI, 524.

they desired.”¹⁰⁶ Their love set tongues wagging because there was some question of whether or not Edith Matilda had taken the veil.¹⁰⁷ Despite the talk of love, Henry certainly also desired a marriage with Edith Matilda because she represented a union with the old line of Anglo-Saxon kings

Marriage Negotiations

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers rarely discuss the full details of the many marriages listed, and the information about these arrangements has to be largely inferred; rarely are negotiations discussed at length in a manner such as Bertrada’s above. Part of these negotiations would include the discussion of *maritagium* or dowry, what came with the bride into the marriage. It is difficult in most cases to ascertain women’s dowry. When Ascelin Goel captured William of Breteuil around 1094, the two made peace. William, “gave his daughter Isabel in marriage to Goel, paid him three thousand livres as well as giving him horses and arms and many other things, and ceded the castle of Ivry to him.”¹⁰⁸ Even when the negotiations are laid bare, it is difficult to tell what is ransom and what is dowry.

Marriage negotiations could be extensive and complicated. Fulk V of Anjou, the son of Bertrada and Fulk IV, used the marriage of his two daughters, Matilda and Sybil, to strengthen the position of Anjou, balancing the interests of the English king versus the interests of the French king. Fulk V was also negotiating his own marriage to Melisende, future queen of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, which obviously required him to leave Anjou in the hands of his young son.

¹⁰⁶ Eadmer, 121.

¹⁰⁷ See discussion below this chapter.

¹⁰⁸ OV, IV, 286.

First, around 1120, Fulk married off Matilda to Prince William, the son and heir of Henry I. In order for the marriage to take place, a number of things were given on each side. Henry I made Prince William the heir to the throne;¹⁰⁹ although this was a foregone conclusion since William was the only legitimate son of Henry I, this officially made Matilda a princess. In return, Fulk received the county of Maine and swore fealty to Henry I.¹¹⁰ The counts of Anjou had never sworn fealty to the kings of England, in fact the counts and the kings were frequently at odds; this marriage soon caused even further strife.

Within a few short years, the political situation had changed drastically. In 1121, just six months after their marriage, Prince William drowned in the wreck of the White Ship. His death left Matilda a very young widow; she could not have been more than about sixteen or seventeen at the time.¹¹¹ Henry I hoped to keep her at his court and “marry her off to a husband of great rank and raise her above her kinsfolk with wealth and honors.”¹¹² Fulk V had gone to the Holy Land and married Melisende, becoming king of Jerusalem. When he returned to Anjou in 1123, he was outraged that Henry I continued to control Matilda’s dowry even after the death of the prince.¹¹³

In retaliation, Fulk V betrothed his second daughter, Sybil, to William Clito, the son of Robert Curthose. Once again, certain negotiations must have taken place: Fulk V gave the county of Maine to William Clito as well as “considerable other help” in

¹⁰⁹ JW, III, 144.

¹¹⁰ OV, VI, 180.

¹¹¹ According to Orderic the two were “about the same age.” OV, VI, 302. Elsewhere, Orderic says she was only twelve when she was married. He relates that “the king brought her up as his own child.” OV, VI, 330.

¹¹² OV, VI, 330.

¹¹³ GRA, 762.

regaining his inheritance.¹¹⁴ William Clito was the son of Robert Curthose, who was presently imprisoned by Henry I, and Clito continued to press his claims to Normandy. Here Fulk V forms an alliance with William Clito in his disputes against his uncle.¹¹⁵

Henry did not sit idly by and accept this. Henry retained custody of Matilda and her dowry while at the same time working to end the marriage. “Henry sent advocates to allege consanguinity between the parties and it was ruled that they ought not to be married by canon law... The alliance which the distinguished youth [William Clito] had long hoped for was invalidated” by Pope Calixtus II in 1124.¹¹⁶

Both girls were completely at the hands of the English king. Henry I not only defeated Fulk’s plans, but Henry also negotiated a second marriage, one more amenable to England’s interests, between Sybil and Thierry of Alsace.¹¹⁷ Matilda remained in England for nearly a decade. “With the advice of Geoffrey, bishop of Chartres, she abandoned the world and became a nun at Fontevrault where she served her heavenly bridegroom.”¹¹⁸

Aside from these passages in chronicles, charter evidence can fill in some of the gaps left by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. These charters give some insight into the marriage negotiations. A grant that Henry I issued at his Easter court in 1121 gives details of the marriage between Miles of Gloucester and Sibyl, the daughter of Bernard of Neufmarché. The charter is quoted at length here:

Know that I [Henry I] have given and firmly granted to Miles
of Gloucester Sibyl, daughter of Bernard de Neufmarché, together

¹¹⁴ *GRA*, 762.

¹¹⁵ For more information about William Clito’s struggles, see, *GRA*, 758-62.

¹¹⁶ *OV*, VI, 166 and note 1.

¹¹⁷ *GND*, II, 232.

¹¹⁸ *OV*, VI, 330.

with all the land of Bernard her father and of her mother after their deaths, or earlier during their lifetime if they so wish, and with this *maritagium* comprising Talgarth, the forest of Ystradyw, the castle of Hay, and the whole of the land of Breacknock up to the boundaries of the land of Richard fitz Pons, namely up to Breçon and Much Cowarne, a vill in England; and also the fee and service of Roger of Baskeville, the fee and service of Robert de Tuberville, and the fee and service of Picard... And I give and grant this to him as Bernard's purchase which he has rendered to me, and at the request of Bernard himself and his wife and his barons.¹¹⁹

Once again, notice that the negotiations must be inferred from the final results.

Sibyl was the heiress of Breçon. Since both of her parents were still living, the marriage was desirable but not truly profitable for Miles until such time as the lands were inherited. Bernard therefore provided a *maritagium* for Miles as described in the charter. The exact size and composition of the *maritagium* must certainly have been one of the more important parts of the negotiations. There were a great number of people interested in the negotiations and the outcome, as well, from the king and Bernard's fellow nobles to neighbors and the barons holding of Bernard. Many of these same interested parties witnessed the charter.

Escaping the Intended Path

Daughters who did not want to follow the path intended by their parents or guardians were frequently left in a difficult position. Most of these girls had no escape from their intended path. Marriage was an expected part of life, was the duty of an obedient daughter, and had dire ramifications for the family if it did not occur. While this may seem harsh, as stated above, frequently neither the groom nor the bride had much

¹¹⁹ "Grant by Henry I to Miles of Gloucester of Sybil, daughter of Bernard de Neufmarché, and of her inheritance, and giving details of her *maritagium*, 1121" in *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500* translated and edited by Jennifer Ward (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), # 10, pages 26-7.

choice in the matter. Below are cases in which nunneries could be an escape from marriage and in which marriage could be an escape from the nunnery. Once young girls had been sent to the nunnery, either as oblates or because of political causes, it was just as difficult to escape as a potential marriage.

Shortly after the Conquest, one of King William's daughters, Agatha, was betrothed to a Spanish king.¹²⁰ Orderic gives the most comprehensive description of the proposed union although the details remain sketchy.¹²¹ In any case, Orderic claims that Agatha, "was terrified of the Spanish husband she had never seen. So she besought the Almighty with tears that he would rather take her to himself than suffer her to be led away to Spain. She prayed and was heard; on the way she died a virgin."¹²²

While Agatha may have wanted to escape her marriage, this was not an easy task. Orderic had limited knowledge of this betrothal, and he certainly embroiders the tale to make his point. He feels that Agatha feared Spain and leaving her homeland. There is no mention of Agatha applying to her father or other members of her family or household to escape the marriage, however. Furthermore, while God may have been moved by her tears, clearly her father was not. The marriage would have been carried out if not for her death. William of Poitiers implies that it was her piety that made her loathe the

¹²⁰ OV, III, 114 and WP, 94-6

¹²¹ According to Orderic, Agatha was to marry *Amfurcius*, king of Galicia, who had sought the marriage. OV, III, 114. William of Poitiers also describes the betrothal, however, he has two Spanish kings competing for her "so that by this alliance they could add luster to their kingdom and their descendents." WP, 94-6. The two kings were probably Sancho, king of Castile, Galicia, and Portugal, and Alfonso, king of Leon. WP, 94-5, note 2. For further discussion of the betrothal, see OV, III, 114-5, note 1. There is some confusion over the identity of this daughter. See below, Appendix I.

¹²² OV, III, 114.

marriage.¹²³ Even if this was the case, her possible desire for a religious life was completely ignored.

There was a long tradition of girls fleeing into nunneries to avoid unwanted marriages. In the tenth century, an Anglo-Saxon girl, Wulfthryth “had adopted the veil out of fear of the king [Edgar], but later had it snatched away and was forced into a royal marriage.”¹²⁴ Edgar had heard of her beauty¹²⁵ and knew that she “was certainly not a nun at the time but was a girl of lay status.”¹²⁶ The marriage might have occurred, but it raised the wrath of the church. “St Dunstan [the archbishop of Canterbury] was indignant at [Edgar’s] casting eyes of desire on one who had passed even through a shadow of the religious life, and used all his powers as archbishop against him.”¹²⁷ St Dunstan ordered Edgar to fast and not wear his crown for seven years, and the king agreed to this penance.¹²⁸

Henry I’s marriage to Edith Matilda in 1100 echoes this scenario although in this case, the bride hoped to escape the nunnery by marrying. Upon the death of her mother St Margaret of Scotland, Edith Matilda and her sister Mary were put into the care of their aunt Christina, abbess of Romsey.

Now it is true that this Matilda was brought up from early childhood in a convent of nuns and grew up there to womanhood, and many believed that she had been dedicated by her parents to God’s service as she had been seen walking abroad wearing the

¹²³ WP, 96.

¹²⁴ *GRA*, 260. There is no mention of a marriage, simply the marriage bed. There is some question of whether this is a true marriage or concubinage.

¹²⁵ *GRA*, 258. Edgar seemed to have a weakness for pretty girls. He had at least three other wives. Wulfthryth’s marriage seems to have been brief although the two had at least one child, St Eadgyth. *GRA*, 258-60.

¹²⁶ *GRA*, 260. William of Malmesbury is strangely adamant about her lay status, which implies the truth was more debatable.

¹²⁷ *GRA*, 260

¹²⁸ *GRA*, 258.

veil like the nuns with whom she was living.¹²⁹

Once again it was the archbishop of Canterbury, this time Anselm, who was at the fore during the scandal. Anselm felt,

that the case ought to be determined by the judgment of the chief persons in religion in the kingdom. So at his bidding on an appointed day the bishops, abbots, and all the nobles and leading men of the religious profession assembled in the manor of St. Andrew of Rochester, named Lambeth, to which he himself had then come for the treatment of the question.¹³⁰

In her own words, Edith Matilda defended her position that while she had been raised in a nunnery, she had never wanted to be a nun and her parents had not dedicated her as an oblate either.¹³¹

“But, that I did wear the veil.’ she said, ‘I do not deny. For, when I was quite a young girl and went in fear of the rod of my aunt Christina, whom you knew quite well, she to preserve me from the lust of the Normans which was rampant and at that time ready to assault any woman’s honor, used to put a little black hood on my head and when I threw it off, she would often make me smart with a good slapping and most horrible scolding, as well as treating me as being a disgrace. That hood I did indeed wear in her presence, chafing at it and fearful; but, as soon as I was able to escape out of her sight, I tore it off and threw it to the ground and trampled on it and in that way, although foolishly, I used to vent my rage and the hatred of it which boiled up in me. In that way, and only in that way, I was veiled, as my conscience bears witness.”¹³²

Anselm and the other churchmen ruled that the marriage could take place since Edith Matilda had never been the bride of Christ. The couple was married by Anselm a

¹²⁹ Eadmer, 121-2.

¹³⁰ Eadmer, 122-3.

¹³¹ These words are a speech put into Edith Matilda’s mouth by Eadmer; although, as he writes: “So there, as my conscious truly bears witness, I have described in due sequence what took place, as I being myself present heard and saw it all.” Eadmer, 125.

¹³² Eadmer, 122.

few days later.¹³³ The decision also applied to Edith Matilda's sister, Mary of Scotland. Henry I offered Mary of Scotland in marriage to Eustace III of Boulogne around this same time.¹³⁴

Eadmer's description of the council above also tells how Anglo-Saxon daughters who hoped to avoid Norman marriages or possible sexual assault after the conquest of 1066 had successfully escaped to nunneries:

When the great Duke William first conquered this land, many of his men, pluming themselves on so great a victory and considering that everything ought to yield and submit to their wishes and lusts, began to do violence not only to the possessions of the conquered but also where opportunity offered to their women, married and unmarried alike, with shameful licentiousness Thereupon a number of women anticipating this and fearing their own virtue betook themselves to convents of sisters and taking the veil protected themselves in their company from such infamy. Thus when after a time this violence had quieted down and considering the nature of the times, comparative peace had been restored to the land, the question was asked of that Father Lanfranc what view he took of the treatment of those who had safeguarded their chastity by taking such refuge, that is, whether or not they should be bound to remain in the convent and keep the veil which they had taken. This question he with the advice of a general council resolved by giving judgment that to those women who had by their conduct so clearly testified their devotion to virtue should be accorded the honor due to them for their chastity rather than they should be forced to keep to their life of the convent, unless they chose it of their own free will.¹³⁵

Once again, it was the archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc, who settled the dispute. The problem here was more widespread than a pair of sisters and, in fact, Anselm's decision had used Lanfranc's decision as a precedent.¹³⁶ Certainly, these girls feared for their chastity, but girls were also put into the nunneries in order to avoid

¹³³ Eadmer, 125.

¹³⁴ Eadmer does not mention Mary anywhere in his text, although Orderic ties the marriages of the sisters together. OV, IV, 272-4.

¹³⁵ Eadmer, 123-4.

¹³⁶ Eadmer, 124.

marriages to the invading outsiders. These Anglo-Saxon daughters represented an important resource for their families. Marrying an Anglo-Saxon landholder's daughter could lend legitimacy to a Norman land grab. Once normalcy had been restored, these girls must have presented quite a problem for the church. It was to the church's advantage to let these girls, many of whom certainly did not want to continue in nunneries, leave the spiritual life. There was probably also a clamor from some of these same families to allow the daughters to leave the nunneries in order to negotiate new marriage alliances.

Judith and Emma of Grandmesnil, sisters, also fled the nunnery to find secular marriages. They,

had taken up their abode in the chapel of St Évrout at Ouche, and were believed to have renounced the world to take the veil and serve God alone in purity of heart and body. But when they heard that their brother Robert was honoured by the secular power in Apulia, whilst they were despised and helpless, they took the road for Italy and, putting off the sacred veil, threw themselves whole-heartedly into a worldly life.¹³⁷

Judith was married to Roger I of Sicily. Orderic does not record Emma's marriage and it is unclear what became of her. According to Orderic, "because they were faithless to their first vows both remained childless all their lives."¹³⁸ The chronicler tells their story as a sort of cautionary tale. Despite Orderic's hope, Judith had at least two children, Adelaide and Emma, and enjoyed a life of great wealth and status.¹³⁹

The Marriages that Never Were

With the changing fortunes of a family, there were instances in which daughters were left suddenly in a sort of limbo where future marriages were either questionable or

¹³⁷ OV, II, 102.

¹³⁸ OV, II, 102-4.

¹³⁹ OV, II, 104, note 1.

completely out of the question. After the death of their father Arnold of Échauffour around 1064, Petronilla and Geva were raised by others while their mother sought refuge in the court of William the Conqueror.¹⁴⁰ In response to their family's ruin, the two sisters "chose rather to serve God by discipline of life than to prosper in the world through physical beauty, which is doomed to decay. Both vowed themselves to God as virgins, and renouncing the world became nuns."¹⁴¹ This was probably less of a personal or spiritual choice, but rather more likely reflected the ruin of the family. The family had lost their lands and reputation, and the girls had been abandoned in some sense by their mother.

Orderic talks of the fate of their brothers, as well. The eldest, William, was sent to the French court as an adolescent. He served as a squire there but eventually carved out a niche for himself in Italy, serving under Robert Guiscard. The youngest son, Reginald, was a child oblate at St Évrout.¹⁴² Neither brother was in a position to rebuild the family's land and reputation in Northern France. Orderic laments that "after Arnold's death the noble family of Giroie fell on evil days; and up to the present not one of their descendents has been able quite to restore the fortunes of his ancestors."¹⁴³

Married Daughters and the Question of Allegiance

Once daughters became wives, they did not sever their ties to the family into which they were born. Daughters interacted with their parents even as married adults.

¹⁴⁰ OV, II, 124. There was constant dispute and competition between the family of Giroie and the Montgomery's. Arnold, grandson of Giroie, was trying to restore his inheritance from William, then duke of Normandy, when Mabel of Bellême, the wife of Roger of Montgomery, poisoned Arnold. OV, II, 122-4.

¹⁴¹ Petronilla was a nun at St Mary's at Angers, and Geva was at Holy Trinity at Caen. OV, II, 128-30.

¹⁴² OV, II, 126. Orderic notes that the family had "several other sons and daughters," but Orderic does not either name them or discuss their fates. OV, II, 124.

¹⁴³ OV, II, 124.

Daughters could even give advice to their fathers: Henry I moved Robert Curthose from the custody of Roger of Salisbury to the custody of Robert of Gloucester, and “that was all done through the advice of his daughter [i.e. the Empress Matilda] and through her uncle, David the king of the Scots.”¹⁴⁴

There could be times when the allegiance of daughters was pulled between the family they were born into and the family they married into. As described above, Juliana of Breteuil, the illegitimate daughter of Henry I, chose her husband, Eustace, over her father. Eustace sent Juliana to the castle of “Breteuil and provided her with the knights necessary to defend the fortress.”¹⁴⁵ She obeyed her husband, but disobeyed her father, rebelling against the king. Henry responded by marching against her and eventually forcing her to surrender the castle.

This idea is echoed in the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* which states that Eustace held his lands “until his wife, Juliana, King Henry’s illegitimate daughter, against the wish and fealty she owed to the king, haughtily and stupidly threw his garrison out of Breteuil.”¹⁴⁶ Once again, the issue of allegiance owed to a father is tied to the allegiance owed to a king. The angry king “deservedly” punished Juliana for her actions.¹⁴⁷ There is no pity for her, her husband, or her blinded daughters.

In the end, Juliana and her husband, Eustace, were forced to make peace with Henry in order to regain their lands. The couple “entered the king’s tent barefoot, and fell

¹⁴⁴ ASC, E, 1126. Admittedly, the empress was in between marriages having just returned from the Holy Roman Empire after the death of her first husband, Henry V, but having yet to marry Geoffrey V of Anjou.

¹⁴⁵ OV, VI, 212.

¹⁴⁶ GND, II, 230.

¹⁴⁷ GND, II, 230.

at his feet... Richard, the king's son, pleaded his sister's cause,"¹⁴⁸ and everyone was reconciled. Juliana eventually, "abandoned the self-indulgent life she had led for the religious life, and becoming a nun, served the Lord God in the new abbey at Fontevrault."¹⁴⁹ Once again, Orderic reproaches Juliana's former bad behavior but is pleased that she, at last, through piety and devotion to a religious life, has redeemed herself.

Other women were stuck in similarly difficult scenarios, caught between the family into which they were born and the family into which they married. Judith was a kinswoman of William the Conqueror,¹⁵⁰ and William gave her in marriage to Waltheof, earl of Northampton, as a reward for present and an incentive for future loyalty, as discussed above. Over the years, the couple had two daughters and possibly a son.¹⁵¹

Despite this picture of domestic harmony, Waltheof was involved in a number of schemes against William.¹⁵² While the schemes came to nothing, William tired of the seemingly constant threat, and "Earl Waltheof was summoned before the king and accused, on deposition of his wife Judith, of being a party to the conspiracy and being unfaithful to his lord."¹⁵³ Waltheof admitted that he knew of the latest conspiracy, but that he would not join the rebels. Because he knew of the conspiracy and did not tell William, he was jailed at Winchester. After a year of penance, William had Waltheof executed. Orderic implies that he was executed more through Norman greed than justice;

¹⁴⁸ OV, VI, 278. This would be another illegitimate son of Henry I and, therefore, Juliana's half-brother.

¹⁴⁹ OV, VI, 278.

¹⁵⁰ Judith is the daughter of Lambert, count of Lens and his wife, Adelaide of Aumale. William the Conqueror is Adelaide's brother. OV, VI, 55, note 6.

¹⁵¹ For the daughters, see OV, II, 262 and OV, VI, 54. For the possible existence of a son, see OV, VI, 55 note 6. The couple would have been married around 1067 and Waltheof was executed on either April 30 or May 31 of 1077. OV, II, 322 and note 1.

¹⁵² For these rebellions, see OV, II, 226 (rebellion of 1069) and 312-20 (rebellion of 1075).

¹⁵³ OV, II, 320.

Judith is not implicated in this greed even though she took the side of her Norman kinsmen rather than that of her husband.¹⁵⁴ Despite her deposition, or perhaps because of it, Judith requested that her husband's body be taken out of the ditch where it had been dumped a fortnight before and given a proper burial at Crowland. William granted the request.¹⁵⁵

Orderic portrays Waltheof as a martyr while distancing Judith from blame. Waltheof chose to recite all of the Psalms daily while he was being held as his penance. Before his execution, he gave his current possessions to the clergy and the poor. After his head was severed from his body, it spoke: "but deliver us from evil. Amen." When Ulfketel, abbot of Crowland, went to move Waltheof's body, he found it to be uncorrupted. Throughout the story there are mourning crowds at every turn,¹⁵⁶ and miracles occurred at Waltheof's grave.¹⁵⁷ Orderic also chooses to tell the story of St Guthlac, Crowland's founder, in the midst of his account of Waltheof's death and burial.¹⁵⁸ Because of his burial at Crowland, the inclusion here is a logical jump, but it also adds more religious dimension to Waltheof's death. Despite all this, Orderic stays in the grey and does not directly point fingers. He recognizes that Waltheof was in the wrong even if he feels the punishment was greater than deserved. Orderic also makes it clear that Judith's actions in accusing Waltheof and having him buried at Crowland were correct.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ OV, II, 320-2.

¹⁵⁵ OV, II, 322 and 344.

¹⁵⁶ OV, II, 320-2.

¹⁵⁷ OV, II, 346-8.

¹⁵⁸ OV, II, 322-44. After finishing his discussion of St Guthlac, Orderic reiterates the details of Waltheof's burial.

¹⁵⁹ OV, II, 322 and 344.

Judith's story is not unique; another of William's kinswomen turned on her rebellious husband. During the years 1059-60, Robert Giroie rebelled against Duke William in Normandy.¹⁶⁰ His wife Adelaide appears to have killed him in order to end that rebellion. As Orderic states:

When this brave warrior, who had survived many conflicts, was sitting peacefully at the winter fireside, he noticed that his wife Adelaide, the duke's kinswoman, had four apples in her hand; playfully he snatched two of them not knowing they were poisoned, and ate them in spite of her protests. The poison spread through his body, and five days later, on February 6, he died lamented by his followers.¹⁶¹

This passage raises a number of questions: Why would she be playing with poisoned apples? For whom were the apples intended? Since she protested his eating them, Adelaide seems to have known there was something wrong with them from the beginning. She taunts her husband with the pretty apples, dangling the precious fruit in front of him during the long, cold winter. Her cries, instead of warning him off, only spurred him on; he ate two. Adelaide did not eat the remaining apples. She clearly had not been protesting that he might eat all of her apples. Since the poison was slow moving, taking days to kill Robert, a sudden death or illness could not have explained why she did not eat the remaining apples.

Adelaide's motive also remains unclear. What could she hope to gain from killing her husband? Orderic does not mention any other potential victims which he certainly would have done if such a potential victim had existed. The only plausible explanation is she intended to kill him. Orderic quickly follows the above quote with a description of

¹⁶⁰ OV, II, 78 and note 3.

¹⁶¹ OV, II, 80.

the effects of Robert's death. While Arnold, Robert's nephew and heir, did stand up to William and thereby retain control of the family lands, further talk of rebellion ceased, and William now regained the loyalty he had desired from the family. It would seem that Adelaide poisoned her husband in order to serve the political needs of the family into which she was born.

Unfortunately, many questions remain. This story is not told elsewhere, and Orderic surely takes dramatic license with it as he has with so many other passages. Accusations of poisonings are rather frequent in his writings as well as other Anglo-Norman chroniclers.¹⁶² Because of this, it is difficult to say if Adelaide really poisoned her husband or if the suddenness of his death simply raised unwarranted alarm. There is no more mention of Adelaide by any of the chroniclers, and Orderic does not vilify her here. Despite the fact that the Giroie family was a large patron of St Évrout, Orderic simply comments that "human strength is transient and withers as the flower of grass."¹⁶³ God's will had been done.

Despite rare appearances in the Anglo-Norman chronicles, the lives of young girls can be reconstructed providing a vivid portrait of the expectations that society had for daughters. Their absence in the chronicles can mostly be explained because these young girls were expected to learn and obey, to be seen and not heard. Even in their youth, time and effort was put into their education, both formal and informal. It was only at the time

¹⁶² For another of Orderic's stories of a woman administering poison, see Mabel of Bellême's poisoning of Arnold of Échauffour (OV, II, 122-4), Bertrada of Montfort's poisoning of her stepson Louis VI (OV, VI, 50-54) and Sichelgaita's poisoning of Bohemond and Robert Guiscard (OV, IV, 28-30). For a more thorough discussion of poisonings in Normandy see David C Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (London: 1964), 408-15 and for poisonings in Orderic's writings, see Marjorie Chibnall, "Women in Orderic Vitalis" in *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, vol. II, edited by Robert Patterson (London: Hambledon Press, 1990), 108-9.

¹⁶³ "*Sed quia mortalium robur labile est subitoque ceu flos foeni marcet.*" OV, II, 80.

of their marriage, or sometimes with an early betrothal, that these girls become more visible in the chronicles and certainly in the Anglo-Norman world as well. Society expected them to be both moral and pious, to serve the needs of their families. As hostages and potential brides, they could provide for the needs of their family even while they were still quite young. Even as adults, married daughters were expected to remain obedient and to continue to help out the family into which they were born even if it caused tension with the family into which they were married.

Chapter 4: Wives: The Roles of Married Women

Women become more visible in the sources once they were linked with husbands, their actions helping to build up the families into which they had married and to aid the family into which they were born. The Anglo- Norman chroniclers described good helpmates, women who needed to be wise and give good advice or be prepared to negotiate for their family; furthermore, they needed to be pious and moral, patronizing the church and encouraging their husbands to do the same. Each woman also continued to serve as a link between the family into which she was born and the family into which she had married.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers stress the importance of wives to their husbands, especially as advisors. Once daughters became wives, it was important that they be “shrewd,” “persuasive,” and “clever” as discussed in the chapter above.¹ These women needed to be intelligent and well-educated to carry out their duties as wives and helpmates. The chroniclers frequently described women as advising their husbands, many times causing them to make decisions these men otherwise would not have considered. Women could negotiate for their families and oversee the family’s estate. Each of these

¹ Once again, refer to the individual character descriptions of wives: Gunnor (*GND*, II, 268); Sainsfrida (*GND*, II, 268); Adela of Blois (*OV*, V, 324); Adela of Flanders (*WP*, 32); Isabel and Helwise (*OV*, IV, 212); Margaret of Maine (*WP*, 64); Edith Matilda and Margaret of Scotland (*GND*, II, 216); Mabel of Bellême (*GND*, II, 118); Empress Matilda (*GND*, II, 244); Sibyl of Conversano (*GND*, II, 222). See the discussion of the moral and formal education of daughters above, see Chapter 3.

tasks required them to use their education, whether formal or informal, as well as to be pragmatic in actively seeking out solutions to a wide variety of problems. Wives not only gave advice but their husbands frequently followed that advice.

Wives as Facilitators of Conversion

During the early Anglo-Saxon period, wives had helped to convince several of their husbands to adopt Christianity, and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers always reminded the reader of their roles in the seventh century conversions throughout the English kingdoms. Bertha, the Christian wife of Æthelberht I of Kent, helped to convert that kingdom. When St Augustine came to England, he found that Æthelberht “had already heard of the Christian religion having a Christian wife of the Frankish race called Queen Bertha, whom he had received from her kinsfolk on condition that she should have freedom to practice her faith and religion unhindered with a bishop named Liudhard whom they had provided as her helper.”² Bertha and Liudhard were using the church of St Martin’s for Christian worship and quickly allowed St Augustine and his priests to use that church for masses and the baptizing of converts. Eventually, Æthelberht was converted, and he bestowed the lands that formed the archbishopric of Canterbury.³

The daughter of Æthelberht and Bertha, Æthelburh, worked to convert her husband, Edwin the king of Northumbria. Just as her mother had come into the marriage with a spiritual advisor and priest to hold mass, Æthelburh had come to Northumbria with Paulinus. Both Æthelburh and Paulinus worked to convert Edwin. While he was

² HH, 142-4. Here Henry of Huntingdon is relying heavily on Bede. See Bede, 72-4.

³ HH, 144 and see Bede, 74.

stubbornly pagan, after Æthelburh had a safe and quick childbirth, Edwin allowed the newborn daughter to be baptized and was soon baptized himself.⁴

Pope Boniface later wrote a letter to Æthelburh which asked for Æthelburh's help in keeping Edwin from falling back into pagan practices. Henry of Huntingdon merely touches on the letter, although it had been copied in its entirety in Bede's history on which Henry based his own writings: "We learned that [Edwin] was still serving abominable idols and hesitated to hear and obey the words of the preachers... you should not hesitate, in season or out of season, to labour so that, through the power of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he may be added to the number of Christians."⁵ Along with the letter, Pope Boniface also sent the gift of a gold and ivory comb as well as a silver mirror as a sign of friendship and an inducement.⁶ It is unclear what pressure Æthelburh applied to Edwin; however, all of their children were baptized and there is no further mention of Edwin's backsliding.

While Henry of Huntingdon praises the efforts of these two women to bring Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England, he blames another wife for reversing conversion. After accepting Christianity in Northumbria, Earpwald, king of East Anglia, returned home. In East Anglia, "he was led astray by his wife and other evil people and had Christ's altar and one for demons in the same temple."⁷ Here the wife is the main cause of backsliding and is as "evil" as his other advisors. There is little more information available about this unnamed wife and her role in Earpwald's rule; even Bede does not name her.

⁴ HH, 172 and see Bede, 162-6.

⁵ Bede, 172-4. Henry of Huntingdon quotes sections of the letter and refers to its contents. See HH, 174-6.

⁶ HH, 174 and see Bede, 174.

⁷ HH, 180 and see Bede, 190.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers depict Anglo Saxon wives influencing their husbands in other situations as well. The unnamed wife of Readwald, king of the East Angles, discouraged her husband from killing Edwin, a prince of Deira,⁸ who had sought refuge at Readwald's court. Æthelfrith, king of Northumbria, had chased Edwin and now threatened to attack East Anglia. "Readwald, emboldened by the counsel of his stout-hearted wife, refused to break faith with a friend no matter what the threat, raised forces and descended unexpectedly on Æthelfrith."⁹ In the battle that ensued, Æthelfrith was killed although Raedwald's son was also killed.¹⁰

Wives as Civilizers

Comparing these Anglo-Saxon women, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers depicted more contemporary wives as putting members of their family, usually their husbands, onto a straighter path. Even if conversion to Christianity was no longer at stake, keeping husbands on a righteous path remained important. Orderic Vitalis credits Avice of Auffay with helping her husband Walter live a more praiseworthy life. Before marriage, Walter was "lacking in wisdom," "easily dominated" by others, and surrounded by "a group of frivolous companions, and led astray by their pernicious influence he dissipated his inheritance, and continually injured and harassed monks, clerks and honest peasants."¹¹ Orderic then describes Avice as his "beautiful and persuasive wife... By her advice and wise influence, he was somewhat restrained from his earlier folly. She indeed was

⁸ Edwin was a son of Aelle, king of Deira, and his sister Acha was married to Æthelfrith. Using his wife, Æthelfrith laid claim to all of Northumbria, not just Bernicia. By chasing out Edwin, Æthelfrith had control of all of Northumbria. However, when he died in battle, Edwin became king of all Northumbria. The kingdom was divided up again on Edwin's death. See the entries under Northumbria in *HBC*.

⁹ *GRA*, 66. This story is repeated in Henry of Huntingdon, *HH*, 174. Both Anglo-Norman authors are relying on Bede and give less detailed accounts. See Bede, 176-82.

¹⁰ *GRA*, 66; *HH*, 174-6; Bede, 182.

¹¹ *OV*, III, 256-8.

prudent and golden-tongued, devoted to God from her earliest years and utterly given over to good works.”¹² Avice also convinced Walter to make gifts to the church as well as to confirm the gifts of his parents.¹³

Avice is just one example of how a wife could change her husband’s character for the better. There are many others; Orderic also tells the tale of a Breton:

[Geoffrey] was guilty of much brigandage and theft in his youth... He took a wife named Hildeburg in lawful marriage and, obeying her wise counsel, ceased to associate with his cruel and murderous followers and earned his living by the labor of his own hands. Then, with the goods he had acquired by the sweat of his brow, he gave alms to the poor and to clerks and hermits and monks, giving all his superfluous possessions to men of this kind, reserving only the necessities of life for himself and his family.¹⁴

Orderic relates that Geoffrey’s life was completely changed by the guidance of his wife, Hildeburg. Not only did he move from brigandage to making an honest trade, but he even became a perfect example of piety, giving very generously to religious persons.¹⁵

Whereas Roger of Montgomery’s first wife, Mabel of Bellême, was certainly not one to guide her husband towards proper behavior, his second wife was. Adelais was the daughter of Evrard of Le Puiset, and she married Roger after Mabel was murdered.¹⁶ “The second wife was utterly unlike the first in character. She was remarkable for her gentleness and piety, and continually encouraged her husband to befriend monks and

¹² OV, III, 256-8.

¹³ This passage also describes gifts Avice of Auffay made on her own. OV, III, 250.

¹⁴ OV, III, 342. This story is told amidst other events that occurred around 1130, and it can be assumed that he had been living the pious life in the recent past.

¹⁵ OV, III, 342.

¹⁶ For more information on Mabel’s murder and the behavior of this “terrible lady,” refer to OV, III, 134-8.

protect the poor. So this great lord came to realize all the harm he had done to the monks of St Évrout.”¹⁷ These stories are frequent throughout the Anglo-Norman chronicles.¹⁸

Just as in the Anglo-Saxon examples, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers continue to discuss some later wives who led their husbands astray. “Richard of Fresnel, who boasted of eight sons, was tempted towards the close of his life by the foolish nagging of his wife Emma to endanger the general safety of the people by playing tyrant with the help of his sons.”¹⁹ Richard and his sons took the side of Eustace of Breteuil who was rebelling against Henry I in 1119. Orderic not only castigates Richard for rebelling against his lord, but “the sons of men imperiled their souls by disturbing the season of Lent.”²⁰ Richard fell ill shortly thereafter: “Towards the end of June the aged Richard came to Saint-Évrout, received the monastic habit as a sick man, and died early in July.”²¹ Richard made gifts to Évrout, which his sons later confirmed, but there is no more mention of his wife Emma.²²

William of Malmesbury criticizes a mistress who led her lover astray: William IX of Aquitaine left his wife for Malberge, the wife of the viscomte of Châtellerault. The church judged his actions, excommunicating the two,²³ and William drove Peter, the

¹⁷ OV, III, 138. This passage is followed by a charter which describes the gifts that Roger gave to St Évrout and also confirms the gifts of others. OV, III, 138-42. Furthermore, the couple’s son, Evrard, was a child oblate. OV, IV, 302.

¹⁸ See also Adela of Blois who convinced her husband to return to the crusades to repair his tarnished image (OV, V, 324). There are also a number of women who are credited with convincing their husbands to give to the church or make foundations. For one example, see Beatrice who convinced her husband, Gilbert, to establish the Church of St. Mary’s (OV, III, 246).

¹⁹ OV, VI, 218.

²⁰ OV, VI, 218.

²¹ OV, VI, 222.

²² The gift included a portion of the church of La Gonfrière and the tithes associated with that portion. OV, VI, 222. Orderic does not mention the family again, and it is possible that Emma died shortly thereafter.

²³ William’s wife, Hildegard, petitioned the pope to force her husband to return to her. OV, VI, 258-60. her petition is discussed below.

bishop of Poitiers, into exile because of this chastisement. Orderic further blames Malberge for leading him astray: “Poisoned by the whispers of that hissing viper his mistress, he [William] drove into exile the man [Peter] who had rebuked his vice.”²⁴ Bishop Peter died soon after in exile.²⁵ Although Malberge is a mistress,²⁶ not a wife, the author is more upset because Malberge was exerting undue influence on William instead of simply providing extramarital sex.²⁷ The serpent imagery that William of Malmesbury employs here leaves little to the imagination, and clearly he sees nothing remotely redeeming about Malberge’s actions.

Wives as Negotiators

Not only did Anglo-Norman chroniclers view wives as wise – or unwise – and capable of influencing their husbands, but the authors often expect wives to use these gifts outside of the household in order to meet the needs of their families. When Baldwin de Redvers held the castle of Exeter against King Stephen early in 1136, Stephen quickly besieged him there; but after three months, the castle ran out of water and then, worse yet, wine.²⁸ Needing to surrender the castle to find relief, the besieged formulated a plan to send out two men to negotiate, but suddenly Baldwin refused this idea. Baldwin and others, noting

their sagging and wasted skin, the look of torpor on their faces, drained of the normal supply of blood, and their lips drawn back from gaping mouths, perceived that they were suffering from agonies of thirst and that therefore it was anything but wise to give them permission to leave the castle, it being certain that they would very soon surrender on

²⁴ *GRA*, 784.

²⁵ *GRA*, 784.

²⁶ For a more complete discussion of extramarital liaisons, see below Chapter 5.

²⁷ This can be seen in both William of Malmesbury’s writings as well as in Orderic’s description: *GRA*, 784 and *OV*, VI, 258-60.

²⁸ For an account of the siege, see *GS*, 22-27

whatever terms the besiegers desired.²⁹

While his unnamed wife certainly suffered the same fate, Baldwin chose his wife to negotiate since she was more capable and trustworthy and, perhaps, more likely to elicit sympathy.

Baldwin's wife, too, unable to bear this harsh rejection of her companions, came to the king to offer entreaty on their behalf, barefooted, with her hair loose on her shoulders, and shedding floods of tears. He received her kindly, without haughtiness, both on account of the pity he felt for one of her sex in such wretched affliction and because of the high-born woman's relations and friends who were toiling there with him in the siege, but after listening to her mournful and piteous supplications about the surrender of the castle he hardened his heart inexorably yet again, and at last sent her back to her companions with nothing accomplished.³⁰

Stephen's loyal supporters, including those who knew or were related to Baldwin's wife, were mortified that Stephen had been so dismissive of her and argued that Stephen had punished the besieged enough. Eventually, Stephen gave way to these arguments and allowed the surrender of the castle.³¹ Neither Baldwin's wife, nor any other negotiator, was sent out from the castle again. It may have taken time, but her appearance, her words, and the relationships she had formed throughout her life accomplished the desired peace.

In an earlier example, William of Malmesbury writes of a wife who had to act in the absence of her husband. During the reign of William the Conqueror, Ralph of Gael conspired against the king. Before a plot could get off the ground, William uncovered it and drove Ralph into exile. Emma, "his wife, after securing a promise of her physical

²⁹ *GS*, 27.

³⁰ *GS*, 27.

³¹ *GS*, 28-9.

safety and handing over the castle, followed her husband.”³² Once again, the main negotiation was simply a provisional surrender. In this case, however, Ralph of Gael had already fled the area, and Emma had to negotiate in her own right for her safety as well as the safety of her husband’s men.

Some of the examples of women negotiating have been mentioned above. When Juliana of Breteuil and her husband Eustace rebelled against her father, Henry I, Juliana tried to negotiate the surrender of the castle. Even though Juliana tried to shoot her father instead of using words, the two were intending to negotiate. Later, Juliana and her husband appeared before Henry to plead for clemency.³³

When Bertrada of Montfort left her husband, Fulk V of Anjou, and remarried Philip, king of France, her actions caused civil war between the king and his lord. Orderic depicts Bertrada’s efforts to smooth the ruffled feathers:

Then the cunning woman soothed the animosity of the rivals, and by her wiles brought them together in such close alliance that she was able to prepare a splendid banquet for them, persuade them both to recline at the same table, and on the following night prepare couches for them both in the same chamber, while she herself attended to all their wants in a fitting way.³⁴

Orderic stresses that it was her wiles and cunning that led to peace. Writers frequently mention women as negotiators.³⁵

³² Interestingly, the plot was hatched during the marriage celebrations of Emma and Ralph. It is unclear how much time passed before William discovered the plot, as the date of the wedding is not given. The couple could not have been married long. *GRA*, 472

³³ *OV*, VI, 212-4. For the discussion of Juliana of Breteuil, see above Chapter 3.

³⁴ *OV*, IV, 260-2. Bertrada and Philip were married in 1094, and hostilities appear to have broken out immediately thereafter. Fulk did host a banquet for his former wife and Philip at Angers in 1106. *OV*, IV, 262-3, note 1. See more discussion below in section entitled Wives Ending the Bonds of Marriage.

³⁵ For more examples, see: Edith Matilda (*OV*, VI, 14; Eadmer, 121-5 and 185; *GRA*, 754-6); Matilda of Flanders (*OV*, III, 104-8 and 112); Matilda of Boulogne (*JW*, III, 284 and 302; *GS*, 81-2 and 90); Adela of Blois (Eadmer, 164 and *GPA*, 74); Empress Matilda (*GS*, 30, 35, 59-60, 118-9, and 123-4; *GND*, II, 264);

While Anglo-Norman chroniclers recount wives who negotiated for peace in times of war or crisis, these depictions represent dramatic examples instead of prosaic ones. There are further examples below of women negotiating as part of estate management although many of these stories represent crises as well. It is highly likely that wives used their wisdom and pragmatic negotiating skills in their everyday lives. The Anglo-Norman chronicles do not capture these more prosaic moments.

Estate Management

As their husbands' helpmates, women took care of the family estates both alongside their husbands as well as in their husbands' absences. Recall the story of Juliana of Breteuil above.³⁶ Her husband, Eustace, expected her to hold the castle of Pacy during a time of rebellion. This was one of several castles that were part of the family's holdings. Eustace held control of one portion of the estate while Juliana simultaneously held onto another. The work was divided between the two, and Orderic, while disapproving of some of her actions, did not feel it was improper for Juliana to have control of the castle or for her to lead the garrison troops there. By negotiating for the surrender of the castle, Juliana's story reiterates that of the wife of Baldwin de Redvers above. Both Baldwin and Eustace trusted their wives to negotiate in their absence. The agreement that Juliana made was binding without her husband having been consulted at any time.

As their husbands' helpmates, wives frequently carried out the business of running the lands of the family. This help could include any of a number of prosaic tasks

Gerberga (OV, III, 82 and *GND*, I, 112-4 and 120); unnamed wife of Frederick of Étampes (OV, VI, 474-6); unnamed wife of Baldwin de Redvers (*GS*, 27); unnamed wife of Rainer (*GND*, I, 34 and 50).

³⁶ For Juliana of Breteuil, see above Chapter 3. Also refer to OV, VI, 212-4.

and also less usual tasks. In the early eleventh century, Aubrée of Ivry built the castle of Ivry, hiring the architect and master builder, Lanfred, herself and overseeing its building.³⁷ In the same passage, Orderic identifies Lanfred as the architect of the castle at Pithiviers which was also built by a woman, Heloise of Champagne.³⁸

Women not only built castles but also held them, giving commands to the garrison forces within. The unnamed wife of Robert of Mowbray held the family's castle at Bamburgh while her husband spurred the Welsh to rebel against William Rufus. Robert was captured, and William Rufus put down the Welsh revolt although at high cost. "When William II returned from Wales, he ordered Earl Robert to be taken to Bamburgh and his eyes to be put out unless his wife and her kinsman, Moreal, surrendered the castle. Forced by extreme need, they yielded the castle up."³⁹ Robert and Moreal were arrested although it is unclear what became of Robert's wife. There are many other examples of women holding castles.⁴⁰

While there are many examples of wives holding castles in their husbands' absence, wives would have spent more time and energy on the day-to-day running of the families' estates, including their own lands. Charter evidence offers a glimpse into some of the more prosaic activities of estate management. Matilda of Boulogne issued a charter ordering her officials in Dover, Wissant, and Boulogne to recognize the rights of the monks of Coggeshall Abbey. Matilda of Boulogne was the heiress of lands that included the ports of Dover and Wissant, as well as the family lands of Boulogne. The queen had

³⁷ *GND*, II, 226; *OV*, IV, 114; and *OV*, IV, 290.

³⁸ *OV*, IV, 290, note 3.

³⁹ William Rufus fought off a Welsh revolt in September of 1095. *JW*, III, 78.

⁴⁰ For other examples, see: Matilda of Ramsbury (*OV*, VI, 532-4); Juliana of Breteuil (*OV*, VI, 212-4 and 230); Adeliza of Chester (*GS*, 11-12); Radegunde (*OV*, VI, 292-4); Emma of Gael (*GRA*, 472); Empress Matilda (*OV*, VI, 454 and *GND*, II, 274); Duda (*OV*, VI, 200); and Sibyl Bordet (*OV*, VI, 404).

founded Coggeshall Abbey from her lands, as well. Matilda of Boulogne moved to protect her foundation and also to decide what customs were and were not acceptable on her lands. Stephen did not issue the order nor did he witness it.⁴¹

Piety and Patronage

Women at every stage of life displayed piety. While young daughters could prove their piety by simply attending masses, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers expect more from wives. With more power and autonomy, wives took actions to prove the piety of both themselves and their family. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers illustrate a number of different manners in which wives could display their piety.

A few of the ways in which wives could show their piety have been described above. Clearly, women who convinced their husbands to become Christian or who encouraged their husbands to adopt more Christian morals showcased their own piety. Who could doubt that a Bertha of Kent or an Avice of Auffay had proved their faith and the importance of being models of Christian values? Wives often signed off on the gifts that their families made to the church or patronized the church independently of their families. Patronage of the church showed piety, and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers record a long tradition of both piety and patronage.⁴² The churches faithfully kept track of the gifts made, and the records of this patronage can be found in collections of charters and were recorded in some of the chronicles.

⁴¹ R H C Davis, *King Stephen, 1135-1154*, 3rd edition (New York: Longman, 1990), 167. Davis includes additions and corrections to RRAN, III in his appendix. See #207b.

⁴² Anglo-Saxon charters were not as well preserved but some records do remain. For a rare seventh century charter in which King Æthelred of Mercia confirms a grant made by his sisters, Cynesburh and Cyneswith, see ASC [E], 675. This charter is the only evidence of the original gift. The passage dates the charter to 680 even though it is described in the entry for 675. Æthelred's wife, Osthryth, confirms the gifts as well.

Orderic records many of the grants made to St Évrout and its related lands and, therefore, describes numerous women taking part in gifts to the church. Most of these gifts appear in books five and six of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Nearly all of these grants were confirmed by the wives or heirs of the giver, often both. Foucher, son of Gerard, granted lands and pannage to St Évrout. The charter ends by saying, “my wife Alpes and my sons have also granted it.”⁴³ Elizabeth confirmed the gifts of her husband Ralph of Conches. The unnamed wife of Roger of Vaux also confirmed her husband’s gift to St Évrout. Because Ralph of Conches was Robert’s overlord, both Ralph and Elizabeth confirmed Robert’s gifts.⁴⁴

Frequently when families gave to the abbey, the monks offered up counter gifts to wives and heirs. These counter gifts were meant to keep disputes to a minimum.⁴⁵ In the charter from above, the monks of St Évrout gave the unnamed wife of Roger of Vaux “ten shillings by free gift of the monks.”⁴⁶ This was in addition to a counter gift of forty shillings made to Roger. Sometimes the chroniclers do not separate the counter gifts to men and women. When William of Moulins-la-Marche and his wife made a grant to St Évrout, the couple received thirty shillings.⁴⁷

The above examples represent just a few of the many gifts confirmed by wives; Orderic concludes a section on gift-giving by relating, “many other men and women

⁴³ The entire charter can be found, OV, III, 152-4.

⁴⁴ OV, III, 126. Not only could the wives of overlords confirm gifts, but the wives of the sons and heirs could confirm gifts as well. For example, Elizabeth confirmed the gifts of her husband as well as her husband’s parents, OV, III, 172-6.

⁴⁵ Tabiteau, 10-11. Also see Johns’ chapter entitled “Counter gifts and Affidation.” Her chapter, even more so than others, is based on charter evidence after 1160, and shows some trends that are not found in the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, such as the frequency of counter gifts of sheep.

⁴⁶ OV, III, 126

⁴⁷ OV, III, 132.

made gift-offerings of various kinds to the monastery.”⁴⁸ In Orderic’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* alone, thirty-six women gave gifts along with husbands and sons.⁴⁹

Frequently, the wives convinced their husbands to give to the church. After Roger of Bellême married his second wife, Adelais, she “continually encouraged her husband to befriend monks and protect the poor.”⁵⁰ Orderic follows this passage with a copy of a charter granting extensive lands to St Évrout.⁵¹ “In addition to this Earl Roger gave many gifts to other churches, Troarn, Séez, Almenèches, Cluny, Caen, and many others.”⁵²

Once again, Anglo-Norman chroniclers depict a long tradition of Anglo-Saxon women who made gifts to the church. In the seventh century, Cynesburh and Cyneswith had given lands to Peterborough which their brother King Æthelred of Mercia confirmed.⁵³ “Around this time Cuthburh, sister of Cwenburh, founded an abbey at Wimborne.”⁵⁴ Osthryth, the wife of King Aethelred of Mercia had enriched the monastery at Bardney by translating the bones of St Oswald there, also in the seventh century.⁵⁵ Æthelflaed, lady of the Mercians, later translated the same relics from Bardney to the monastery of St Peter’s at Gloucester in the tenth century.⁵⁶

Orderic describes numerous instances in which women were making gifts independently of their husbands. Many times, these gifts were in turn confirmed by their

⁴⁸ OV, III, 240.

⁴⁹ See OV, II, 10-11, 46-8, 66, and 216; III, 10, 126, 132, 134, 140, 154, 158, 162, 164-6, 174-6, 184-6, 188, 190-2, 200, 202, 208, 210, 230, 246-8, 250-2; VI, 146-8.

⁵⁰ OV, III, 138.

⁵¹ For the charter, see OV, III, 138-142.

⁵² OV, III, 142. For more information on these foundation, see Chibnall’s note 1, OV, III, 142

⁵³ ASC [E], 675.

⁵⁴ HH, 224-6. Henry copied this statement almost exactly from a passage in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. See ASC [A & E], 718.

⁵⁵ HH, 632-4. Henry tells of a number of miracles that occurred when the bones were translated. Henry relies heavily on Bede for this information. See Bede, 246.

⁵⁶ GRA, 198.

husbands or sons, sometimes both. Women provided these gifts from lands that were under their direct control, usually their marriage portion. Occasionally, they bestowed objects instead of lands. “Helvise, William’s sister, gave St Peter the whole of her marriage portion in Aubri-le-Pantou, and William conceded her gift at that time.”⁵⁷

Mabel, the daughter of Roger, earl of Shrewsbury, also gave from her lands. “Mabel gave to Saint-Évroul sixty shillings sterling annually as her tithes out of her revenues in England for the lights of the church.”⁵⁸

Matilda of Flanders, the queen of William the Conqueror, made a number of gifts to St Évroul. She had more disposable income than other patronesses to St Évroul.

Matilda,

placed a mark in gold on the altar, asked to be remembered in the prayers of the brethren together with her daughter Constance, and left instructions for the building of a stone refectory, where they could all take their meals together, and enough money to pay for it. She also gave a chasuble decorated with gold and pearls and a fine cantor’s cope to Saint-Évroul; and she promised more if she lived long enough.⁵⁹

Women with less income still made similar gifts of objects. “Adeline, the wife of Roger of Beaumont, gave the monks of Saint-Évroul an alb richly ornamented with ophrey, which the priest is accustomed to wear for celebrating mass on the greater feast days.”⁶⁰ Orderic describes fifteen women who made gifts individually.⁶¹

Even though most of these examples came from books five and six of Orderic’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*, there are many other sources for the piety and patronage of

⁵⁷ OV, III, 156.

⁵⁸ OV, III, 234.

⁵⁹ OV, III, 240.

⁶⁰ OV, III, 240. For more examples and a more detailed discussion, see below Chapter 8.

⁶¹ See OV, II, 8, 10, 42, 130, 148-50, 160, 240, 334-6, 342, 354; III, 156, 192, 202, 240, 250-2; IV, 44-6, 272, 308; VI, 42, 450.

women. Because it was so important for medieval people to keep track of lands, the charters were invaluable prized possessions, whether recorded within a chronicle like Orderic's or whether the charters were simply kept separately. Fauroux's collection of early Norman charters reflects the same pattern of patronage described above.⁶²

Husbands Ending the Bonds of Marriage

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently describe the multiple marriages of both men and women. Sometimes the first wife or husband, or a second, or a third had died but other times the marriage ended with repudiation or annulment. In the period between the ninth and twelfth centuries, the church came to believe that the only end to the marriage was if there was a discovery that the marriage had never been valid in the first place.⁶³ Frequently, it can be unclear exactly how the marriage ended as the wife in question is simply not mentioned again: was she dead? had she been repudiated? Once one marriage had ended and kinship ties had been severed, the path was clear for both men and women to remarry and for their families to form new kinship ties.

Fulk IV of Anjou had at least four, if not five, different wives, and it is unclear exactly how these marriages ended, although several of his wives were certainly repudiated. Fulk IV of Anjou had been married to the daughter of Lancelin of Beaugency, Ermengarde of Bourbon, Orengarde of Chatelaillon, and possibly a daughter of Walter I of Brienne. While giving the details of the negotiations leading up to his last marriage to Bertrada of Montfort, Orderic reports that two of Fulk's previous wives were alive at the time. It appears that Fulk had repudiated both Ermengarde and Orengarde, although it is

⁶² See Fauroux no.s 14b, 83, 84, and 85.

⁶³ Constance Bouchard, *"Those of My Blood:" Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 39. Technically, this would mean an annulment instead of a divorce; at any rate, the marriage came to an abrupt end.

unclear what happened to the daughters of Lancelin or Walter.⁶⁴ In fact, Orderic claims that Bertrada fled her marriage out of fear that she was about to be repudiated herself.⁶⁵

While Orderic does say that Fulk's previous marriages made Bertrada's uncle, William of Évreux, think twice about allowing the marriage, the marriage did take place and there is little evidence that Fulk was seen as some sort of deviant for having so many wives. William of Poitiers does mention in a passage the possibility of having too many wives: "Indeed in those parts [Brittany] one warrior sired fifty, since each had, according to their barbarous custom, ten or more wives, as is related of the ancient Moors who were ignorant of divine law and chaste morals."⁶⁶ It would appear that in this case, however, that William of Poitiers is complaining about polygamy, not simply a long string of marriage and remarriage.

While Fulk may seem a little extreme with five wives, the examples below continue to show that the Anglo-Norman chroniclers commonly write of both repudiation and remarriage. These authors rarely express that this was anything out of the ordinary.⁶⁷ Repudiation could occur for a variety of reasons, and, as is clear from the example above, it can be nearly impossible to ascertain exactly why some of these marriages ended. Many times repudiation was a socio-political decision, a way to sever unneeded or unwanted kinship ties. While the chroniclers frequently mentioned consanguinity as a cause for the end of a marriage, sometimes the chroniclers ascribed the repudiation to aesthetic or moral reasons. Frequently, these stated reasons were fictions that concealed the true socio-political ramifications of a husband's decision to repudiate his wife.

⁶⁴ OV, IV, 187, note 3.

⁶⁵ OV, IV, 260 and see below Chapter 3.

⁶⁶ WP, 74.

⁶⁷ OV, IV, 184-6.

According to the Church, couples could not be married if they were related within seven degrees, meaning they could not even share the same great-great-great-great grandparents.⁶⁸ This seemed somewhat impractical, and marriages frequently took place within seven degrees, which could cause problems of another sort. Realizing this, the Church cut the prohibited degrees from seven to four at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.⁶⁹ While consanguinity was frequently the stated reason for the end of most marriages, it seems dubious that no one realized that they had married within the prohibited degrees. Divorces did not occur because new relatives had suddenly been uncovered. It was simply that consanguinity was the only legitimate way to end a marriage.

After William the Conqueror married Matilda of Flanders, rumors abounded that the two were related within the prohibited seven degrees. According to the authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, “the pope absolved William and Matilda of any charge and laid a penance upon them. He ordered both to found a monastery where monks and nuns should zealously pray for their salvation.”⁷⁰ While the couple did found two religious houses in Caen, there is no indication that William and Matilda were actually related within the prohibited degrees or that the foundations were some sort of penance.⁷¹

William’s biographer, David Douglas, argues that the pope prohibited the marriage for

⁶⁸ Bouchard, “*Those of My Blood*,” 42.

⁶⁹ Bouchard, “*Those of My Blood*,” 40. This cuts it down to not being able to share the same great-great grandparents.

⁷⁰ *GND*, II, 146-8.

⁷¹ Holy Trinity was founded for women, St Stephen’s for men, both around 1059 shortly after the couple’s marriage. None of the other chronicles give this version of events, and there is no evidence of the pope assigning penance to the couple. *GND*, II, 148, note 1.

purely political reasons.⁷² Whether the charges had merit or not, consanguinity was not an insurmountable problem that would immediately end a marriage.

Matilda of Laigle's marriage to Nigel d'Aubigny superbly illustrates how political repudiation could be cloaked by claims of consanguinity. Matilda was the daughter of Richard of Laigle and niece of Hugh, earl of Chester. Nigel hoped to ally himself with her family. According to Orderic, Nigel "treated her well until the death of her brother, Gilbert."⁷³ The stated reason for the repudiation was that Matilda had been previously married to one of Nigel's blood relatives.⁷⁴ Nigel was well aware of Matilda's first marriage to Robert of Mowbray prior to their marriage so this could not have been the true reason for the divorce. Nigel was most certainly more interested in ending a marriage that was no longer useful and contracting a new one that was. He soon remarried, taking Gundreda, the sister of Hugh of Gournay, as his wife. This remarriage was not only sanctioned by his peers but arranged on the recommendation of Henry I.⁷⁵

Louis VII of France also repudiated his queen. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers are clear that Louis married Eleanor in order to gain control of Aquitaine.⁷⁶ Louis repudiated Eleanor after she had produced two daughters claiming consanguinity. Louis hoped to retain control of Aquitaine and force Eleanor into a nunnery, but she quickly married the future Henry II of England, taking the lands of Aquitaine with her.⁷⁷ No matter how

⁷² Douglas, 78-9.

⁷³ OV, VI, 282.

⁷⁴ OV, VI, 284.

⁷⁵ Hugh had discussed Gundreda's marriage with Henry I, and "on the king's recommendation, gave her in marriage to Nigel d'Aubigny, a powerful man." OV, VI, 192.

⁷⁶ The political reasons for the marriage are discussed by many of the chroniclers. OV, VI, 490; GS, 149; HH, 756; ASC, E, 1140.

⁷⁷ The divorce and remarriage both took place in 1152. Once again the information is given by a number of chroniclers. GS, 149 and HH, 756-8. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does not give a stated reason for the divorce, but echoes the information given by the others. ASC, E, 1140.

much Louis protested, he was not able to block her marriage to Henry nor regain control of Aquitaine. Eleanor, however, made the repudiation work to her benefit.

While consanguinity was the most frequent reason for repudiation, there were other reasons used to explain the end of a marriage. A few generations before Louis, Philip I of France repudiated his first wife, Bertha, to marry Bertrada de Montfort. According to William of Malmesbury, “growing tired of this marriage because his wife [Bertha] was inordinately stout [*prepinguis corpulentiae*], he sent her away.”⁷⁸ There is no evidence of exactly how stout she might have been, but it is likely she was not so much repulsive as Bertrada was alluring. Bertrada de Montfort was a wealthy heiress who was married to one of Philip’s strongest nobles, Fulk IV of Anjou. By marrying Bertrada, Philip weakened Fulk while strengthening himself. It is also possible that Bertrada was physically alluring as well. As discussed above, Fulk claimed to be in love with Bertrada because of her beauty.⁷⁹

While Philip repudiated Bertha and married Bertrada in 1094, the church did not recognize an end to his first marriage and excommunicated the new couple. As Orderic states, however, “Pope Urban rebuked Philip to no avail.”⁸⁰ Philip never repudiated Bertrada, although the church never gave up on opposing the union either.⁸¹ Repudiation and remarriage could be a tricky business.

⁷⁸ *GRA*, 474.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of Bertrada’s marriages to Fulk IV of Anjou and Philip of France, see above Chapter 3.

⁸⁰ *OV*, IV, 262

⁸¹ The pope excommunicated the couple in October of 1094, removed it in 1096, and excommunicated them again in 1100. In 1104, Philip and the pope were reconciled on condition that he would repudiate Bertrada. Philip never did, but the pope did not excommunicate the couple again. *OV*, IV, 261, note 2. Even Bertha’s death in 1094 did not stop the church’s protest. *OV*, IV, 262-3, note 3.

Similar to Philip's repudiation of a stout Bertha, Orderic claims that Baldwin I of Jerusalem repudiated his third wife because of her looks. Baldwin took his third wife, Adelasia del Vasto, for political and financial reasons around 1115. Adelasia had previously been married to Roger I of Sicily and brought Baldwin Norman and Italian connections as well as much needed funds. According to Orderic, he repudiated her because she was "wrinkled with age and notoriously stained with many crimes."⁸² This is not the only account of the repudiation, however. William of Malmesbury claims that Baldwin repudiated her because "she was afflicted with some disorder, which caused an incurable cancer to attack her privy parts."⁸³ Because of her affliction, she was unable to produce any heirs. Both chroniclers agree that Baldwin had little use for Adelasia beyond her wealth, and once that wealth was spent their marriage ended.⁸⁴

Wives could and sometimes did challenge their husbands' repudiations. The church was a frequent ally to these women, as can be seen in the case of Queen Bertha above. The Church proved unable to force Philip to return to her, but it also made sure that Philip paid for that decision. The church was quick to use excommunication in these cases to help women who did not want to end their marriages.

Orderic describes how Hildegarde, countess of Poitou, went before a papal council in France in 1115 to argue that her husband, William, had abandoned her to be with Malberge, the wife of the viscomte of Châtellerauld. Pope Calixtus II summoned William to the council and eventually ordered William to return to Hildegarde's bed or

⁸² OV, VI, 432.

⁸³ William of Malmesbury continues, "is it surprising that a wife's embraces should prove repellent to a man for whom leisure was a form of illness and whose time was spent in battle." *GRA*, 688.

⁸⁴ *GRA*, 688 and OV, VI, 432.

face excommunication.⁸⁵ Orderic makes it clear in his writings that any woman, if so forced by her husband's gross misdeeds, could and should appeal to the pope. The church would stand by a pious woman who wanted to retain her husband despite his adultery.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe a tradition of families who contested the repudiation of their kinswoman. As William of Malmesbury relates, during the seventh century, Cenwalh, king of Wessex, "abandoned without remorse both Christianity and lawful wedlock; but being attacked and defeated by Penda, king of the Mercians, whose sister he had divorced, he took refuge with the king of the East Angles."⁸⁶ William takes this story from Bede as did Henry of Huntingdon, although the two versions place different emphases on the story.⁸⁷ According to Henry, Cenwalh "rejected the faith, but he did not go unpunished. For having repudiated his wife, the sister of Penda, king of the Mercians, to marry another, he was defeated in battle and deprived of his kingdom by Penda."⁸⁸

It is clear from both versions that Penda attacked Cenwalh to avenge his sister's repudiation. This sudden repudiation meant not only an end to kinship ties but was disrespectful to both Penda and his sister. The authors link the rejection of Christianity with the repudiation of his wife. Neither action was acceptable, and clearly the Anglo-Norman chroniclers believe that God had justly punished Cenwalh. While the king of Essex eventually returned to Christianity, the fate of his repudiated wife remains

⁸⁵ OV, VI, 258-60. William of Malmesbury also discusses the scandal caused by William IX of Aquitaine although he does not describe these proceedings. *GRA*, 784. To make the matter slightly more confusing, Hildegard is alternatively called Philipa, Matilda, and Adelaide. OV, VI, 258, note 2.

⁸⁶ *GRA*, 42.

⁸⁷ Compare Bede, 232-4 with the passages in *GRA*, 42 and *HH*, 190-2.

⁸⁸ *HH*, 190-2.

unclear.⁸⁹ Neither of the Anglo-Norman chronicles can relate her ultimate fate as Bede did not record it or even her name.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers occasionally describe marriages that ended without repudiation. William Talvas, known for his cruelty, had his first wife, Hildeburg, murdered. As Orderic describes, “because Hildeburg was of excellent character and fervently loved God, she did not approve of her husband’s wicked actions. For this reason, he deeply resented her. Finally, one morning when she was on her way to church to pray to God, he had her strangled by two of his cronies on the road.”⁹⁰ While the ‘wicked actions’ of William Talvas are described elsewhere, there are no further details on Hildeburg, although this same passage identifies her as the daughter of “Arnulf, a nobleman” and mother of Arnulf and Mabel of Bellême.⁹¹

Despite limited details, a number of things can be learned from this story from the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*. Orderic uses the murder of his wife here as simply another example of the evils of the Bellême family, whose members frequently went against St Évrout. This partially explains why Orderic is the only Anglo-Norman chronicler to describe her death or even her life. Hildeburg was a model wife and had “excellent character;” being pious, she attempted to sway her husband to do the right thing. In the end, however, her advice led to her demise. Orderic is rarely very judgmental, even of murder, and this is no exception. While William’s actions were part of his wicked deeds, there is no special mention of repercussions for the crime, either temporally or spiritually. If she had family or friends who were willing to stand against William, their actions did

⁸⁹ *GRA*, 42; *HH*, 192; Bede, 234.

⁹⁰ *GND*, II, 108.

⁹¹ *GND*, II, 108.

not find their way into the chronicle. Furthermore, Orderic reports that William Talvas took a second wife, an unnamed daughter of Rodulf, viscomte of Beaumont.⁹²

On the other end of the spectrum, husbands could also end their marriage to enter a monastery. This occurred somewhat frequently, and Orderic describes a number of these instances where local noblemen came to St Évrout and its cells, almost always in the final days of their lives. In these cases, husbands asked their wives and families for permission to leave the marriage and leave administrative control of their lands.

Henry of Huntingdon describes the attempts of Sebbi, the late seventh century king of Essex, to join a monastery. “[Sebbi] eagerly sought after the monastic life, but his wife forbade him... But when he was struck by illness, he gained his wife’s permission and received monastic blessing from Waldhere, bishop of London.”⁹³ Sebbi’s wife was successfully able to block him from a religious calling. The choice of words is very telling. She did not advise him or convince him not to join; she forbade him. According to Henry, “it was often said that a man of such a disposition should have been a bishop rather than a king.”⁹⁴ Sebbi felt called to a religious life, but it was not until he fell ill that his wife changed her mind.

Ansold of Maule, a patron of a cell at Maule attached to St Évrout, was in his fifties when he realized that “he could not escape from approaching death.”⁹⁵ He asked the monks that he “be joined to them in dress as he was in mind, saying that he had put

⁹² *GND*, II, 108.

⁹³ *HH*, 658. Henry does not name her, nor is she named in Bede, from whom Henry obtained the story. Bede’s telling of the story is more detailed, and it stresses that Sebbi’s wife was very reluctant to allow Sebbi to become a monk. According to Bede, she “obstinately refused to be separated from him.” Bede, 364-6.

⁹⁴ *HH*, 658.

⁹⁵ *OV*, III, 192.

aside all family ties of wife and sons and no longer held any temporal dominion.”⁹⁶ The monks agreed although he did not join their ranks until his family had been gathered around him. Orderic inserts speeches here in which Ansold gives up his lands to his son and heir.⁹⁷ Ansold then turned his attention to his wife, Odeline.

“Dear companion and beloved wife, Odeline, hear, I now implore you, my prayers. Up to now we have loyally kept to the bond of lawful marriage, and have lived together by God’s aid for more than twenty years without dispute or shameful accusations. We have given birth to fine children in lawful wedlock, and you will lead them by constant exhortation to be obedient to their Creator for their spiritual good. But see, I am approaching my end... Since your life may be an example to many, add only this to your accustomed virtues, that from this day forward you live chastely in holy widowhood. Let your permission be granted for me to become a monk... Therefore I pray you, my lady, to release me from the bond of wedlock and commend me to God in faith, so that, set free from every worldly obligation, I may be entitled to receive the habit and tonsure of a monk. This I ask from the depth of my heart.”⁹⁸

While it is clear that Ansold was expecting to die very soon, and in fact died three days after joining the monastery,⁹⁹ his death was not the reason for the end of the marriage. It was clearly important to Ansold to leave his marriage before his death. While the speech is dramatic and loving, Ansold makes it clear over and over that he needs Odeline’s consent to leave the marriage. Furthermore, he asks that, “from this day forward you live chastely in holy widowhood,”¹⁰⁰ even though he is not yet dead.

When Ansold had said this and more to the same purpose the good woman, who had never been in the habit of opposing his will, wept copiously but without protestations, preserving a seemly modesty, and, obedient to her husband as was her wont, granted all

⁹⁶ OV, II, 192.

⁹⁷ OV, II, 192-6.

⁹⁸ Despite claiming that “I do not wish to force a long speech upon you,” Ansold’s speech is rather long with many exhortations about the glory of becoming a monk which are left out here. OV, III, 196.

⁹⁹ OV, III, 198.

¹⁰⁰ “ut amodo casto uiuas in sancta uiduitate.” OV, III, 196.

that he asked.¹⁰¹

Orderic stresses that Odeline is a good wife because she was obedient to her husband in the past and is now modest when losing her husband to a more Godly life.

Wives Ending the Bonds of Marriage

Men were not the only ones to bring an end to a marriage. Bertrada of Montfort, as discussed above, left her first husband, Fulk IV of Anjou, in order to marry Philip of France. According to Orderic,

Bertrade, countess of Anjou, feared that her husband might treat her as he had already treated two other wives, and that if she were deserted she would be despised by all like a low harlot. Being fully conscious of her high birth and beauty, she sent a loyal messenger to King Philip of France, to tell him what she had in mind; for she thought it better to desert her husband voluntarily and seek another than to be deserted by him and exposed to public scorn. The outcome was that the weak prince, learning of the wanton woman's desire, agreed to the crime, and received her rapturously, separating from his wife and immediately marrying Bertrada.¹⁰²

Bertrada wanted to end the marriage, and she worked to create a second match with Philip. It is striking that Bertrada preferred to be known as an adulterer than be next in a list of repudiated wives. Repudiation was hard for a woman to take, particularly if she had much to offer.

None of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers discuss why Fulk IV had repudiated these other wives;¹⁰³ what is clear, however, is that Fulk had consistently formed political alliances through marriage, and Bertrada had been his most politically advantageous match. It is doubtful that he would have been able to find a better marriage, and indeed,

¹⁰¹ OV, III, 196.

¹⁰² OV, IV, 260.

¹⁰³ OV, IV, 187, note 3. See above Chapter 3.

he did not marry again after Bertrada left him.¹⁰⁴ The couple had only been married for four years, although Bertrada had borne Fulk a son and heir, the future Fulk V of Anjou.¹⁰⁵

Orderic records the aftermath of the elopement, filling the account with his own assessment of their misdeeds:

So the absconding concubine left the adulterous count and lived with the adulterous king until his death parted them. The detestable sin of adultery, sad to tell, was committed within the bounds of the kingdom of France, and led to terrible threats and preparations of war between the rival lords.¹⁰⁶

Orderic's vivid speech leaves little to interpretation, as he seethes against the two lovers. Even Fulk cannot escape from Orderic's tongue lashing, although the author is more concerned with aiming his sharp quill at Bertrada and Philip. War did break out between the two parties, although, as mentioned above, Bertrada was able to negotiate a peace between her former and current husbands.

Isabel of Vermandois also left her first husband, Robert of Meulan, to marry another. According to Henry of Huntingdon, "when he [Robert] was at the height of his fame, it happened that another count stole his wife by intrigue and violent treachery."¹⁰⁷ Isabel went on to marry William II of Warenne although according to the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, this occurred only after Robert's death in 1118.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, there is not much more information available. Henry does not describe the intrigue and

¹⁰⁴ Bertrada appears to have left Fulk shortly before her marriage to Philip in 1094, leaving Fulk alone until his death in 1109. Dunbabin, 390.

¹⁰⁵ OV, IV, 186.

¹⁰⁶ OV, IV, 260-2.

¹⁰⁷ HH, 598.

¹⁰⁸ GND, II, 278. Isabel remarried in either 1118 or 1119. GND, II, 278-9, note 5 and HH, 598, note 39.

violent treachery; the scandal does not appear in any of the other chronicles.¹⁰⁹ While her actions may have caused scandal, Isabel's elopement did not cause the kind of disruption that Bertrada's had.

Henry of Huntingdon describes two different wandering wives which he inserts in a speech delivered by Robert of Gloucester:

"The count of Aumale appears, a man who is remarkably consistent in wrong-doing, swift to enlarge it, intransigent over giving it up, because of whose intolerable filthiness his wife left him and became a fugitive. That earl appears who stole the said count's wife, a manifest adulterer and distinguished lecher, a faithful follower of Bacchus, though unacquainted with Mars, smelling of wine, unaccustomed to warfare."¹¹⁰

Robert of Gloucester scathingly attacks two different counts, the count of Aumale and another unnamed count who supported King Stephen during the Anarchy. In the first case, Robert accused William of Aumale of being such a degenerate that his wife left. Using Robert's voice, Henry of Huntingdon shows he was somewhat sympathetic towards the woman even though he calls her a fugitive. It is unclear where she escaped to or even who she was, as the passage lacks detail.¹¹¹

In the second case, the unnamed count has stolen a wife from another. The information surrounding this count is even more sparse and problematic.¹¹² Henry does not sympathize with the wandering wife or the stealing count in this scenario. Robert of

¹⁰⁹ Orderic talks of her first marriage, but is completely silent on her second. See OV, V, 30 and, VI, 20 and 40.

¹¹⁰ HH, 730 and see notes 88 and 89.

¹¹¹ HH, 730, note 88 gives possible identities for this wife.

¹¹² HH, 730, note 89 argues that the unnamed count is most likely William III of Warenne conceding that William is a little young to have stolen a wife by the time of this speech in 1141. Henry of Huntingdon may, however, be referring to the aforementioned marriage of William II of Warenne and Isabel of Vermandois. If Henry is referring to William II, however, there is another problem, as William II died in 1138. Henry may be confused on the date in which Warenne changed hands between William II and William III. This is much more likely than William III being in the exact situation as his father.

Gloucester's speech damns the count equally for being an adulterer, a serious drinker, and a coward. Despite the identity and Henry's judgment of the actions, women could and did leave their marriages.

Even though the preceding examples were all about women who simply abandoned their husbands, women could end an unwanted marriage, legitimately, just as men could. Matilda, the daughter of Richard of Laigle, was married to Robert of Mowbray, an ambitious man who hoped to increase his power and influence with a marriage to Matilda. Soon after the marriage took place, however, he rebelled against William Rufus: "His wife Matilda, who had scarcely ever known any joy with him, for she had been married at the beginning of the rebellion and had shared his bed, fearfully, for three months only amid the clash of arms, was soon deprived of marital solace."¹¹³

William Rufus had Robert of Laigle imprisoned for his actions and was not quick to forgive his transgressions. This put Matilda and her family in a bind as a kinship relationship with Robert was harmful to the family and also left her unable to remarry and create new ties: "Her husband being alive in prison, as I have described, she could not lawfully marry another without transgressing the law of God. Finally, long afterwards, with the permission of Pope Paschal to whom the affair was made known by men of the court, Nigel of Aubigny took her as his wife."¹¹⁴ It was difficult to obtain a divorce for any reason other than consanguinity, and here Matilda had to apply directly to the pope for such dispensation. It is unclear how long she had to wait before getting the permission of the pope.

¹¹³ OV, IV, 282.

¹¹⁴ OV, IV, 282. The revolt took place in 1095, but Orderic does not give the date of her divorce beyond the phrase, "long afterwards."

The Disloyalty of Wives

Occasionally, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers write of wives who they described as disloyal towards their husbands. Some of these instances have already been described above as this disloyalty came from daughters who retained loyalty to the family into which they had been born: Judith, the wife of Earl Waltheof, reported her husband's disloyalty to William the Conqueror knowing well that it could have, and in fact did, result in his execution.¹¹⁵ Adelaide poisoned her husband when it was clear that she would have to choose between the family into which she was born and the family into which she was married.¹¹⁶

Adelaide and Judith were not the only ones whose disloyalty may have led to their husbands' deaths. Henry of Huntingdon also provides some evidence for this in Anglo-Saxon England: "Peada was killed through the treachery of his wife."¹¹⁷ Peada was a seventh century king of Middle Anglia and South Mercia, a time of great unrest. Henry of Huntingdon does not elaborate on what the betrayal was, much less the motivation for it. He copied this from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which does not provide much information.¹¹⁸

While the above wives survived the betrayal unscathed, that was not always the case. In 912, Rollo married Gisla, the daughter of King Charles the Simple, in order to seal an uneasy peace between the Viking invaders and the French. Around 922, the king "sent two soldiers to his daughter Gisla. She secretly made them stay a long time with her and would not display them to Rollo. When Rollo learned of this, he was furious and,

¹¹⁵ See above chapter 3 and OV, II, 320-2 and 344.

¹¹⁶ See above chapter 3 and OV, II, 78-80.

¹¹⁷ HH, 198.

¹¹⁸ ASC, E, 654.

believing them to be spies, ordered them to be led to the market-place and executed.”¹¹⁹
Rollo felt that Gisla had betrayed him and reacted.

The execution of the so-called spies served to punish Gisla, although the fall-out did not end there. According to Robert of Torigni, the author of this passage, various nobles attacked Charles after they realized the peace “had been broken and shattered.”¹²⁰ Even perceived disloyalty could cause tensions between the family into which wives were born and the family into which they married. Gisla appears to have died around this time so it is unclear the extent of the repercussions of this event.

Disloyalty was not only caused when a woman had to choose between her two families. Aubrée, the wife of Count Ralph of Bayeux, had ordered and overseen the building of the “mighty and almost impregnable” castle at Ivry.¹²¹ After Orderic describes the building of the castle in the early eleventh century, he reports that “she herself was slain by her own husband on account of that very same castle, because she had attempted to expel him from it.”¹²²

Aubrée’s disloyalty was simply trying to throw her husband out of the castle which she certainly considered her own. That kind of disloyalty was not tolerated. Orderic does not condemn Ralph’s actions. In fact, since Aubrée had ordered the death of the architect of the castle, Orderic sees her death as an inevitable consequence of being so cavalier towards the life of others: “Man sends his fellow man to death, and, having

¹¹⁹ *GND*, I, 70.

¹²⁰ *GND*, I, 70. According to van Houts, this justification of the rebellion is a fiction borrowed from Dudo of St Quentin. Refer to *GND*, I, 70-1, note 3.

¹²¹ *OV*, IV, 290.

¹²² *OV*, IV, 290.

driven him to his ruin, follows by the same path, deservedly, alas, losing the power to help himself or others.”¹²³

In contrast to this, husbands appreciated good wives, particularly ones that were worked alongside them. William of Malmesbury describes the affection that William the Conqueror had for his wife:

He had many children by Matilda, and she, with her willingness to please her husband and her ability to bear him children, kindled a passionate attachment in the spirit of that great man... When she died, four years before him, he gave her a most splendid funeral, and showed by many days of the deepest mourning how much he missed the love of her whom he had lost.¹²⁴

Wives needed to help their husbands in innumerable ways, acting both in tandem with and individually from their husbands. The authors praise wives who are wise and active, obedient and loyal, chaste and pious. Good wives gave their husbands prudent advice, patronized the church, and even participated in negotiating peace or holding castles. Even though marriages were intended to tie together two families forever, the ties could be broken by both husbands and wives.

¹²³ OV, IV, 290. For more information of Aubrée of Ivry, see below Chapter 6.

¹²⁴ *GRA*, 500-2.

Chapter 5: Concubines: Wives Who Were Not Wives?

Concubines, mistresses, and the children they bore litter the pages of the Anglo-Norman chronicles. It is clear that extramarital sex was common, and surprisingly enough, the authors, men of the church, rarely chastised this behavior. Adultery was far from ideal, but it seemed to be viewed as unavoidable. Daughters and wives were expected to remain chaste despite the apparent freedom of their fathers and husbands; however, men who were faithful to their wives were praised. Concubinage can take a variety of forms and could appear almost exactly like marriage.

The exact status of concubines and mistresses is almost impossible to pinpoint, ranging from partner in extramarital sex to a woman who was a wife in everyone's eyes but the eyes of the Church. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers are frequently imprecise, leaving the exact nature open to some interpretation. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers use a number of terms for concubines, which include *pelex*,¹ *concubina*,² *meretix*,³ *mæcha*,⁴

¹ Most often translated as concubine. *GRA*, 726; *OV*, II, 262; *OV*, IV, 182, 282, and 284; *OV*, VI, 92, 98, and 212.

² Most often translated as concubine. *OV*, II, 28; *OV*, IV, 98; *OV*, VI, 40; *GND*, II, 96 and 104; *GRA*, 258-60

³ Most often translated as harlot or whore. *OV*, III, 182; *OV*, V, 98 and 308; *OV*, VI, 62; *GND*, I, 102; *GND*, II, 114.

⁴ Most often translated as adulteress or mistress. *OV*, V, 202.

and *scortum*.⁵ Since almost all of the Anglo-Norman authors use these terms more or less interchangeably, the status cannot be implied from which term was used. There are also brief passages that simply imply concubines; for example: “yet the king [Henry I] had six sons and seven daughters, though they were of less honorable birth.”⁶ Clearly, Henry I had these children outside marriage, but who were the mothers of these children?

Because of the questionable status of these women, it is also difficult to determine how prevalent concubines or mistresses were in society. Passages that mention concubines rarely name them or talk about the exact nature of the relationship. Even when modern historians can uncover information about illegitimate children, the identity of their mother or mothers can remain hidden. Of the over twelve hundred women who appear in the Anglo-Norman chronicles, at least ninety-five appear as concubines.⁷

While the Anglo-Norman chroniclers rarely attack concubinage, the authors did praise men who abstained from extramarital relationships. William of Malmesbury praised the sons of St Margaret of Scotland at length and especially for staying faithful to their wives. “They successfully overcame the vice most prevalent in kings, and it is recorded that no woman entered their bedchamber except their lawful wives, nor did any of them bring a stain upon his innocence by keeping any mistress.”⁸ Despite this praise,

⁵ Most often translated as harlot or whore. OV, V, 292.

⁶ *GND*, II, 248.

⁷ This number was calculated by counting only those who were specifically called concubine or who were the mothers of illegitimate children. It does not include women whose marriages were questionable.

⁸ William of Malmesbury is mostly focused on David, but also is praising Alexander. William also admits that “Edmund was the only son of Margaret who sank from this high standard.” The passage then goes on to list Edmund’s vices, chief of them, of course, was Edmund’s participation in the murder of his brother. *GRA*, 726.

Orderic does write that one of these sons, Alexander, had an illegitimate son, Malcolm Macbeth.⁹

Elsewhere, Orderic praises the late eleventh century nobleman, Ansold of Maule: “a lover of chastity, he was content with lawful marriage, and attacked lust not, like a layman, with coarse abuse, but like a doctor of the church, openly, with reasoned proofs. He praised fasting and bodily abstinence in all men and practiced these virtues stalwartly all his life in so far as a layman can.”¹⁰ Elsewhere, Orderic reminds the reader that Ansold and his wife Odeline had “loyally kept to the bond of lawful marriage, and have lived together by God’s aid for more than twenty years without dispute or shameful accusations.”¹¹

Most frequently, the chroniclers discussed concubines and illegitimate offspring alongside passages about marriages and legitimate offspring. As just an example, Orderic sums up the life of Hugh of Avranches, earl of Chester:

He was more prodigal than generous; and went about surrounded by an army instead of a household. He kept no check on what he gave or received. His hunting was a daily devastation of his lands, for he thought more highly of fowlers and hunters than husbandmen or monks. A slave to gluttony, he staggered under a mountain of fat, scarcely able to move. He was given to carnal lusts and had a numerous progeny of sons and daughters by concubines; but almost all of them died miserably in one way or another. He married Ermentrude, daughter of Hugh of Claremont in Beauvaisis, by whom he had an heir to the county of Chester, named Richard; but this youth perished without issue in the company of Prince William, son of King Henry, and many nobles, in the shipwreck on 25 November.¹²

⁹ OV, IV, 276. Chibnall argues that Malcolm may have been the son of Angus, earl of Moray, and not Alexander. OV, IV, 276, note 3.

¹⁰ This is part of a longer passage that outlines his good character. OV, III, 180-2.

¹¹ OV, III, 196.

¹² OV, II, 260-2. The wreck of the White Ship took place in 1120.

While this passage is overwhelmingly negative, having multiple concubines was the least of Hugh's issues. As can be seen through the entirety of this passage, Orderic stresses that Hugh was given to excess in every aspect of his life. There is even an undertone suggesting that Hugh would have done better to give to the poor and to the Church. Furthermore, in one breath Orderic talks of illegitimate offspring and in the next Hugh's wife and legitimate son. While it may seem that Orderic damns Hugh's illegitimate offspring who died miserably, Richard's death in the wreck of the White Ship shows that there is no link between illegitimacy and misery.

The above passage also illustrates the difficulty of describing concubinage. Orderic does not name any of the women or even give a number. It is unclear if he is exaggerating by saying numerous progeny. Neither the women nor their children are mentioned by any of the other Anglo-Norman chroniclers. The exact status of these women can not even be guessed. There is also no timeline for these liaisons; they could have occurred before or during his marriage to Ermentrude.

Concubines and the Norman and Anglo-Norman Lineage

Much of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers' attitude towards concubines can be explained by the number of concubines and the importance these women held within the Norman and Anglo-Norman reigns. Rollo, the first duke of Normandy, 911-932, had a Christian wife, Gisla, but no legitimate offspring. Rollo did have two children, including his heir William Longsword, by Popa whom he had married, "according to the Danish custom"¹³ before his marriage to Gisla in 911. Rollo's marriage to Gisla actually

¹³ "*more Danico*," *GND*, I, 58. Also see van Houts' note 5, *GND*, I, 58-9. For *more Danico*, see Elizabeth Eames, "Mariage et concubinage legal en Norvège à l'époque des vikings," *Annals de Normandie*, II (1958), 195-208.

disrupted his relationship with Popa: “After his wife had died prematurely without issue, the duke resumed his relationship with Popa, whom he had left.”¹⁴ The idea of a Danish marriage was certainly a relationship that Rollo could step in and out of easily in sharp contrast to his Christian marriage to Gisla. Even though he was a Christian by that time, he never had a Christian marriage to Popa.

Rollo’s son, William Longsword (932-942), also had a relationship by Danish custom with Sprota, even though William had always been Christian. Like his father, William Longsword had a Christian wife, Leyarda, who did not have any children.¹⁵ It was by Sprota that William fathered his own heir, Richard I of Normandy. The timing of William’s relationships with Leyarda and Sprota are unclear, and it is possible that he maintained the relationships simultaneously.¹⁶ Furthermore, according to William of Jumièges, Louis IV of France called Richard “the son of a whore.”¹⁷ While the Normans seemed to have accepted Richard without comment, the French seemed to have had a certain level of contempt for Danish marriage.

Richard I (942-996) had a relationship to Gunnor by which numerous children were born outside of a Christian marriage. According to Robert of Torigni,

when however, the duke wished his son Robert to become archbishop of Rouen, he was told by some people that according to canon law this was impossible, because his mother had not been married. Therefore, Duke Richard married Countess Gunnor according to the Christian custom and during the wedding ceremony

¹⁴ *GND*, I, 72.

¹⁵ Leyarda was the daughter of Hubert II of Vermandois. The couple was married around 936. After William’s death, she married Theobald I of Blois and Chartres and bore him children. *GND*, I, 80 and note 7.

¹⁶ Sprota also outlived William and later was associated with Esperling by whom she had an additional son and daughters. Here Robert of Torigni uses the term *contubernium*, or concubinage, in his later interpolations. *GND*, I, 174.

¹⁷ *GND*, I, 102. Louis IV definitely wanted Normandy for himself, but he never questioned Richard’s ability to inherit despite the name-calling.

the children, who were already born, were covered by a cloak together with their parents.¹⁸

In all of the above accounts, it is clear that a marriage by Danish custom was enough for the women, all Viking descendants, as well as their subjects. These Danish marriage practices continued long after the dukes converted to Christianity. Not only could the Danish customs coexist with Christian ones, but in the cases of Rollo and William Longsword, Christian wives coexisted with Danish ones. The legitimacy of the children or their ability to inherit never came into question. Outsiders, whether it was the French king or members of the church, were not as accepting.

Richard I also had at least one other concubine by whom he had at least four children. There is little information on the children and even less on their mother or mothers. Richard made no effort to legitimize these children although he did provide titles and marriages for them. Two sons, Godfrey and William, became counts of Eu. A third son, Robert was count of Avranches. A daughter, Beatrice, married the lord of Turenne.¹⁹

Even though Richard II (996-1026) had strictly Christian wives, his son, Richard III had only concubines.²⁰ Richard III (1026-7) died young, and once again the information about his relationships and offspring remains sparse. He had three children by one or more mothers: Nicholas, Papia, and Adeliza. Perhaps because of his age,

¹⁸ *GND*, II, 266-8.

¹⁹ Elisabeth van Houts, *The Normans in Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 293.

²⁰ Richard II married Judith of Brittany by whom he had five children including the future dukes, Richard III and Robert. After her death, Richard II married Estrith of Denmark although the couple quickly divorced without issue. Thirdly, he married Papia of Envermeu by whom he had at least two additional sons, Malger and William. van Houts, 294 Estrith or Margaret of Denmark is not known from any of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, but is described at some length in Adam of Bremen. It is possible that descriptions of her may have been found in the lost pages of William of Poitiers.

Nicholas became an oblate at Ouen and Normandy went to Richard's brother, Robert instead.²¹

Robert (1027-1038), had a concubine, Herleve, by whom he fathered his heir, the future William the Conqueror. Only Orderic's *Historia Ecclesiastica* describes Herleve, where he refers to her strictly as a concubine, using the term *pelex*.²² Since Orderic did not describe any of the preceding countesses, it is difficult to compare descriptions of them to his reference here to Herleve. Like Richard I, Robert did not have a Christian wife, and there were no other heirs. While William's early years were tumultuous, much like Richard I before him, no other sons challenged his legitimacy in inheriting Normandy.

Robert had other relationships with other women. Modern historians argue that a second unnamed concubine was the mother of Robert's daughter, Adelaide. Robert also had a brief Christian marriage to Estrith of Denmark. The couple were married in 1031 but divorced by 1032, and there were no children from the marriage.²³ There is no mention of Herleve during this period. Robert may have put her aside for the moment only to resume his relationship with her once Estrith was gone. While this would certainly fit the pattern of his forebears, Herleve does not appear in the sources again until after Robert's death. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers stress the love and honor that William the Conqueror bestowed on his mother. Orderic even goes so far as to write that

²¹ van Houts, 293.

²² OV, II, 264.

²³ This marriage is described by Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*, *Adom von Bremen Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte*, edited by B. Schmeidler, *MGH Scriptores* (Hannover and Leipzig, 1917), 114-5.

William “harshly laid low the kinsman of his father and he honorably exalted the humble family of his mother.”²⁴

William the Conqueror had a Christian marriage to Matilda of Flanders and does not appear to have had a concubine, certainly not one that behaved like a wife; there is one instance, however, of rumors of adultery. According to William of Malmesbury, “besides his other virtues, William had such a respect for chastity, especially in early manhood, that public gossip told of his impotence.”²⁵ The chronicler dismisses such gossip although he does report it here and adds: “There are scandal-mongers who maintain that he abandoned his early continence when royal power came to him, and wallowed in the embraces of a priest’s daughter, whom Matilda sent packing after having her hamstrung by one of her vassals.”²⁶

This piece of gossip raises a few interesting issues. Although William of Malmesbury writes, “to believe this of so great a king I regard as lunacy,”²⁷ the rumor is very detailed, and the chronicler does not seem to feel guilt over including it here. Regardless of its truth, William of Malmesbury describes how Matilda saw the concubine as a threat and acted against the poor girl. He does not express wonder, or rather horror, at Matilda’s reaction. William of Malmesbury goes on to stress that William and Matilda were a very happy and affectionate couple, a detail meant to counteract the salacious gossip.

²⁴ *GND*, II, 128. There are a few examples of this behavior in the chronicles: *GND*, II, 128; *WP*, 32; and *OV*, IV, 98.

²⁵ *GRA*, 500.

²⁶ *GRA*, 500-2.

²⁷ *GRA*, 502.

Even if William the Conqueror remained completely faithful to Matilda, their sons were all known for taking up with concubines. As a young man, Robert Curthose “fell in love with a beautiful concubine.”²⁸ Robert thought the matter over and later married Sibyl of Conversano. Once again, he chose a more legitimate wife over the less legitimate concubine. The unnamed woman, however, reappeared with Robert’s two young sons trailing behind her.

She brought up the children carefully for a long time, and when they were grown she presented the duke in Normandy with his two sons and reminded him of many familiar proofs of their close intimacy in his youth. Because he saw some truth in this, but hesitated to recognize the boys as his, the mother publicly carried the red-hot iron and, escaping without the least burn, proved that she had conceived by the king’s son.²⁹

Robert Curthose treats this concubine with less respect than the other dukes of Normandy had treated theirs. This marks an interesting departure and may point to a change in the status of concubines and their illegitimate offspring as the practice of primogeniture continued to develop. Robert Curthose had to recognize the sons as his own. Neither one outlived their father, so it is impossible to tell if anyone would have challenged their ability to inherit Normandy.

Robert Curthose had a brief marriage to Sibyl of Conversano. She died shortly after the birth of their son, William Clito, who also predeceased his father. Robert also had at least one other concubine by whom he had a daughter. Robert Curthose married this daughter to Helias of Saint-Saëns. This was a prestigious and political marriage that Orderic claims occurred “in order to secure his [Normandy’s] boundaries.”³⁰

²⁸ OV, V, 282.

²⁹ OV, V, 282. There is a similar case in which William of Malmesbury claims that a woman, Gunhilda, the wife of Holy Roman Emperor Henry III, used the ordeal in order to prove her chastity. See *GRA*, 338.

³⁰ OV, IV, 182. Orderic elsewhere describes this unnamed daughter and her marriage: OV, VI, 92

Orderic castigates Robert's brother, William Rufus, in several passages for his lustful behavior despite a general lack of evidence of concubines or wives. Orderic claims that William Rufus, "never had a lawful wife but gave himself up insatiably to obscene fornications and repeated adulteries. Stained with his sins, he set a culpable example of shameful debauchery to his subjects."³¹ Despite this, modern historians have not identified a single child belonging to William Rufus. Orderic makes it seem as if orgies were commonplace and clearly blamed Rufus for leading his flock astray. Elsewhere, Orderic divulges, "during the reign of William Rufus, adultery openly defiled the marriage bed and divine law was neglected."³² Nearly all of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers are hard on William Rufus as he had a strained relationship with the leadership of the church. Despite this, Orderic is the only one to accuse him of concubines and orgies at court.

The Special Case of Henry I of England

Henry I had more concubines and illegitimate children than any other man described by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, and the numerous accounts of his relationships give a full picture of the roles of concubines in society. Even within the chronicles, there are a variety of attitudes towards his wandering eye. Henry I also used concubinage and illegitimate children to create relationships with other powerful groups. For all of these reasons, the discussion of Henry's relationships with women deserves a more thorough investigation.

³¹ OV, V, 202.

³² OV, IV, 146.

Most of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, at one time or another, felt the need to speak out against Henry and his womanizing ways. Orderic writes, “[Henry I] gave way too easily to the sin of lust; from boyhood to old age he was sinfully enslaved by this vice and had many sons and daughters by his mistresses.”³³ The author of the *Gesta Stephani* implies that wherever the king went, the kingdom was sure to follow: “as he [Henry I] gave way to adulterous allurements himself, so he winked at such practices in others.”³⁴

Henry I did have a single defender, William of Malmesbury, who dedicated several of his works to Robert of Gloucester, the illegitimate son of Henry I. According to William,

All of his life he was completely free from fleshly lusts, indulging in the embraces of the female sex (as I have heard from those who know) from love of begetting children and not to gratify his passions; for he thought it beneath his dignity to comply with extraneous gratification, unless the royal seed could fulfill its natural purpose; employing his bodily functions as their master, not obeying his lust as its slave.³⁵

While the words of William of Malmesbury were meant to convince the reader, the above passage only serves to reinforce that Henry I had an unusual number of concubines and illegitimate children. Henry I most likely had twenty-four illegitimate children, a remarkable number.³⁶

³³ OV, VI, 98.

³⁴ GS, 17.

³⁵ The passage is part of a longer description of the character of Henry I and was meant to show that the king was moderate in all things. GRA, 744.

³⁶ *Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom*, new edition revised and edited by Vicary Gibbs, 13 volumes in 14 (London, 1910-59), 11, app, 112-20. Another few have been described elsewhere, see: G W S Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 36 note 2 and C Warren Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates, and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 283-4. Hollister describes some of the circumstances surrounding the concubines and children. C Warren Hollister, *Henry I*, edited and completed by Amanda Clark Frost (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 41-5.

As the passage in William of Malmesbury states, Henry I did use his illegitimate children to his political advantage, frequently creating marriage alliances throughout England, France and Scotland. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe a number of these matches: Matilda was married to Conan III of Brittany “as a bond between them [Conan and Henry I].”³⁷ Another Matilda was married to Rotrou, count of Perche, after Henry “learned of Rotrou’s valor.”³⁸ Henry also “built up his [Rotrou’s] power by greatly augmenting his estates and wealth in England.”³⁹ “Henry bound his [King Edgar’s] successor Alexander by ties of relationship, giving him his own illegitimate daughter [Sibyl] in marriage.”⁴⁰ Constance was married off to Roscelin, viscomte of Maine.⁴¹ As was described above, “Henry gave Eustace of Breteuil his daughter, Juliana, in marriage and promised Eustace help against his enemies”⁴² All of these men loyally served Henry.

Henry I also had an illegitimate son, Robert, whom he made earl of Gloucester, even though the growing custom of primogeniture and the sheer number of illegitimate sons seemed to keep him from inheriting the crown. Robert was rewarded more than some of his other illegitimate children. When Henry I died, many of his nobles were uncomfortable with his only legitimate daughter, Matilda, inheriting since her husband had been at war with her father at the time of his death. Some of those same nobles even pressed Robert to become the next king.⁴³

³⁷ OV, II, 352. Their marriage is described elsewhere: OV, VI, 180 and *GND*, II, 250.

³⁸ OV, VI, 398. Their marriage is mentioned elsewhere: OV, VI, 40 and 304.

³⁹ OV, VI, 398.

⁴⁰ *GRA*, 724. The information about her marriage is repeated, and her name is given by Orderic. OV, IV, 274

⁴¹ *GND*, II, 250. Constance is alternately called Matilda. OV, VI, 444, note 3.

⁴² OV, VI, 40. Juliana and her husband did briefly rebel against Henry I for reasons described above. See discussion of Juliana of Breteuil above Chapter 3.

⁴³ According to the author, Robert told the unnamed nobles that he would not go against his half-sister, the Empress Matilda. GS, 8.

With examples such as these Norman and Anglo-Norman rulers, is it any wonder that other members of the nobility had concubines? Not only did the Normans have such a tradition, but so did the rulers of Anglo-Saxon England. In the eighth century, King Cynewulf of Mercia was killed while visiting his concubine.⁴⁴ Cynewulf was literally caught with his pants down. While the Anglo-Norman authors imply here that women were distracting, none of the authors attack her or criticize Cynewulf for having a concubine.

Upon his father's death, Harold Harefoot, the illegitimate son of Cnut, claimed the throne of England. Like the Normans before him, Cnut appears to have had a marriage by Danish custom with Ælfgifu of Northampton, a marriage that produced both Harold Harefoot as well as Swein.⁴⁵ Despite being illegitimate, Harold became king of England, and Swein inherited Norway. The authors of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* did challenge the parentage of Harold Harefoot.⁴⁶ This represents a rare instance in which the chroniclers attack the legitimacy of children of a Danish marriage.

King Edgar, who ruled in the late tenth century, forced two different women into concubinage. "Hearing of the beauty of a nun under vows, he removed her by violence from her convent, and having done so violated her, and forced her more than once to sleep with him."⁴⁷ According to William of Malmesbury, when St Dunstan heard of the outrage he ordered Edgar to allow her to return to the nunnery and to do seven years of

⁴⁴ ASC, A and E, 755 recte 757. The story is also repeated by Henry of Huntingdon. HH, 252.

⁴⁵ GND, II, 104.

⁴⁶ ASC [C,D and E], 1035

⁴⁷ GRA, 258. This is propaganda meant to stress the sainthood of Dunstan by attacking Edgar.

penance.⁴⁸ Despite this, the nun, Wulfthrytha, bore Edgar a daughter, Eadgyth, who was later abbess at Barking.⁴⁹

Afterwards, Edgar was smitten by the beautiful daughter of a nobleman and he sent for her to be brought to him. “The girl’s mother disdained to have her daughter treated as a concubine.”⁵⁰ Consequently, the mother sent her slave girl instead of her daughter. In the morning Edgar figured out the ruse, and the girl begged for her freedom, saying, “one who had shared the king’s pleasure should groan no longer under the command of cruel masters.”⁵¹ Edgar took pity on her, and “he raised her to a position of high honour, and loved her and her only, remaining faithful to her alone as his bedfellow until he took Ordgar’s daughter Ælfthryth as his lawful wife.”⁵² While the servant girl was treated like a queen for a while, Edgar made another noblewoman his wife and true queen.

Concubines and Churchmen

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently broached the topic of married priests and other clergymen, whether they were describing concubines or announcing the various synods that outlawed marriages. Before the tenth century, many priests were married. Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a number of councils moved to forbid the clergy from marrying.⁵³ Despite the repeated pronouncements, there were examples of

⁴⁸ *GRA*, 258.

⁴⁹ *GRA*, 260.

⁵⁰ *GRA*, 258.

⁵¹ *GRA*, 258-60.

⁵² *GRA*, 260.

⁵³ The Council of Lisieux (1064): *OV*, III, 120 and 290. Council of Rouen (1072): *OV*, II, 288. Council of Lillebonne (1080): *OV*, III, 26. Council of Clermont (c 1094): *OV*, V, 12-14. Synod at London (1102): Eadmer, 141-4. Council of London (1108): *JW*, III, 114-6. Synod at Rouen (1119): *OV*, VI, 290-4. London Synod (1125): *JW*, III, 160-4. Legatine Council at Westminster (1127): *JW*, III, 168. The Synod of Rouen

either married clergy or churchmen having relationships with women throughout the period described by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers.

According to Orderic, Robert, archbishop of Rouen, “in his capacity as count [of Évreux], took a wife, Herleve and had by her three sons, Richard, Ralph, and William, amongst whom he distributed the county of Évreux and his other wide honors according to secular laws.”⁵⁴ Since Robert was a son of Richard I and Gunnor, there seemed few willing to challenge Herleve’s position as wife or the legitimacy of his children. “At length in old age, mindful of the error of his ways, he grew penitent and greatly feared the consequences of his sins which were many and grievous.”⁵⁵ Over the course of his life, numerous synods and councils, as noted above, had outlawed the marriage of clerics and bishops, ordering them to put aside their wives. As a sort of penance, Robert gave alms and built the foundations of St Mary’s Cathedral in Rouen. He also granted numerous gifts to other monasteries and churches throughout Normandy.⁵⁶

Even as time went on and more pronouncements were made, married clergy remained a problem. If everyone had accepted the first decrees, they would not have needed to hold meeting after meeting to discuss the same age-old problem. Orderic describes the concubine who bore Robert Curthose’s two illegitimate sons as “the beautiful concubine of an old priest.”⁵⁷ During the Anarchy of Stephen’s reign in

(1128): OV, VI, 388. These all represent local or regional pronouncements. The Second Lateran Council in April 1139 was the earliest ecumenical council to ban clerical marriage.

⁵⁴ OV, III, 84.

⁵⁵ OV, III, 84.

⁵⁶ OV, III, 84.

⁵⁷ OV, V, 282.

England, Roger, bishop of Salisbury, had a concubine, possibly named Matilda, by whom he had a son, Roger Le Poer.⁵⁸

The Dangers of Being a Concubine

Families viewed concubines as a threat similar to the instances described above in which wives had been repudiated.⁵⁹ Once again, the issue was not simply that their sisters or daughters were not being respected, but also that the marriage and the kinship ties it represented should not be broken or sullied. Illegitimate offspring could also take away from legitimate ones. Hugh of Chester came to the aid of his sister, Helisende: “At that time [around 1100] William of Eu was publicly found guilty of treason, and the king [Henry I] had him blinded and castrated. This sentence was carried out at the instigation of Hugh, earl of Chester, whose sister he had married; he had not remained faithful to her, but, neglecting her, had had three children by a concubine.”⁶⁰

There are other accounts of William of Eu’s punishment although Orderic is the only one to link the rebellion and its repercussions with William’s behavior towards Helisende.⁶¹ While it is clear that William was being punished for treason not adultery, Orderic is careful to include Hugh’s motive for attacking William. The marriage ties had been damaged, and not only did Hugh not try to protect William, deflecting wrath away from his own extended family, but Hugh turned on his sister’s cheating husband.

⁵⁸ OV, VI, 532. Chibnall notes that her name, Matilda of Ramsbury, was inserted into the text later. Her name only appears in manuscripts D and L, and is not given by any other Anglo-Norman chronicler. OV, VI, 532-3, note 2.

⁵⁹ For this discussion, see below Chapter 4.

⁶⁰ OV, IV, 284. Chibnall’s note 5 discusses the dating of the incident.

⁶¹ Chibnall provides the name for the countess of Eu who may also appear in Guibert of Nogent’s writings at a later date. OV, IV, 284 and note 5.

Orderic's description is also a rare instance in which the chroniclers conclude that concubinage is neglect.

Orderic, and other Anglo-Normans, would have found William of Eu's adultery distasteful even if they would not outright condemn him. Orderic also implies that the length of William's relationship with this concubine was just as injurious as the fact that there was an adulterous relationship at all. He carefully notes that there were three children with the concubine, but does not mention any legitimate children that Hugh had had with Helisende. Once again, there is an implication that William was not working to produce heirs with Helisende, and therefore, his actions were all the more damaging to Helisende and the family into which she had been born. While it is not even hinted at in the chronicles, a society that was harsh on William would have been harsher on his concubine.

Being a concubine also left women with no security or support for the future. There is little evidence of men giving support to concubines especially once the relationship had ended. Men appear to have had a great deal of latitude and responded very differently to concubines. Robert of Normandy allowed Herleve, the mother of his heir, to marry Herluin of Conteville, an important nobleman. Beyond this marriage, William the Conqueror also gave lands and titles to Herluin and William's half-siblings.⁶² On the other hand, Robert Curthose tried to deny his previous relationship with a concubine and even paternity of their sons. It was only once she had gone through the ordeal of the hot iron that he supported the children.⁶³

⁶² OV, IV, 98.

⁶³ OV, V, 282.

Concubines Behaving as Wives

Concubines fulfilled the needs of the men with whom they had relationships much like wives fulfilled the needs of their husbands. As has been described above, the line between wife and concubine could be blurred. Both wives and concubines bore children including heirs. They provided more than just sex and companionship. As described above, the concubines of the Norman rulers behaved like countesses. Gunnor was a concubine first and a Christian wife decades later. The marriage was a formality that certainly did not change Gunnor's behavior.

This idea extended beyond the Norman rulers. Roger of Salisbury's concubine, Matilda of Ramsbury, bore him a son. Later, during the Anarchy of Stephen's reign, Matilda even held the castle of Devizes from Stephen after the king had Roger arrested. She negotiated with Stephen's supporters to surrender the castle to save the life of her son with Roger.⁶⁴

Concubines and illegitimate children were common, and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe these women even if the authors are less precise on the nature of their relationships with men. On one end of the spectrum, concubines could simply provide extramarital sex but often the Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe concubines who behave like wives that were not wives. While their futures were less secure, some found reward and promoted themselves and their children. Even though the authors praised chastity, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers rarely railed against either concubines or the men who had extra-marital relationships.

⁶⁴ OV, VI, 534.

Chapter 6: Mothers and Stepmothers: Protection and Threat

Anglo-Norman chroniclers often focus on women as mothers producing children, especially heirs, and raising these children. Mothers oversaw the education of their children and gave them advice, whether they were young or were adults. Mothers frequently tried to put their children on an advantageous path and keep them there. If their husbands died leaving small children behind, widows became regents, caring for the lands until their children reached majority. While the Anglo-Norman chroniclers praise mothers, they also frequently describe archetypal evil stepmothers.

Producing children was an ever present part of the life of these secular women, and was one of the most described aspects of their lives. Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently describe the marriage of a couple and then immediately give the important statistics of the children produced by the marriage. In typical fashion, Orderic Vitalis writes: “Earl Roger had by his first wife [Mabel of Bellême] five sons and four daughters.”¹ Orderic then continues naming each of their children, his second wife, Adelais, and their child together, Evrard.²

¹ Orderic goes on to list the children: Robert of Bellême, Hugh of Montgomery, Roger of Poitou, Philip, Arnulf, Emma, abbess of Almenèches, Matilda, wife of Robert of Mortain, Mabel, wife of Hugh of Châteauneuf, and Sibyl, wife of Robert fitz Hamon. These are only the children who lived to adulthood, and it is unclear how old Mabel was when she died. OV, III, 138.

² OV, III, 138.

Chroniclers frequently stress the fecundity of various women. Orderic Vitalis praises Avice of Auffay's ability to produce so many children even if most died in infancy.³ Richard of Fresnel "boasted of eight sons" which he had by Emma.⁴ Robert of Beaumont and his brother Henry were "blessed with noble and fruitful wives."⁵ Baldwin V of Flanders "had by his wife Adela a numerous progeny of gifted sons and daughters."⁶ Orderic then lists five sons and two daughters saying, "scholars could fill many volumes with the story of their deeds and merits."⁷ Hugh of Bayeux had a "numerous and promising family"⁸ with his wife Adeliza. The couple had five sons and five daughters.⁹

Much of these women's lives was spent bearing children. Avice of Auffay was married for fifteen years, and in that time, she produced twelve children.¹⁰ These appear to be all single births, thus much of her married life was spent pregnant. Isabel of Vermandois had eleven children by two husbands.¹¹ The first eight children were born in under twenty years.¹² Richard of Coulances and his wife Adela had fifteen adult

³ OV, III, 256-8.

⁴ OV, VI, 218.

⁵ OV, IV, 302.

⁶ OV, II, 280. This included Matilda of Flanders who was born around 1030.

⁷ OV, II, 280.

⁸ OV, IV, 230.

⁹ Orderic lists their children: Robert, William, Hugh, Ivo, Aubrey, Adelina, Hawise, Rohais, Matilda, and Agnes. OV, IV, 230. The children were born in the last decades of the twelfth century.

¹⁰ OV, III, 256-8. The children were born in the early years of the twelfth century.

¹¹ By her first husband, Robert of Meulan she had the twins, Waleran of Meulan and Robert of Leicester, as well as Hugh le Poer, Adelina, two Isabel's, and two unnamed daughters. By her second husband, William II of Warenne, she had William III, Gundreda, and Ada. OV, VI, 20 and *GND*, II, 278. The second marriage may have produced another 2 children. See note 5, *GND*, II, 278. The children were born in the early decades of the twelfth century.

¹² Isabel of Vermandois and Robert of Meulan were married around 1096. It is unclear when Isabel left Robert, but it was before his death in 1118. See note 39, *HH*, 598.

children.¹³ Giroie and Gisela of Montfort had seven sons and four daughters who lived to adulthood.¹⁴ There are many other examples of large families.

For wide and varied reasons, it is impossible to tell the average number of children produced in these families. While it is clear there was potential for many children, infant mortality was a serious issue. Even though Avise of Auffay had twelve children, it appears that only four lived to adulthood.¹⁵ There are many families that appear to have produced only a few children, but many times it can be assumed that more children were not only born to the family but lived to adulthood; the chroniclers simply did not know their names or did not find it important to include them. Chroniclers frequently use the stock phrase “many sons and daughters” when glossing over the information that would allow historians to be more precise. Furthermore, higher ranking families have their children named again and again while lower ranking families did not always merit a full listing. Even high profile couples can leave incomplete information; it is debatable how many daughters William the Conqueror had.¹⁶ Obviously, some marriages were short-lived or problematic, and therefore produced few offspring.

While Anglo-Norman chroniclers were less likely to enumerate children who died, these stillbirths or children who died young are occasionally described. King Edwin’s “children by Queen Æthelburh were baptized, of whom two died while still

¹³ Their children include: Hugh, Geoffrey, Richard, John, Robert, Odo, Henry, Ivo, Ralph, William, Henry, Rohais, Adela, Matilda, and Avise. OV, III, 230. The children were born within the first few decades of the twelfth century.

¹⁴ Their children include: Arnold, William, Fulk, Ralph “Ill-Tonsured,” Robert, Hugh, Giroie, Heremburga, Hawise, Emma, and Adela. OV, II, 22 and *GND*, II, 110. The two sources agree on the children’s names but put them in different order. The children were born in the early decades of the eleventh century.

¹⁵ OV, III, 258

¹⁶ See below Appendix I for a full discussion of these daughters.

wearing the chrisom and were buried at York.”¹⁷ The future King Stephen of England and his wife, Matilda of Boulogne, founded the hospital of St Katherine in London in honor of two of their children, Baldwin and Matilda, who had died while still very young.¹⁸ Matilda later made endowments to the hospital so that the nuns would recite prayers for the souls of the two.¹⁹

Childbirth was very dangerous for mothers even with the help of midwives and nurses. Orderic relates how the unnamed wife of Frederick, count of Étampes, died in childbirth. When Waleran of Meulan had captured Frederick, his wife rode to Paris to seek an audience with King Louis VI, hoping to plea for Frederick’s freedom. “On the way back, being pregnant, she suffered an injury from riding and shortly afterwards died in a difficult childbirth.”²⁰ Orderic does not give any further information although he comments on Frederick’s position, writing: “Earthly joys soon pass and vanish in a moment.”²¹

Chibnall argues that the Empress Matilda also fell ill after giving birth to her second son Geoffrey in 1134.²² This was the serious illness described above that nearly cost Matilda her life.²³ In response to the seriousness of her illness, the Empress Matilda made arrangements for her burial. She truly believed that she was going to die. The delivery of her third son, William, in 1136, went far more smoothly. Within two months

¹⁷ HH, 174.

¹⁸ RRAN, III, #512.

¹⁹ Strickland, 128.

²⁰ OV, VI, 476.

²¹ This is simply a portion of a longer passage in which Orderic waxes poetic on the transient nature of good fortune. OV, VI, 476.

²² Marjorie Chibnall, “The Empress Matilda and Her Sons” in *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (NY: Garland Publishing, 1996), 281.

²³ See above Chapter 3 and GND, II, 246.

of his birth, the Empress Matilda led a force into Normandy to relieve her besieged husband.²⁴

A few years into their marriage, Sibyl of Conversano, the wife of Robert Curthose, “fell sick and died, having been misled (so the story goes) by the advice of a midwife, who had told her when she was in childbed to restrain the superabundant flow of milk by very tight lacing of her breasts.”²⁵ According to Kimberly LoPrete, “references to physicians in her entourage and to her patronage of medical practitioners suggest that [Adela of Blois], like her sister-in-law Matilda II of England, would have been attended by doctors at childbirth.”²⁶ While there is little evidence in the Anglo-Norman chronicles, noblewomen, particularly royal women, appear to have had the help of midwives and physicians during childbirth.

There are brief mentions of wet-nurses in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. Orderic writes that “King David’s son was murdered while suckling in his nurse’s arms.”²⁷ William of Malmesbury identified the wife of King Alfred’s steward as a wet-nurse to the king’s sons.²⁸ Despite this meager evidence, it can be assumed that mothers in royal families and maybe even of the upper nobility had the aid of wet-nurses in the eleventh and twelfth century.²⁹

²⁴ Chibnall, “The Empress Matilda and Her Sons,” 283.

²⁵ *GRA*, 704.

²⁶ Kimberly A. LoPrete, “Adela of Blois as Mother and Countess” in *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (NY: Garland Publishing, 1996), 317.

²⁷ Despite his violent death and his being a member of the royal family, there is no further evidence of this son or his murder other than this brief passage. *OV*, IV, 276.

²⁸ *GRA*, 224

²⁹ There is some charter evidence for 13th century wet-nurses. See Johns, 73 and note 118. Also see Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, revised edition (London: Routledge, 2003), 140.

Children represented the interests of both parents and were the ultimate symbol of a successful union. Marriages tied together two families, but this tie was not permanent until a child was born, uniting the claims of both the families of the mother and father. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently stressed the lineage of mothers along with that of fathers. There are even numerous instances in which the mother's lineage is stressed above or instead of the father's.

[Matilda of Flanders'] wise and blessed mother [Adela Capet] had nurtured in her daughter a lineage many times greater even than her paternal inheritance. If you ask about her mother's lineage, you should know that her mother's father was Robert, king of Gaul, who, son and grandson of kings, was himself progenitor and whose praise for his piety and wise rule of the kingdom will be sung all over the world.³⁰

Adela Capet's lineage is stressed here in order to tie Flanders back to the kings of France, and by proxy, Matilda of Flanders' to tie William the Conqueror back to the kings of France. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers stressed ties to royalty or to specific pieces of land time and again.

Sibyl, the daughter of Robert of Gloucester, had her lineage delineated in order to trace land acquisition. Robert fitz Hamon married Sibyl, "granddaughter through Mabel, Roger's daughter, of Roger of Montgomery, father of Robert of Bellême, who brought with her an inheritance by right in Normandy and in England."³¹ Sibyl claimed lands through both her parents, but here Robert of Torigni stresses the lands Sibyl claimed through her mother's line.

In another passage, Robert of Torigni writes that "Roger [of Bellême] was the son of one of Countess Gunnor's nieces and therefore held immense possessions in different

³⁰ WP, 32

³¹ GND, II, 248.

parts of Normandy.³² As has been traced by Eleanor Searle, Gunnor's family profited extensively from their association with the dukes of Normandy.³³ Here Robert of Torigni draws attention to that connection both because of the importance of ties to the Norman dukes as well as because of the lands claimed through his mother. Similarly, William of Malmesbury records the ties between the East Saxons and Kent: "Saerberht, king of the East Saxons and son of Ricula, Æthelberht's sister."³⁴

Several men were listed only as sons of women without even a hint of their fathers' identities. In each of these cases, land claims were not an issue. William of Poitiers identifies William of Arques as "the offspring of Papia"³⁵ even though his father was Richard II of Normandy. Interestingly enough, Orderic identifies Richard II exclusively as a son of Gunnor seven times.³⁶ In another instance, Richard II was the son of Richard and Gunnor.³⁷ Orderic lists a knight, "Stephen the son of Richelda"³⁸ among a group of crusaders. It is unclear why Orderic chose to identify him in this manner or who the knight's father was. The same is true for "Savaric, son of Cana."³⁹

Mothers as educators and advisors

Mothers were frequently charged with both the moral and the formal education of their children. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the evidence for the education of sons and daughters remains scarce. Despite this, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers do describe

³² *GND*, II, 264-6. Van Houts notes that this may be Joscelina, the daughter of Wevia, Gunnor's sister. For more information, see *GND*, II, 266, note 1.

³³ See Eleanor Searle, *Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

³⁴ *GPA*, 92.

³⁵ *WP*, 40.

³⁶ *OV*, II, 2, 8 (twice on same page), and 38; *OV*, III, 304; *OV*, V, 26; *OV*, VI, 166.

³⁷ *OV*, III, 84.

³⁸ *OV*, V, 326.

³⁹ *OV*, IV, 230. Here historians have at least identified a father, Ralph of Beaumont. *OV*, IV, 230, note 5 and *OV*, VI, 32-3, note 2.

mothers educating their children or hiring tutors. Education included both a formal education in letters as well as morals. Children sought advice from their mothers even as adults.

William of Malmesbury describes an Anglo-Saxon tradition of mothers educating their children. During the ninth century, Osburh, the wife of Æthelwulf, king of Kent and Wessex, taught her children to read, especially the future king Alfred. “This was the more surprising, as at the age of twelve he still had no education; but his affectionate mother then found a ruse to encourage him: he should have the book she held in her hand as a present, if he learnt it quickly. So he began to learn reading as a game, and soaked it up like a sponge.”⁴⁰ This book was probably something like an alphabet psalter that was meant to give children a solid foundation in both reading as well as the psalms giving moral instruction. William of Malmesbury gives a long list of the books that Alfred read as well as works he either attempted to translate or wished to translate. Because Alfred, as king, would not allow anyone to be illiterate in his court,⁴¹ it can be assumed that even in the ninth century much of the nobility were literate, including women.

The passages about mothers raising children can be rather vague. “Constance, the highly born daughter of King Philip of France, bore a son to Bohemond and brought him up carefully at Taranto in Italy, looking after him as a mother should until he reached the age of puberty.”⁴² Frustratingly, Orderic does not explain how to bring up a child “carefully” or “as a mother should.” For much of this time, Bohemond was fighting in the

⁴⁰ *GRA*, 192.

⁴¹ *GRA*, 192-4.

⁴² *OV*, VI, 132.

Holy Land. If he was raised in Italy, then Constance was raising him without much involvement from Bohemond.

Margaret of Scotland also tried to rear her small children, teaching them the concepts needed to be morally responsible adults. “‘Because of the religious zeal of their mother, the children’s manners were far better than those of other children who were much older than they were.’ Margaret had her children brought to her ‘very often’ and taught them the precepts of the Christian faith ‘using words suitable to their age and understanding.’”⁴³ Despite her best intentions, Margaret’s death in 1093, while many of her children were still so young, certainly left them with an incomplete education. She gave instructions before her death, however, in which “she sent her two daughters, Edith [Matilda] and Mary, to her sister Christina, who was a nun at Romsey Abbey, to be brought up and taught sound doctrine.”⁴⁴

Other mothers also oversaw the education of their children. Adela of Blois hired tutors for the education of her children, sons and daughters. While little else is known about them, Adela hired at least three tutors for the education of her children: Burdinus, Geoffrey, a monk of St Évrour, and William Normandus.⁴⁵ LoPrete also argues that “‘formal instruction in Latin by a learned tutor could be supplemented by vernacular oral

⁴³ Chibnall is quoting a passage from the *Vita Margaretae*, chap. 1, p. 325d, para. 9. Marjorie Chibnall, “The Empress Matilda and Her Sons” in *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (NY: Garland Publishing, 1996), 302. The *Vita Margaretae* is heavily damaged but can be found in the British Library, Cotton Tiberius D iii.

⁴⁴ OV, IV, 272.

⁴⁵ Kimberly A. LoPrete, “Adela of Blois as Mother and Countess” in *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (NY: Garland Publishing, 1996), 318-9.

teaching from household clerics, jongleurs, or Adela herself.”⁴⁶ A children’s education was a priority for mothers.

Mothers as Regents

Frequently, mothers had to act as regents overseeing the lands that would one day be the birthright of young or absent sons. As discussed above, Beatrice oversaw the administration of the county of Mortagne after the death of her husband. While her son was not a child, he was absent fighting in the First Crusade.⁴⁷ There are many other examples alluded to by the chroniclers although details were rarer. A few of these have been detailed below.

When Robert II died in 1111, he left a young son, Baldwin VII, as heir of Flanders. “Baldwin succeeded his father and for a number of years governed his father’s principality with his mother, Clementia.”⁴⁸ The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently wrote as if young boys were ruling alongside their mothers even if these boys were far too young. Once their father died, the lands automatically fell into the hands of these boys regardless of age. All of these boys remained in wardship of some kind until they attained their majority. Frequently mothers acted as regents although it was not automatic. It is unclear when Baldwin was born or what age he might have been when his father died.

While little is known about the exact nature of this regency, Orderic mentions the regency in another part of his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. During the Council of Rheims in 1118, “a letter of Clementia, the Pope’s sister, on behalf of her son Baldwin, count of

⁴⁶ “Adela of Blois as Mother and Countess,” 319.

⁴⁷ OV, VI, 394, and see above Chapter 6.

⁴⁸ OV, VI, 162.

Flanders was read out.”⁴⁹ Clementia was the daughter of William, count of Burgundy, and therefore, the sister of Pope Calixtus II.⁵⁰ There is no further information about what the letter may have contained or what matters may have needed the attention of either the Church or the pope, personally, as uncle of the young Baldwin VII. Whatever issue may have been at hand, it mattered little. Baldwin died the following year, and Clementia’s nephew Charles the Good became count.

Richilda of Hainault held Flanders for her young sons after the death of Baldwin VI in 1070. In this case, things were more complicated and in many ways more challenging than the above example. Baldwin VI had left the boys, Arnoul and Baldwin, in the charge of not only Richilda but of Philip I of France, who was also his first cousin, and William fitz Osbern. There was a real desire by nearly every party to take Flanders away from them: the boys’ uncle, Robert the Frisian had the strongest claim to Flanders as another son of Baldwin V. Primogeniture was not as strong in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as it was later; that Arnoul should have Flanders was not a foregone conclusion. Indeed, Robert eventually did take Flanders from the boys. William fitz Osbern hoped to induce Richilda to marry him and thus attain control of the county.⁵¹ Philip I would have hoped to extend more of his control over Flanders by keeping the boys in wardship although in the end he did not exert himself there. It was an unusual step for Baldwin VI to give wardship of his sons to such a large and disparate group. It appears that he anticipated problems and hoped to balance the various groups against each other to protect his sons’ interests.

⁴⁹ OV, VI, 274.

⁵⁰ OV, VI, 162, note 3.

⁵¹ William of Malmesbury felt that love, not land lust, motivated William fitz Osbern. For a full discussion of this point, see above Chapter 3.

Richilda tried unsuccessfully to keep each of these parties at bay. To raise an army, Richilda increased taxation in her lands. The action backfired causing a rebellion that allowed each of the players an easy excuse to intervene. William of Malmesbury blames Richilda and criticizes her ability as regent: “she, with a woman’s ambition, was forming plans beyond her sex, and by exacting new taxes from the people of the provinces she roused them to revolt.”⁵² The rebels called for Robert the Frisian to become count. When William fitz Osbern marched his forces into Flanders in an effort to quell the rebellion, Robert’s forces slew both William and Arnoul in an ambush. Robert’s accession as count of Flanders was paved by the death of these two and the support of the Flemish people.⁵³

In the above quote, William of Malmesbury is brutal in his assessment of Richilda’s role in causing the revolt, stressing twice in a single sentence her gender and not so subtly saying that she had overstepped her boundaries as a woman. The true crime, however, was more likely the raising of new taxes and not simply being a woman. Even men who raised new taxes on their lands were met with threats of revolt and criticism from the Anglo-Norman chroniclers.⁵⁴ She did not overstep her boundaries as regent, but rather William of Malmesbury feels that innovation in the midst of regency and particularly in such a tenuous position was folly. This was especially true for a woman relying on military help from other men, Philip I and William fitz Osbern. William of Malmesbury also omits or ignores the strong possibility that Robert the Frisian had been

⁵² *GRA*, 474.

⁵³ *GRA*, 474.

⁵⁴ John of Worcester describes three nightmares Henry I had in which first knights, then churchmen, and lastly peasants threatened him. A few days later, while crossing the Channel, a great storm threatened Henry’s crossing into England. In response Henry I stopped trying to collect the Danegeld. *JW*, III, 198-203 and for illustrations of the dreams, li-liv.

actively campaigning to become count. The brevity of his account, only a few paragraphs of text, leaves the exact nature of her sin inconclusive.⁵⁵

Richilda had lost control of the county of Flanders, but, as heiress of Hainault, she kept control of her lands for her youngest son. None of the chroniclers commented on her administration of Hainault; however, she must have done a decent job of it since Baldwin was the next count of Hainault and since there was no further flap. There were a number of succession issues over the years, so that Flanders lacked stability through much of this era despite the rapid growth of economic trade.

Richilda was not the only widow who was afraid of losing control of her son's future lands. Adelasia del Vasto was the wife of Roger I of Sicily. When Roger died in 1101, he left a young heir, the future Roger II.

Adelasia realized that she could not rule such great possessions with her little son and in her perplexity gave much thought to what she should do and held many consultations with her close counselors. At length she made a friendly alliance with Robert the Burgundian and gave him her daughter in marriage with the whole principality of Sicily.⁵⁶

By creating a marriage alliance with Robert the Burgundian, Adelasia had guaranteed support for her regency. Like Flanders above, Sicily was unstable at the time of the count's death. The need for outside support was very real. According to Chibnall, Orderic overstates the importance of Robert the Burgundian in Sicily, and it is most likely that Adelasia was aided by her brother, Henry, and not Robert the Burgundian.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *GRA*, 474. None of the other Anglo-Norman chroniclers discuss the regency, although more can be reconstructed from French sources. See Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good, count of Flanders*, translated by James Bruce Ross (New York: Columbia Press, 1960).

⁵⁶ *OV*, VI, 428.

⁵⁷ G A Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest* (New York: Longman, 2000), 177 and 180.

Adelasia maintained control of her son's lands from the death of Roger I in 1101 until her son reached his majority in 1112.⁵⁸ Adelasia appears to have ruled without major incident. Unlike Richilda, Adelasia was successful in raising taxes: Adelasia, "a crafty woman, who was a daughter of Boniface of Liguria, had collected money from all sources after the death of her husband and amassed a huge treasure."⁵⁹

Regencies could occur as a result of absence as well as death. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, Adela of Blois served as regent for her sons both times that Stephen was away on crusade and she continued to rule after Stephen died. Orderic states that "this noble lady governed her husband's county well after his departure on crusade and carefully brought up her young sons to defend the church."⁶⁰ Adela's regency is unique, however. Her eldest son, William, reached his majority shortly after Stephen's death in the Holy Land in 1102. The next eldest, Theobald, gave of age a few years later. Despite having at least two, if not three, sons who had reached majority, Adela retained control of her husband's lands until 1120.⁶¹

Mothers protected the legal rights of their sons even if the father was still alive. When King Stephen had been taken hostage in the Battle of Lincoln, his queen, Matilda of Boulogne, worked to secure the legal rights of her firstborn son, Eustace. The Empress Matilda had captured Stephen as part of her campaign to dethrone the supposed usurper. When Matilda of Boulogne learned of her husband's imprisonment, she sent an envoy to

⁵⁸ OV, VI, 429, note 6. Orderic claims that once Roger II reached his majority, Adelasia poisoned Robert the Burgundian to make sure that Robert did not challenge Roger's rule. See discussion below, Chapter 8, and OV, VI, 432.

⁵⁹ OV, VI, 432. Also see, Hubert Houben, *Roger II of Sicily: A Ruler between East and West*, translated by Graham A. Loud (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ OV, VI, 42.

⁶¹ See discussion of Adela of Blois as widow in Chapter 6.

a church council at Winchester. Her clerk, Christian, delivered a letter to Henry, bishop of Winchester, asking for Stephen's release and Eustace's inheritance.⁶² Despite her efforts, the bishop, her brother-in-law, not only refused her appeals but excommunicated her and her supporters.

Matilda of Boulogne also appealed directly to the empress in London.

the queen, a woman of subtlety and a man's resolution, sent envoys to the countess [the Empress Matilda] and made earnest entreaty 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 [Henry I's] will; but when she was abused in harsh and insulting language and both she and those who had come to ask 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 [into London to directly challenge the empress].⁶³

As a last resort, Matilda of Boulogne used an army made up of mercenaries, Londoners, and some of her husband's supporters to directly challenge the empress.

While Matilda of Boulogne was working for her husband's release, she made it her simultaneous goal to retain control of her son's inheritance. In fact, she appears to have believed that guaranteeing Eustace's inheritance was more tenable than freeing Stephen. She simultaneously looked after her husband's needs as well as her son's.

The Anglo-Norman chronicles describe other mothers, with fewer resources, who served as regents for their children. Agnes, the widow of Walter II Giffard, had a son Walter; "whom she brought up carefully after her husband's death until he attained manhood, and successfully administered his father's honor on his behalf for many

⁶² *GS*, 81.

⁶³ *HN*, 520.

years.”⁶⁴ Similarly, when Fulk V of Anjou went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1120, he left “his lands in the care of his wife [Eremburge] and young sons Geoffrey and Helias.”⁶⁵

Mothers and Their Adult Sons

One of the most important roles for an Anglo-Norman mother was giving wise guidance to her sons, even adult sons. Just as the chroniclers praised wise wives, these skills soon applied to giving guidance to their children. When he reached his majority, Herbert II of Maine “took the advice of his mother Bertha and commended himself and his patrimony to the powerful duke of Normandy [William], giving his sister Margaret in marriage to the duke’s son Robert.”⁶⁶

Mothers could advise their sons in spiritual matters as well as temporal ones. Once again, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers indicate an Anglo-Saxon tradition of mothers advising sons. In the mid-eleventh century, “Wulfstan, fired by their example and particularly by his mother’s persuasion abandoned the world in his youth,” joining the monastery at Worcester.⁶⁷ As the preceding passage refers to, both his parents had been pious to the point that “they took vows of chastity and lived apart from one another, and rejoiced in perfecting their lives in the customs of the holy monastic life.”⁶⁸ Despite the piety of both parents, John of Worcester stresses the role of Wulfstan’s mother and her persuasion in his decision.

⁶⁴ OV, VI, 38.

⁶⁵ OV, VI, 310. It is unclear how long he was in the Holy Land, but he had returned by the time of Eremburge’s death in 1126. OV, IV, 198, note 3. Fulk returned to the Holy Land in 1028 where he married Melisende of Jerusalem. GND, II, 260 and note 4.

⁶⁶ OV, II, 116.

⁶⁷ JW, II, 588.

⁶⁸ JW, II, 588.

As William of Malmesbury relates, when Edgar, the tenth century king of England, had a disturbing dream, he found that he could rely on his mother, Ælfgifu. She eased his worries and helped him solve the dream's message.

His mother urged him to clear his anxious brow and mind; she herself, she said, would take pains to appeal to God, who knows how by His inspiration to make all riddles plain. On this advice, he repressed his anxieties, "and his cares melted into peace of mind," for he knew his mother was a saintly person, to whom God granted many revelations.⁶⁹

The next day, Ælfgifu had solved the riddle of her son's dreams. William of Malmesbury praises the cooperation of the son and his mother: "one of them as he lay awake saw the problem without impediment; the other solved the riddle by directing the eye of prophecy upon it at long range."⁷⁰

Both William of Jumièges and Orderic describe tense interactions between Gytha and her son. In 1066, Gytha attempted to advise her son, Harold Godwineson, but he continually rejected her advice, kicked her, and participated in the Battle of Hastings over her objections with disastrous results.⁷¹ While Orderic Vitalis and the authors of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* feel that Harold died as God's punishment for breaking his oath with Duke William, both also judge Harold for not listening to the council of his friends, brother and mother. In both, the chroniclers build up the drama of the situation by showing Harold as ignoring the advice of his friends, brother, and mother with increasing folly. Ignoring his mother's advice is more foolish than ignoring the advice of his friends or his brother.

⁶⁹ *GRA*, 252.

⁷⁰ *GRA*, 254

⁷¹ *GND*, II, 166-8; *OV*, II, 170-2.

When the young Ralph of Cravent attacked a monk, Guitmond, on the road depriving him of his horses, Guitmond was quick to seek out Ralph's parents, Albert and Aubrée. The instant that the monk told them what had occurred, "Aubrée began to lament and wring her hands and tear her hair, and to weep for her son as though he were already dead."⁷² Aubrée begins a long speech in which she rants and rails against her errant son. "O Ralph, my son, what did you do in your frenzy, when you struck your first blow as a knight against the Almighty?"⁷³ Albert got together the stolen horses, while "this wise mother pleaded for the preservation of her son and endeavored to console the injured monk."⁷⁴ After amends were made, Guitmond left with his horses, "giving thanks to Albert and his wife."⁷⁵

Aubrée tried to raise her son well but some teenage rabble-rousing distressed not only her family but her community. Aubrée worked to put her son back on the right path and to make things right with Guitmond. While her husband was also by her side, Orderic places Aubrée at the center of the action, giving her the long speech and having her appeal to Ralph and the monk. Clearly, this mother served as both an advisor to her son and as an intercessor between her family and the community.

Sometimes mothers even had to act as intercessors between members of their own family. Matilda of Flanders, William the Conqueror's queen, kept the peace between her husband and one of their sons. When King William had a falling out with his rebellious son Robert Curthose, Matilda stood up for her firstborn. Initially, she gave him financial support even though she claimed to back William and indeed stayed at her husband's side

⁷² OV, III, 242.

⁷³ OV, III, 242-4

⁷⁴ OV, III, 244.

⁷⁵ OV, III, 244.

throughout the rebellion.⁷⁶ Eventually, Queen Matilda, along with many of the magnates of Normandy and England, was able to pressure William into making peace with their son. Matilda died shortly thereafter, and the father and his rebellious son once again had a falling out.⁷⁷ According to Chibnall's note on Orderic's account, "the death of Queen Matilda... probably removed the only influence capable of preventing conflict between the two."⁷⁸

The Empress Matilda often intervened between her grown sons, the future Henry II and Geoffrey. When Geoffrey ran afoul and was captured by Theobald IV of Blois, the empress convinced Henry to negotiate his brother's release. After their father's death, Geoffrey rebelled against Henry hoping to gain control of the county of Anjou. Once again, the empress mediated between her two sons. "As long as Matilda lived, all family quarrels were in the end resolved amicably, but within five years of her death this changed drastically."⁷⁹

Mothers could even negotiate for their sons in much the same way that negotiating for husbands was described above. Matilda of Ramsbury negotiated with King Stephen for the life of her son, Roger le Poer, whom Stephen had ordered hung from the gallows in order to send a powerful message to those who were rebelling against the king. Matilda was holding the main castle at Devizes for Roger of Salisbury, whose concubine she was, and so she was in a strong position to negotiate. "She sent an envoy at once to the king and handed over the strong castle she was holding as ransom for his

⁷⁶ OV, III, 102.

⁷⁷ OV, III, 112.

⁷⁸ OV, III, 112, note 4.

⁷⁹ Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Her Sons" in *Medieval Mothering*, edited by John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (NY: Garland Publishing, 1996), 285-6.

enemies.”⁸⁰ The negotiated peace reestablished ties between Stephen and Roger and their respective supporters and therefore had wide-ranging implications beyond saving Roger’s life and lands.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers praised children who were obedient to their mothers. Ansold of Maule “always honoured his pious mother Windesmoth, and never failed to obey this dutiful mother as a faithful son should.”⁸¹ Orderic continues to praise Ansold’s treatment of his mother in describing her death: “happy matron, who was dutifully supported by her faithful son in her husband’s chamber up to old age! And who, with her steadfast comforter before her eyes, died there after receiving the viaticum! From there she was reverently taken for burial by her affectionate son.”⁸²

Adult sons appreciated their mothers and frequently showed that appreciation. Orderic included a charter among the gifts to St Évrout in which William Giroie donated one ploughland to the monastery in honor of his mother, Emma’s, soul.⁸³ William of Breteuil gave one hundred shillings to St Évrout, “for the redemption of the souls of my father and mother, and so that their anniversaries and mine may be celebrated with full ceremonial by all the monks.”⁸⁴ Orderic also praises Robert of Bellême for loving both his parents.⁸⁵

Stepmothers

Stepmothers deserve a separate discussion, because long before the Brothers Grimm, the archetype of the evil stepmother was common in the Anglo-Norman

⁸⁰ OV, VI, 534.

⁸¹ OV, III, 180.

⁸² OV, III, 180.

⁸³ OV, II, 36.

⁸⁴ OV, III, 128-30.

⁸⁵ OV, IV, 158.

chronicles. While stepmothers and fathers must have been fairly common in a society where so many remarried, stepmothers acting charitably towards the members of their extended family were rarely even hinted at by the authors. In sharp contrast, evil stepfathers are rarely mentioned. Evil stepmothers, however, are rather frequent and appear in nearly all of the Anglo-Norman chronicles. In nearly every case, the evil stepmother tries to harm her stepson so that her own son will profit instead and was usually as infamous for her intrigue as for her results.

As before, Anglo-Norman chroniclers wrote about a tradition of evil Anglo-Saxon stepmothers. In the fifth century, Rowena was the second wife of Vortigern, king of the Britons. According to Henry of Huntingdon, Vortigern's son, Vertimerus "was poisoned by his stepmother."⁸⁶ In this case, Rowena's motive for attacking her stepson was not to promote her own son, since the couple had not yet produced children. She was, however, able to promote the family into which she had been born.

Only Henry of Huntingdon brings up Rowena's treachery, but Ælfthryth, the third wife of Edgar, the tenth century king of England, was so evil that her betrayal is in the works of Henry of Huntingdon, William of Malmesbury, and John of Worcester. William of Malmesbury offers the most complete account of her ill deeds.⁸⁷ When Edgar died, his eldest son Edward became king, much to Ælfthryth's distress. Ælfthryth "tried to promote her own son Æthelred, a child barely seven years old, in order that she might

⁸⁶ HH, 576.

⁸⁷ Ælfthryth's story does not appear in Bede or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Henry appears to have borrowed the story from Byrhtferth's *Vita Oswaldi*, as does John of Worcester. William of Malmesbury may have used this source as well but definitely uses another source or sources which have yet to be identified. HH, 324-5, note 186.

reign herself in his name.”⁸⁸ Despite this, her stepson, “Edward treated his brother, who was still a boy, and his stepmother with proper warmth of feeling, keeping the royal title for himself alone, but allowing them all other privileges.”⁸⁹

Ælfthryth was not satisfied being the mother of a prince and remained ill at ease since her status depended on Edward’s continued warmth of feeling. “With a stepmother’s hatred and a viper’s guile, in her anxiety that her son should also enjoy the title of king, [Ælfthryth] laid plots against her stepson’s life, which she carried out.”⁹⁰ Ælfthryth went out to greet Edward as he returned from the hunt. The evil stepmother, “with a woman’s wiles, distracted his attention,”⁹¹ allowing an attendant to stab the king.⁹² Ælfthryth and those around her had Edward buried quietly and without honor. When her young son cried at the death of his half-brother, “having no whip handy, she snatched up the candles and beat the innocent child with them, not stopping until he was nearly dead and even she was weeping over him.”⁹³ A series of miracles highlighted his death and especially God’s judgment on the murderers’ actions.

William of Malmesbury details Ælfthryth’s downfall, relishing every torturous moment. Belatedly, Ælfthryth realized that God himself was against her, and she attempted to have Edward reburied with honor. Another set of miracles prevented her from this small measure of repentance. “At length, though slowly, her unfeeling heart

⁸⁸ *GRA*, 262.

⁸⁹ *GRA*, 264.

⁹⁰ *GRA*, 264.

⁹¹ *GRA*, 264.

⁹² *GRA*, 264. According to Henry of Huntingdon, “It is said that his stepmother, that is the mother of King Æthelred, stabbed him with a dagger while stretching out a cup to him.” HH, 324. John of Worcester does not describe the event itself, just that Ælfthryth was responsible. JW, III, 302.

⁹³ Supposedly, Æthelred remained afraid of candles throughout the rest of his life. *GRA*, 268.

understood the purport of the portents.”⁹⁴ Ælfthryth allowed others to give Edward a royal funeral. “And since an unruly spirit is its own torment, and an anxious mind suffers its own evil genius even in the present world, Ælfthryth fell from her pride of royalty into a dire repentance.”⁹⁵ She retired into a monastery at Wherwell, where she spent her time “inventing all the tortures she could for her body... worthy punishment for the great crime she committed. It is believed, and a widely popular view that it was through her cruelty to Edward that the whole country, for a long time after, groaned under the barbarian yoke.”⁹⁶

William of Malmesbury, in particular, stresses over and over how ghastly and appalling Ælfthryth’s actions truly were. Elsewhere in the story he refers to her as a “murderess”, a “powerful mistress,” and claims “she felt the manifest anger of God.”⁹⁷ Through multiple pages, William of Malmesbury blames her for being prideful and arrogant, a plotter, a murderer, and eventually the cause of the Viking invasions. She was conniving, unstable, and perhaps even a little scary. He only makes a single positive comment, that she was “a beautiful woman and finely faithful to her husband.”⁹⁸ John of Worcester adds that, “in remorse for her stepson’s murder, [Ælfthryth] built this house [the Church of the Holy Cross at Wherwell].”⁹⁹ It is unclear how long she lived, and thus remained in the nunnery, but clearly all that atonement did not even begin to rebuild her reputation which William of Malmesbury is so thoroughly trashing two hundred years

⁹⁴ *GRA*, 266.

⁹⁵ *GRA*, 266.

⁹⁶ Here William of Malmesbury is hinting at Æthelred’s defeat by Cnut and the coming of the Danelaw. *GRA*, 266.

⁹⁷ “Interfectrix,” “potentam heram,” and “cum manifestam iram Dei persensit,” respectively. *GRA*, 266.

⁹⁸ *GRA*, 266.

⁹⁹ *JW*, III, 302.

later. Both Henry of Huntingdon and John of Worcester also see her as a murderer, but they do not revel in the details quite like William. Ironically, Ælfthryth did attain her eventual goal: in 979, her son, Æthelred became the next king.

Orderic describes a number of plots in which Bertrada of Montfort was accused of trying to harm her stepson, the future Louis VI of France. Bertrada had two young sons, Florus and Philip, by Philip I. She hoped that those sons, instead of Louis, would gain the French throne. In one instance, while young Louis was visiting Henry I in England, a messenger from France delivered an order, purportedly from Philip, asking Henry to arrest Louis. Henry doubted the truth of letter; he informed Louis of the message and sent him back to France. When Louis confronted his father, Philip claimed ignorance.¹⁰⁰

After Louis threatened his stepmother, Bertrada retaliated. She called for three sorcerers and had them cast spells to cause Louis' death. One of the sorcerers divulged the plot, and it was foiled. Angry that Louis still lived, Bertrada hired poisoners to kill Louis. He fell ill and could not be treated by any of Philip's physicians. Finally a "a shaggy doctor from the barbary" healed him.¹⁰¹ Despite his recovery, Orderic writes that Louis remained pale for the rest of his life. Bertrada continued to plot against her stepson even after the poison failed.¹⁰²

At this point, Philip stepped in and made peace. In return for making peace with his stepmother, Philip gave Louis Pontoise and the Vexin. Philip then turned on Bertrada. Realizing Philip knew of her actions and, "covered with shame, [Bertrada] submitted

¹⁰⁰ OV, VI, 52.

¹⁰¹ "*hirsutus de Barbarie*." OV, VI, 52.

¹⁰² OV, VI, 52-4.

herself as his slave to secure pardon. She reluctantly desisted from her molestations, after making so many attempts against his life.”¹⁰³

Orderic’s tale raises a number of issues. He relates the stories in a very matter of fact manner, reserving his judgment for his last statements. Here Orderic quickly castigates Bertrada for her plotting. He also stresses that if left to her own devices, Bertrada would have continued her attacks on Louis. Orderic implies that Philip was initially weak in responding to his wife’s bad behavior, claiming Philip was “dominated by his shameless wife.”¹⁰⁴ Even if Philip should have worked earlier to create peace between his son and wife, it is Bertrada who was shameless.

It is unclear if Bertrada really behaved in this fashion. Her guilt is merely hinted at in the plot to have Louis arrested by Henry I. Also, Orderic is the only Anglo-Norman chronicler to describe Bertrada’s actions. The French sources do not corroborate Orderic either. Interestingly, those same French sources describe Bertrada as attacking another of her stepsons, Geoffrey Martel.¹⁰⁵ Orderic describes Martel’s death without mentioning Bertrada’s involvement.¹⁰⁶ Despite these inconsistencies, Bertrada’s behavior, as described by Orderic, shows the suspicion that Anglo-Norman chroniclers had about stepmothers.

Sichelgaita, the second wife of Robert Guiscard, similarly schemed to kill her stepson. Sichelgaita was the daughter of Gaimar of Salerno and brought Guiscard Apulia

¹⁰³ OV, VI, 54.

¹⁰⁴ OV, VI, 52.

¹⁰⁵ OV, VI, 54, note 2.

¹⁰⁶ OV, VI, 54-6.

and Calabria as her dowry.¹⁰⁷ The couple was married around 1058 and had numerous children¹⁰⁸ before things went sour in 1082.

This woman conceived a hatred for her stepson Bohemond, fearing that, because he was stronger than her son Roger and excelled in judgment and valour, he might cause Roger to lose the duchy of Apulia and Calabria, which was his due by hereditary right. Therefore she brewed a deadly potion and sent it to the physicians of Salerno, amongst whom she had been brought up and from whom she had acquired great skill in the preparation of poisons. On receiving it they understood the will of their mistress and pupil, and administered the deadly poison to Bohemond, whom they should have attempted to cure. After taking it he sickened to the point of death and hastily sent a messenger to tell his father of his illness. The shrewd duke immediately recognized his wife's evil doing.¹⁰⁹

Robert Guiscard sent for Sichelgaita, asking her to bring both the Gospels and a sword. Orderic sets up a dramatic scene. When she appeared before him, he swore on the Gospels that if Bohemond died, Guiscard would kill her with his sword.¹¹⁰

Sichelgaita worked to undo the harm: "At this, terrified by the fearful vow, she prepared a sound antidote and dispatched it hastily to the doctors at Salerno, who had been instruments in the intended murder."¹¹¹ Fearful of her husband, Sichelgaita moved to solidify her position.

The shifty, cunning woman turned over many schemes in her mind; haunted day and night by terror she knew that if the messenger she had sent were delayed in crossing the sea so that the sick man died before his arrival she would not escape death by her husband's sword, as he had vowed. Consequently she devised another plot, which was cruel and utterly depraved. Terrible to relate, she administered poison to her husband. The moment his sickness began, when she was sure that he could not escape death, she sent for her dependents and the

¹⁰⁷ Robert Guiscard had defeated Sichelgaita's brother Gisulf. The marriage brokered a peace and also legitimized a transfer of lands from the Lombard to Norman hands. OV, IV, 28.

¹⁰⁸ *GND*, II, 190-1, notes 3 and 6.

¹⁰⁹ OV, IV, 28-30. For the poisoning, see OV, IV, 30, note 2.

¹¹⁰ OV, IV, 30.

¹¹¹ OV, IV, 30

other Lombards and set out at dead of night to the coast, where she embarked in the best ships with all her partisans. To prevent the Normans from following her she burned the remaining ships.¹¹²

The story does not end there. One of Sichelgaita's attendants broke away and warned Bohemond: "'your father is dead and your stepmother is in Apulia; she is coming as fast as she can to kill you.'" ¹¹³ Bohemond escaped to Capua and took possession of his father's lands. Sichelgaita, however, did secure Apulia and Calabria for her son, Roger Borsa.

Sichelgaita's supposed plotting draws attention to the tension between the Norman invaders and the Lombard natives. As Chibnall notes, it is highly doubtful that Sichelgaita poisoned either her stepson or her husband.¹¹⁴ Bohemond had been under the care of the physicians of Salerno because of wounds incurred while campaigning against the Greeks in Italy.¹¹⁵ This is probably the true cause of his fever, not poison. Orderic is the only Anglo-Norman chronicler to accuse Sichelgaita of killing her husband, although William of Malmesbury hints at foul play, saying that Guiscard "fell a victim to the plots of his wife."¹¹⁶ This tension between the Normans and the Lombards motivated Orderic, a Norman, to damn the Lombard lady. Orderic sums up Sichelgaita's tale and Norman insecurities with the following passage:

The Normans were now beset with every kind of anxiety, for they found themselves in a foreign land with their great and invincible leader brought low by a woman's treachery and the strength of his army undermined by the desertion of the Lombards,

¹¹² OV, IV, 30.

¹¹³ OV, IV, 32.

¹¹⁴ It is doubtful that Sichelgaita poisoned either her stepson or her husband. For information on the poisoning and its dubiousness, see OV, IV, 30, note 2.

¹¹⁵ OV, IV, 26-8.

¹¹⁶ *GRA*, 690. The passage makes no mention of hostilities between Sichelgaita and Bohemond. In fact, Malmesbury does not even name her here, referring to her simply as an Apulian wife.

who had crept away with their mistress.¹¹⁷

Despite the possible errors of her depiction in the passage, Sichelgaita does fit into the Anglo-Norman mold of evil stepmother. Orderic plays up her specialized knowledge and the deviousness of her plotting. She has numerous henchmen who participate in her every intrigue. Even though her son was an adult by this time, Sichelgaita seems willing to give all to make sure that her son inherited. Unlike the above examples, however, she took action even before inheritance had become an issue.

Constance, the third wife of Robert of France, was accused of behaving towards her own son like a stepmother upon the death of her husband in 1032.¹¹⁸ Orderic actually calls her a stepmother in one passage: “When King Henry, son of Robert, king of France, ought by right of primogeniture after his father’s death to have been invested with the symbols of government of the kingdom, he was thwarted by the hatred of his stepmother, Queen Constance, who tried to instead thrust his brother Robert, duke of Burgundy, on to the throne of France.”¹¹⁹ A few sentences later, Orderic correctly calls Constance Henry’s mother: When Henry begged Robert, duke of Normandy, to help him regain the throne, he complained that “his mother’s injustice had driven him wretchedly into exile.”¹²⁰

Elsewhere, Orderic describes Henry’s brother, Robert, and Constance’s clear preference for her younger son over the elder. The chronicler correctly identifies her here as the mother of both sons.

¹¹⁷ OV, IV, 32.

¹¹⁸ Part of the confusion here comes because Robert the Pious had three wives, Rozala of Lombardy, Berthe of Burgundy, and Constance of Arles. Robert’s first two marriages were troubled, short, and produced no children. Robert and Constance had six known children, in birth order: Hugh, Henry, Adela, Robert, Odo, and Hadvise. Hugh predeceased his father. Dunbabin, 136 and 383. Even Dunbabin mistakenly calls Constance a stepmother in one passage. Dunbabin, 239. The fourth son, Odo, does not appear in Dunbabin, but can be found in WP, 48, note 1.

¹¹⁹ OV, IV, 74.

¹²⁰ OV, IV, 74.

Robert, duke of Burgundy, was a son of King Robert of France and Queen Constance, who had inherited high rank and had won renown through his deeds. It was he whom his masterful mother wished to place on his father's throne after his death and endeavored by all means to set above her firstborn, Henry.¹²¹

Orderic does not identify any of these deeds which had earned Robert renown or how Constance worked to deprive Henry of the throne. Clearly, she had retained a great deal of power in France even after her husband's death and was able to use that power in order to advance Robert over Henry.

William of Jumièges wrote that Henry "was afflicted by the stepmother-like hatred of his mother Constance, so intense that together with the company of conspirators she made an effort to dethrone Henry in favour of Robert, duke of the Burgundians. Persecuted by her hatred and having been advised by his men to flee,"¹²² Henry escaped to Normandy. It is unclear exactly who Constance was able to marshal into helping her younger son. Eventually, with the help of Robert of Normandy and a number of other powerful dukes in France, Henry did take the throne: "the rebels were forced to reconcile themselves with their king, when the efforts of his most wretched mother had come to nothing."¹²³

Even though Constance was a mother, not a stepmother, each of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers latches on to her behavior and labels it. They stress that supporting a younger son over an elder was un-motherly. Neither the French nor the chroniclers felt that her actions were natural. Despite this, Constance was not demonized beyond being

¹²¹ OV, VI, 430.

¹²² "Postmodum a matre Constantia nouercali odio est affectus, ut conspirantibus aduersus eum comitibus a regali fastigio eum deponere conaretur, Robertum disponens illius loco subrogare Burgundionum ducum." *GND*, II, 54.

¹²³ *GND*, II, 56.

branded stepmother-like. No one describes the aftermath or what kind of revenge Henry might have taken on his mother. Like many of the passages above, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers focus on the intrigues, not the failings.

Despite the tradition of stepmothers harming their stepsons, a few stepmothers committed an evil even greater; they married their stepsons. In most cases, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, while despising the deed, place more blame on the stepsons. Ymme was the second wife of Æthelberht I, the seventh century Christian king of Kent. “But after Æthelberht’s death, his heathen son Eadbald married his father’s widow.”¹²⁴ Henry of Huntingdon borrows the story from Bede.¹²⁵ In marrying his stepmother, both authors felt that Eadbald had turned his back on Christian values and led his subjects back to paganism: “because of this, many returned to their former vomit.”¹²⁶

Eadbald, not Ymme, bore the brunt of the chronicles’ fury. In two separate passages, Henry of Huntingdon discusses Eadbald’s punishment. First, Eadbald was afflicted “by frequent fits of madness.”¹²⁷ In another passage, Laurence, archbishop of Canterbury, revealed to Eadbald a dream in which St Peter whipped Laurence for not having converted all the people to Christianity. Laurence showed the king bruises and stripes from the beating that St Peter had given him. “The king was seized by great terror, put aside his unlawful wife and was baptized.”¹²⁸

Eadbald was very motivated to reform, and his marriage was decidedly un-Christian. The new king seemed bent on proving the determination of his conversion. Not

¹²⁴ HH, 166.

¹²⁵ Bede, 150. Here Bede, and thus Henry of Huntingdon, is paraphrasing 2 Peter 2:22.

¹²⁶ HH, 166.

¹²⁷ HH, 166. Bede actually went a step further, saying that not only was he “afflicted by frequent fits of madness,” but also that Eadbald was “possessed by an unclean spirit.” Bede, 150.

¹²⁸ HH, 170.

long after, when Edwin, king of Northumbria, asked to marry Eadbald's sister, Eadbald responded that Edwin could only have her hand if Edwin converted to Christianity.¹²⁹

There is no further mention of Ymme, aside from the brief mention of Eadbald putting her aside. Ymme also appears in William of Malmesbury although here she is simply the mother of Eadbald's half-brother, Earconberht.¹³⁰

Another Anglo-Saxon queen and lusty stepmother was Judith, the daughter of Charles the Bald. Judith originally married Æthelwulf, the king of Kent and Wessex, in 856. When the king died two short years later, Judith, a stranger in a strange land, turned to her stepson, Æthelbald. William of Malmesbury writes that the new king, "who was worthless and disloyal to his father, defiled his father's marriage-bed, for after his father's death he sank so low as to marry his stepmother Judith."¹³¹ The stepmother's role is brief even if ghastly. Once again, the chroniclers place the blame solely on the stepson.

William of Malmesbury does not mention her again, and her marriage to her stepson is noticeably absent from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which only records her marriage to Æthelwulf.¹³² It is generally accepted that Judith did marry her stepson, but the marriage ended before 863, when she married Baldwin I of Flanders.¹³³ While it can be assumed that the Church would have labeled the marriage of a stepmother and stepson as incestuous, the chroniclers do not detail the Church's reaction. It appears that no one attempted this sort of marriage beyond the ninth century. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers record the marriages of both Ymme and Judith but seem secure in the knowledge that no

¹²⁹ Bede, 162 and HH, 172.

¹³⁰ *GRA*, 32.

¹³¹ *GRA*, 176.

¹³² *ASC*, A, 855 and 885 [recte 884]; *ASC*, E 852 [recte 853].

¹³³ Dunbabin, 69.

stepmother or stepson would dare commit such flagrant sin in their own contemporary time. Even though Duke Robert married Estrith of Denmark, who had been previously but briefly married to his father, Richard II, none of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers record this or any other non-Anglo-Saxon women who married their stepsons.¹³⁴

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers give examples of everything that mothers should be, setting this in sharp apposition to their passages on stepmothers. Women produced many children and motherhood was a major part of their lives. The chroniclers expected mothers to wisely safeguard their children, from infancy through adulthood. Children who did not listen to the advice of their mothers faced reproach. The Anglo-Norman authors castigated stepmothers as women who acted against the needs of their extended family and as guilty of evil scheming.

¹³⁴ For Estrith's marriages to Robert and Richard II, see above Chapter 5.

Chapter 7: Widows: Most Helpless in Society?

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers do not describe widows as much as women in other roles in the life cycle; their views of widows, however, can be reconstructed. There are popular misconceptions that once husbands died their wives were forced to either remarry or become nuns. While wives certainly did remarry or join a monastery, widows had more options open to them. Many widows retained control of their husbands' lands either because they were acting as regents for young children or because of the rights they retained as part of dower. They could continue to act to meet the needs of their family or to serve their own needs. Even though the chroniclers say that widows were near helpless, widows did not simply retire from society and did have power.

As one might expect, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers expected widows to remain chaste. Orderic praised Emma of Échauffour's behavior during widowhood: "She was a woman of great chastity and gentleness, endowed with every virtue."¹ When Ansold joined a monastery at the end of his life, he entreated his wife, Odeline, to "live chastely in holy widowhood."² This chastity, however, did not necessarily mean that widows did not remarry.

Even if chastity was important, widows did frequently remarry. It is impossible to calculate how many widows remarried as Anglo-Norman chroniclers did not record all of women's marriages or remarriages.³ Of the just over twelve hundred women described

¹ OV, II, 126.

² OV, III, 196.

³ For a sampling of those remarriages that are specifically stated by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, see *GND*, II, 98, 162, 214, 224, 232, 268, 272; OV, II, 252; OV, III, 252; OV, VI, 308; *ASC*, E, 1015; *ASC*, D & E, 1015; *JW*, III, 176-8; *RW*, 260-1; *HH*, 476.

by the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, eighty-eight had remarried a second husband after divorce or death. Another twelve women had more than two husbands in their lifetime.⁴ Evidence from charters and rolls confirms that remarriage was common: Johns found evidence of nine widows who had outlived two husbands, and two who had outlived three.⁵

A number of passages describe women who were widowed while still young. Matilda of Anjou married Prince William who soon died in the wreck of the White Ship. As Orderic states, only seven years after marrying, she was widowed early, “by the inscrutable disposition of God.”⁶ She had been approximately seventeen at the age of marriage. By the age of twenty-five, Matilda was a widow. “The kind-hearted king [Henry I] brought her up as his own daughter, and kept her at his court for a long time, hoping to marry her to a great husband of the highest rank, and raise her above all her kinsfolk with wealth and honours. But she chose a better counsel when she wedded a heavenly bridegroom.”⁷ Matilda appears to have remained in society for approximately ten years before becoming a nun at Fontevrault.⁸

Similar to Matilda of Anjou, other widows remained in society for a time before entering a monastery. Isabel of Conches “lived on for a long time as a widow and, repenting the mortal sin of luxury in which she had indulged in her youth, left the world

⁴ The Anglo-Norman chroniclers make it difficult to pinpoint if death was the reason for the end of a marriage. This data on remarriage does not include women who had been nor were later concubines.

⁵ Johns, 184. Johns discusses marriage patterns reconstructed from rolls and charter evidence, 184-7.

⁶ OV, V, 228. The couple was married in February of 1113. OV, VI, 180 and note 1. Prince William died on the White Ship in 1120.

⁷ OV, VI, 330.

⁸ Elsewhere in this passage, Orderic claims that “ten years after her marriage and with the advice of Geoffrey, bishop of Chartres... she became a nun at Fontevrault.” OV, VI, 330.

and took the veil in the nunnery at Haute-Bruyère.”⁹ The timeline for Isabel’s life is less clear. While it is certain that her husband Ralph of Tosny died in 1102, Orderic does not give any information about when Isabel entered the nunnery or when she died.¹⁰ Orderic simply uses *postquam* to describe Isabel’s time as a secular widow.¹¹

Even if remarriage and entering a monastery were options, many women remained secular widows until their death. After the untimely death of her husband Arnold of Échauffour, Emma was left with a host of problems. Arnold had been banished and poisoned, leaving his family, Emma and at least four children, in socio-political limbo.¹² As Orderic states, “After Arnold’s death the noble family of Giroie fell on evil days.”¹³ Emma sought help from the family into which she had been born: “[Emma] took refuge with her brother Eudo, steward of the duke of Normandy, one of the wealthiest and most powerful of the Norman nobles in the Cotentin, and passed almost thirty years of honourable widowhood both there and with other friends.”¹⁴

Emma had a problem that many other widows did not: her husband had fallen from grace before his death. Arnold had lost his lands, and therefore, Emma did not have any access to landed wealth. Her family “being forced to dwell in the house of others, as I have already related, had to endure hardship and want from infancy.”¹⁵ While her husband’s disgrace may have made her an unlikely candidate for remarriage, the

⁹ OV, III, 128.

¹⁰ For the death of Ralph I of Tosny, see OV, III, 129, note 2.

¹¹ OV, III, 130.

¹² For Arnold’s downfall, see OV, II, 122-4. While an exact date for his death is not given. Orderic describes it in the midst of events that occurred in 1063. Mabel of Bellême stood accused of poisoning him. For more discussion, see below Chapter 6.

¹³ OV, II, 124.

¹⁴ OV, II, 124-6.

¹⁵ OV, II, 124. For a discussion of the children’s fate, especially that of her two daughters, Petronilla and Geva, see above Chapter 3.

importance of her brother would have made her more likely to remarry. Emma chose to remain a part of her brother's household. Furthermore, she appears to have had little interaction with her children. Her eldest son was raised in the French royal court. Her youngest son and two daughters became oblates after their father's death.¹⁶ Without any landed wealth, she could not support herself or her children

Emma did eventually turn to a nunnery: "towards the end of her life, she too abandoned the world and reverently received the veil from Roger, lord abbot of the monastery of Holy Trinity, Lessay."¹⁷ She made this decision in 1094, nearly thirty years after her husband's death; it was not an immediate response to her husband's death or to the loss of landed wealth. This was fairly typical. In another example, Eremburge, the widow of Baudry of Dreux, also remained a secular widow until near the end of her life when she entered a nunnery.¹⁸

Most widows did have access to landed wealth at the time of their husbands' deaths because of the practice of dower. Strictly speaking, dower gave a widow a right to one third of the lands held by her husband anytime during their marriage. When husbands died, widows had control of dower lands, which could be quite extensive, until their death. Dower was not strictly codified until the end of the twelfth century, although there was certainly custom in place before the laws. Earlier Norman tradition allowed families

¹⁶ OV, II, 124-130.

¹⁷ OV, II, 126.

¹⁸ OV, III, 192. Orderic does not give the timing of either Baudry's death or for Eremburge's entry into the nunnery. He does, however, describe a number of gifts made by Eremburge, her adult son, Amaury, and her brother, Ansold, before she took the veil. Since Baudry was not a part of these gifts and other members of her family were, it can be assumed that she was a widow at the time of these gifts. There was a dispute over some of these grants which appeared to have taken years to resolve. She joined the nunnery only after those disputes were resolved. OV, III, 186, 190-2 and note 4.

to set aside specific lands that would become the widows' upon a husbands' death, a practice known as customary dower.¹⁹

Wives continued to help meet the needs of the family even when their husbands died. As death neared in 1100, Geoffrey of Mortagne, "put his affairs in order with great care. He gave prudent instructions to his wife Beatrice, who was the daughter of the count of Rochefort, and to his nobles, telling them to keep the peace and maintain order honourably, and protect his land and castles for his only son Rotrou."²⁰ Here Beatrice is not only taking care of the lands of her husband or her dower lands, but she is protecting those lands for her son. Rotrou was an adult but was absent, participating in the First Crusade.²¹ While the ability of mothers to act as regents has been discussed at length above, even without acting as regent, Beatrice had a measure of control over her dead husband's lands due to dower.

While widows did have at least some control over dower lands or the lands of their children, it could be difficult to maintain the loyalty of their husbands' men and sometimes outsiders would take advantage of this as well as their grief. When a rumor spread that Robert Giroie had died in battle against Robert of Bellême,

At once there was general alarm, and a fearful uproar broke out in the castle... Robert Giroie's wife, Radegunde, grew pale at the terrible news, and resolved to wait with her followers in the castle for confirmation of it, but one woman could not uphold what she believed to be right against determined men. Then, as they were leaving the castle with disorderly shouts, Robert of Bellême got wind of the matter.²²

¹⁹ Tabiteau, 176.

²⁰ OV, VI, 394. Beatrice is misidentified here. She was the daughter of Hilduin, count of Montdidier and Roucy. OV, VI, 394, note 2.

²¹ Orderic lists Rotrou amongst those participating in the First Crusade. OV, V, 34.

²² OV, IV, 292-4.

Robert of Bellême took control of the castle without opposition. Robert Giroie was actually alive, but he was now turned out of his lands. Orderic reports that “in the same year that upright and courageous woman, his wife Radegunde, died.”²³ She was courageous for trying to marshal her husband’s men at his reported death, but Orderic seems to believe the task was near impossible. He even implies that the whole incident had outdone her and led to an early death. Widows had a daunting task ahead of them.

Adeliza, the wife of Richard fitz Gilbert, was also left in a difficult position by the sudden death of her husband. Richard died fighting the Welsh who now surrounded one of his castles

in which his wife, sister of the Earl of Chester, had shut herself up for refuge. She was vexed and tormented by all manner of anxieties because through the loss of a husband’s consolation she was a prey to womanly despair, was very closely invested, without supplies, by the enemy in great force, was worn out with grief and sorrow at the absence of hope that any succour could arrive. And as she lingered there for a very long time with her neighbors unable to reach her a certain Miles, governor of the town of Gloucester... hazarded himself and his men to rescue her, both on account of the compassionate pity he felt for a noble woman and in obedience to the king.²⁴

As in the case of Radegunde and Emma above, outside parties took advantage of the death of their adversaries, preying on the grieving widows left behind. Their only hope for rescue lay in gaining help from others.

Anglo-Norman chroniclers often portrayed widows as some of the weakest and poorest members of their society along with the poor, orphans, or monks. William of Jumièges reported “Richard I was a guardian of orphans, a devout defender of widows,

²³ OV, IV, 294.

²⁴ The death of Richard and Miles’ rescue of Adeliza and the garrison in the castle both appear to have occurred in 1136. *GS*, 11-12.

and a generous redeemer of captives.”²⁵ Orderic records the gifts of Robert, duke of Normandy, reporting “which widow, orphan or poor man is there whose misery was not lessened by his gifts?”²⁶ William of Poitiers states that William the Conqueror “listened to the cause of widows, orphans, and the poor, acting with mercy and judging most justly.”²⁷ These quotes represent a mere sampling of the writings of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers that reflect the weakness of the widow in society.²⁸

By using personal relationships, widows could gain further power within society. These relationships could be counting on their husband’s men, the family into which they were born, or other personal relationships they had established over the course of their lives. Upon the death of her husband Baldwin VI of Flanders, Richildis acted as regent for her two young sons, Arnulf and Baldwin. When others, led by Robert the Frisian, tried to prey upon her vulnerability, a number of people came to help Richildis. Baldwin “appointed as their [the son’s] guardians Philip, king of the French (his mother was the king’s aunt) and William Fitz Osbern.”²⁹ Both men, her husband’s cousin and her husband’s good friend, helped Richildis when a peasant’s revolt broke out in Flanders. Unfortunately, William fitz Osbern died in the same rebellion.

William of Malmesbury insinuates that William fitz Osbern only helped Richildis because he wanted her hand in marriage, either because he loved her or because he loved her lands. Richildis was twice a widow. She had been previously married to Herman, duke of Brabant. After his death, she married Baldwin. She retained control of Flanders

²⁵ *GND*, I, 134.

²⁶ *GND*, II, 82

²⁷ *WP*, 80.

²⁸ See also, *GND*, II, 244; *OV*, III, 256-8; *OV*, IV, 148, 150, 180, and 202; *OV*, VI, 242 and 512; *GS*, 15; *RW*, 62-3; *Eadmer*, 160; and *EER*, 50.

²⁹ *GRA*, 474

and Brabant for a time. Eventually, however, Robert the Frisian took control of Flanders after making a peace with King Philip.³⁰ Richildis was only able to retain control of Brabant until her son became the next count.

Richildis was not the only widow to look to outside help. As is discussed above, when Richard was killed by the Welsh, his widow Adeliza had to rely on his men to retain control of his castle. As the situation worsened, King Stephen ordered first Miles of Gloucester and then Richard's brother, Baldwin, to put down the Welsh, even giving him money to hire the knights needed. He also sent Robert fitz Harold to other areas of Wales to subdue it.³¹

Despite the examples above, widows did have power in society especially while they were regents or when using the landed wealth of their dower. Most held the lands without challenge. Some examples of this have been discussed above, such as Adelasia who controlled Sicily until her sons came of age, Beatrice who controlled Mortagne, Clementia who controlled Flanders, Adela of Blois who controlled of the counties of Blois, Chartres, Meux and Troyes, and Agnes who controlled the lands of her husband Walter Giffard.³²

Adela of Blois is one of the most powerful examples of a widow. Her husband, Stephen of Blois, died on crusade around 1102. Her eldest son, William came of age by 1103, so her rule was more than a simple regency.³³ Thirteenth century chroniclers have argued that William was somehow deficient, leaving Adela no choice but to continue her regency. This is blatantly false; she chose to control all her husband's lands, not only her

³⁰ *GRA*, 474. For more discussion of William fitz Osbern's love, see above Chapter 3.

³¹ *GS*, 11-14.

³² See discussion of mothers as regents, above Chapter 6.

³³ *Adela of Blois*, 126.

dower lands, even when her sons came of age.³⁴ Eventually, Theobald, her second eldest son, took over the reins when Adela retired to a nunnery in Marcigny in 1120.³⁵

Various Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe her abilities during her rule. William of Malmesbury calls Adela “a powerful woman with a reputation for worldly influence.”³⁶ Orderic records that “this noble lady governed her husband’s county after he left on crusade and brought up sons well and to defend the church.”³⁷ According to Robert of Torigni, “after the death of her husband, Stephen, count of Blois, Adela... ruled the county nobly for some years.”³⁸

Adela’s position is rather unique; other women were powerful and respected even in widowhood. The Anglo-Norman chronicles only mention a few widows wielding power outside of acting as regents. Despite this, widows were in direct control of their dower lands as evidenced by charters and gifts to the church. Susan M Johns argues that women had more power in widowhood since that status “gave them the most access to land in their own right.”³⁹ Using charter and roll evidence, Johns has been able to recreate the ways in which widows, in particular, used landed wealth in the late twelfth and thirteenth century.⁴⁰

While there is less evidence for widows, there are numerous conclusions. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers expected widows to remain chaste and some joined nunneries. Others still remarried although these were not the only options left open to widows. The

³⁴ *Adela of Blois*, 212-3.

³⁵ For the reasons behind her “retirement,” see *Adela of Blois*, Chapter 7.

³⁶ “laudatae in seculo potentiae uirago.” *GRA*, 504.

³⁷ *OV*, VI, 42.

³⁸ *GND*, II, 276.

³⁹ Johns, 73.

⁴⁰ For her discussion of widows and wardship, see Johns, 165-93.

Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe widows as powerless, but still give striking examples of widows who wielded incredible power. Much of their power came from either their dower lands or their control of their husbands' lands during the regencies of children.

Chapter 8: *Bellatores*: Those Who Fought

Historians, then and now, know the most and write the most about the women who formed a part of the order called *bellatores*. Most of this study thus far has dealt with this order. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers identify many of these noblewomen and describe certain individuals over and over. Because of this, the noblewomen remain highly visible in the pages of the Anglo-Norman chronicles. The fact that many modern historians have written biographies of these women, especially the queens and other members of the royal families, gives the impression that these powerful women were the exceptions not the rule. While women of the upper nobility had access to huge estates, as well as important family ties, which allowed them to exert an incredible amount of power over the lives of others, even less powerful members of the nobility behaved in a similar manner. These similarities further prove that the most well known members of the *bellatores* were in fact not as exceptional as has been previously thought.

Noblewomen, like their husbands, spent a great deal of time and effort on administering the families' lands. Women were not kept out of politics or war and participated on the battlefield. Wives advised their husbands and otherwise helped them. Another important aspect of being a member of the nobility was exhibiting piety and patronizing the Church. There were few boundaries on the behavior of noblewomen.

While their actions may seem exceptional, these women were acting well within the norm.

The Clash of the Empress Matilda and Matilda of Boulogne

The Anarchy of Stephen's reign gives some of the best evidence for what kind of power royal women could wield because of the strong presence of two women: the Empress Matilda and Queen Matilda.¹ The Empress Matilda was a daughter of King Henry I and wife of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V. After the emperor's death, she married Geoffrey V of Anjou, and on her father's death, she was the purported heir to the throne of England.²

Henry I, realizing he would not have a legitimate male heir, named the Empress Matilda as his heir and the next ruler of England. Nearly all of the magnates and churchmen had sworn two different oaths of fealty to the empress. Despite this, when Henry died in 1135, Stephen was crowned king. His queen, Matilda of Boulogne supported her husband's effort to gain and, more importantly, retain control of the Anglo-Norman realm.

While some historians have argued that Stephen was crowned over the empress because she was a woman,³ this argument can no longer be maintained. There are a

¹ Matilda was an incredibly popular name during the Anglo-Norman period. Nearly all of the queens carried this name until Henry II married Eleanor of Aquitaine. The exceptions to this are William Rufus who had no queen, and Adeliza of Louvain, the second queen of Henry I. It was also a popular name outside these powerful women. Many Matilda's crisscrossing the pages of the chronicles can be quite confusing.

² For more details on the life of the Empress Matilda and her roles in the Anarchy, see Chibnall's *The Empress Matilda*. Henry I, realizing he would not have a legitimate male heir, named the Empress Matilda as his heir and the next ruler of England. Nearly all of the magnates and churchmen had sworn two different oaths of fealty to the empress. Despite this Stephen, who had been first among the laymen to swear both those oaths, succeeded Henry I.

³ See R H C Davis, *King Stephen, 1135-1154* (New York: Longman, 1990) and Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139-53* (London: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1996); even later scholarship argues

number of reasons why the magnates chose Stephen over the Empress Matilda that have no component of gender. First, Henry had carefully groomed his nephew as a possible heir in the period between the death of Prince William in 1120 and the return of the empress to England upon the death of Emperor Henry V in 1125. Second, King Henry I had married the empress to Geoffrey of Anjou in 1128 in order to create peace between Anjou and Normandy. While this had worked for a while, Henry I was at war with Geoffrey at the time of his death. The magnates did not want a king on the throne whom they had been fighting against just months before Henry's death. There was also a belief, real or imagined, that Henry had made Stephen his heir on his deathbed because of this fighting.⁴ Also, primogeniture was also not as strong as it came to be over the next century.⁵ Heiresses were definitely not passed over in inheriting lands, and there was a tradition of women lords.⁶ Therefore, it was not a clear cut matter, and certainly the magnates allowed Stephen to be crowned not simply because he was the next male in line for the throne.⁷

Matilda of Boulogne was the daughter of Eustace III, count of Boulogne, and had ancestral ties to both Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxons kings. She married Stephen, the

that gender was one of many other factors, see: Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) and David Crouch, *The Reign of Stephen, 1135-1154* (New York: Longman, 2000).

⁴ HH, 728-30; *Historia Pontificalis*, 84.

⁵ In fact, Stephen's older brother Theobald briefly toyed with the idea of claiming the throne until he heard that his brother was already establishing his claim. OV, VI, 454.

⁶ There is a tradition of women rulers in the Bible and the distant past such as the Amazons, .See above, chapter two. There are also contemporary accounts of queens, see Urraca of Castile, OV, VI, 406-8.

⁷ For an extremely thorough argument that gender did not figure into the succession crisis, see Jean Truax, *The Making of the King in 1135: Gender, family and Custom in the Anglo-Norman Succession Crisis* (Ph.D. diss., University of Houston, 1995).

nephew of Henry I, in 1125, a decade before he became the possible usurper.⁸ The fight for the crown, also known as the Anarchy, pitted these two women against each other continually. When the empress' forces captured Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, these two women were left at the head of opposing factions at the height of the Anarchy. The actions of these two Matildas highlight the lengths to which women went to aid the causes of their families.

While both of these women certainly led their forces, they also had tremendous support from the men around them. The Empress Matilda had the support of her half-brother, Robert of Gloucester. He was a powerful magnate who, it was rumored, had wanted to be king himself and had been offered the crown.⁹ Despite this, he was a source of unwavering support for the empress. While he gave her invaluable support, the Empress Matilda was her own woman. There are a number of times she is shown acting independently of Robert of Gloucester, such as after Robert's capture at Winchester and during her defense of Oxford while Robert was held up elsewhere.¹⁰

The Empress Matilda could not and did not get much support from her husband, Geoffrey of Anjou, whose only goal was to gain lands in neighboring Normandy. Initially, the empress helped her husband gain these lands: "his wife joined him towards evening of that day, bringing many thousands of soldiers with her."¹¹ The Angevins had long sought control of Normandy, and the Normans resisted Angevin control. Geoffrey of Anjou only had claims on Normandy through his wife, as heir to Henry I: "at that time

⁸ For more details on the life of Matilda of Boulogne, her family, and her role in the Anarchy, see "Matilda of Boulogne: The Making of a Queen" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Houston, 2000).

⁹ *GS*, 8.

¹⁰ See *GS*, 88-90 and 92-6 which describe her actions after Winchester and at Oxford respectively.

¹¹ *OV*, VI, 472.

Geoffrey of Anjou invaded Normandy with four hundred knights and caused widespread damage, acting as his wife's stipendiary commander."¹² When the Empress Matilda asked her husband to support her efforts to gain England, Geoffrey flatly refused.¹³

Matilda of Boulogne, similarly, leaned on William of Ypres for support and advice. While she gathered an army and navy from the lands where she still had control, William of Ypres raised an army of mercenaries from abroad. William of Ypres did not have the same prestige and power as Robert of Gloucester. He was the illegitimate grandson, not of a king, but of a count of Flanders.¹⁴ William was unable to attain lands in Flanders, and had to seek his fortune under King Stephen and his queen. Since his fortune was completely tied to them, he was perhaps more loyal to Matilda of Boulogne than Robert of Gloucester was to the Empress Matilda.

Queen Matilda also wielded power completely separately from William of Ypres. Stephen's supporters were wary of William, and the newly-made man was not very popular. In an age in which personal power was immeasurably important, the distrust these men had for William would not have kept Stephen's fight alive if not for the queen's efforts. There are also instances in which the queen was doing one thing while William of Ypres carried out another task hundred of miles away. While their actions may have been coordinated, Queen Matilda wielded her own power. In the days after

¹² This invasion began in May 1137 and ended a two year truce that King Stephen and Geoffrey had made. OV, VI, 482.

¹³ It appears that the empress had begged him on numerous occasions, but William of Malmesbury records that Robert of Gloucester went in person to Normandy hoping to bribe Geoffrey to join his wife in England. Despite much negotiation, Geoffrey refused and Robert returned in disgust, *HN*, 532-3.

¹⁴ William of Ypres was the illegitimate son of Philip of Loo, the son of Count Robert the Frisian and brother of Count Robert II. He had unsuccessfully laid claim to the county after the death of his cousin Count Charles the Good. *JW*, III, 286 and note 13.

Stephen's capture, Matilda held court in London and issued at least one charter.¹⁵ She appears to have spent much of this time raising troops from her lands, especially from the Honour of Boulogne which was centered in Essex. At the same time, William of Ypres gathered Flemish mercenaries from the mainland.¹⁶

Immediately following the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, the Empress attempted to consolidate the power she had gained by the king's capture. She met with many of the powerful members of the church in England at Winchester in an attempt to gain their support. As discussed above, Queen Matilda sent an envoy to the council in an unsuccessful bid to free her husband or to force the Empress Matilda to recognize her son's, Eustace, inheritance.

Despite these actions, Queen Matilda's efforts were to little avail; the Church threw its support behind the empress and even excommunicated King Stephen, Queen Matilda, and their supporters, even though Henry, bishop of Winchester and Stephen's brother, led the council.¹⁷ It appeared that all was lost for King Stephen and his supporters.

The empress marched to London unopposed, but once there she met with staunch resistance from the queen, this time backed by the citizens of London. Queen Matilda sent another envoy to the empress, who demanded the king's release and her son's inheritance as she had done at Winchester. The empress refused to negotiate with the queen.¹⁸ Instead she called the most prominent citizens together and demanded money from them. They had other ideas in mind; they wanted a return to the liberties they had

¹⁵ RRAN, III, # 24.

¹⁶ GS, 85-6. OV, VI, 546.

¹⁷ JW, III, 294; *HN* 518-20.

¹⁸ JW, III, 294-5; *GS*, 81-2.

held under Edward the Confessor's reign.¹⁹ Once again, the empress refused to give an inch and soon lost a mile. The empress' unwillingness to negotiate or to take the advice of others soon led a number of barons as well as the citizenry of London to turn against her.²⁰

When the discontent had reached a sufficient level, Queen Matilda and her military commander, William of Ypres, took advantage of this popular sentiment. The empress was chased unceremoniously out of London.²¹ Queen Matilda met with Henry, bishop of Winchester, and renegotiated the support of the Church including lifting the excommunications from her husband's supporters.²²

The Empress Matilda lashed out at Bishop Henry, marching to Winchester and besieging him in his castle there. Queen Matilda's forces surrounded the empress' party. In the melee that ensued, the queen's forces captured Robert of Gloucester, the empress' most powerful supporter and half-brother.²³ The empress had no other choice than to negotiate Robert's release. The empress and Robert were reluctant to make an even exchange for the king, but the queen would accept no less. When it seemed that things had reached a stalemate, the queen threatened to send Robert to Boulogne, her homeland. Her action sparked further negotiations. Sibyl of Gloucester, Robert's wife, took part in the negotiations.²⁴ Eventually the two parties did agree on an even exchange.²⁵

¹⁹ JW, III, 296.

²⁰ *GS*, 79-80 and 83-5.

²¹ *GS*, 83-5.

²² *HN*, 522; *GS*, 83-5.

²³ For the siege through the capture of Robert of Gloucester; *GS*, 86-9; *HH*, 738-40; *ASC* [E], 1140; *JW*, III, 296-8; *HN*, 524 and 529.

²⁴ *JW*, III, 302.

²⁵ The best and most thorough description of this exchange comes from William of Malmesbury in *HN*, 524-5.

Once Stephen returned to power, he called the Church together at Winchester to force the elites of the church to explain themselves. The empress sent an envoy to this council, but they refused to hear her and excommunicated her, echoing the actions the Church had taken against the queen during the king's captivity.²⁶ Within a few years, the empress was forced out of England altogether although she and her son continued to threaten Stephen's reign for over a decade. Eventually, Stephen made an agreement that placed Henry, the empress' son, on the throne after him.

These two women, the Empress Matilda and Matilda of Boulogne, were extremely active in seeking out solutions to very trying times. Again and again, they made decisions that were necessary to their family, even military decisions, and acted largely independently of their husbands' influence. In fact, men followed their orders. Both women used their personal relationships and the Church in the scramble for power.

The Clash of Isabel of Conches and Helwise of Évreux

Even if there was not as much at stake, an entire kingdom, women of the lower nobility could also wield power and influence in many of the same ways as were used by the Empress Matilda and Matilda of Boulogne. The clash in Normandy between Isabel of Conches and Helwise of Évreux around 1091 mirrors many of the above instances, with wives advising their husbands and even taking part in military actions.

These two women were powerful in Normandy in the late eleventh century. Isabel of Conches was the wife of Ralph I of Tosny and a lady of extensive holdings in Normandy. According to Orderic, "Isabel was generous, daring and gay, and therefore

²⁶ *HN*, 525-6.

estimable to those around her.”²⁷ Helwise was the wife of William, count of Évreux.

Orderic describes her as well: “Helwise on the one hand was clever and persuasive, but cruel and grasping.”²⁸

These two women first appear in the Anglo-Norman chronicles because of the tension between their two families and the open violence that soon broke out. It is useful to quote Orderic at length:

There indeed a more than civil war broke out between powerful brothers and the evil was fomented by the malignant rivalry of two proud women. The Countess Helwise was incensed against Isabel of Conches for some slighting remarks, and in her anger used all her powers to urge Count William and his barons to take up arms. So the hearts of brave men were moved to anger through the suspicion and quarrels of women, which led to great bloodshed on both sides and the burning of many homes in towns and villages. Both the ladies who stirred up such bitter wars were persuasive, high-spirited and beautiful; they dominated their husbands and oppressed their vassals, whom they terrorized in various ways.²⁹

The powerful brothers referred to here are William Rufus and Robert Curthose, sons of William the Conqueror. The fighting between Évreux and Conches was a part of wider tensions between the two, as each brother craved the lands and power of the other.³⁰

Orderic judges both Helwise and Isabel for breaking the peace, but similar allegations were made against others who led men into war.³¹ Orderic actually praises Isabel for taking military action and leading her supporters: “in war she rode armed as a knight among the knights; and showed no less courage among the knights in hauberks

²⁷ OV, IV, 212.

²⁸ OV, IV, 212.

²⁹ OV, IV, 212.

³⁰ OV, IV, 212-4 and 214-15, note 4.

³¹ Just a few pages before, Orderic complains about Robert of Meulan causing a disturbance in Normandy, near Brionne. OV, IV, 204-8.

and sergeants-at-arms than did the maid Camilla, the pride of Italy, among the troops of Turnus. She deserved comparison with Lampeto and Marpesia, Hippolyta and Penthesilea and other warlike Amazons.”³²

Isabel of Conches and Helwise of Évreux were not the only women of the lower nobility involved in military actions:

Twice, while he was traveling to Rome and when he was returning to Normandy, Robert Bordet’s wife, Sibyl, daughter of William la Chèvre, took charge of Tarragona... Every night she put on a hauberk like a soldier and carrying a rod in her hand mounted on the battlements, patrolled the circuit of the walls, kept the guards alert, and encouraged everyone with good counsel to be on alert for the enemy’s stratagems.³³

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe an additional nine women who held castles and took part in military actions.³⁴ As discussed in other parts of this work, these women include: Juliana of Breteuil held the castle of Pacy and battled with her father;³⁵ Matilda of Ramsbury held a castle against King Stephen which she handed over in order to save her son;³⁶ and Aubrée of Ivry who built the castle she held against her own husband.³⁷ The Anglo-Norman chroniclers wrote about these independent military actions without taking special note. As members of the *bellatores*, women did not and could not sit idly by watching the men.

While Isabel of Conches and Helwise of Évreux swayed their husbands and supporters to begin hostilities, there are other examples of these two women listening to

³² OV, IV, 212-4. For more discussion of the Amazons, see Chapter 2.

³³ OV, VI, 404.

³⁴ See Juliana of Breteuil, Matilda of Ramsbury, and Aubrée of Ivry cited above, and also, Adeliza of Chester, *GS*, 11-12; Radegunde, OV, IV, 292-4; Emma of Gael, *GRA*, 472; the wife of Robert of Mowbray, *JW*, III, 78; Duda, OV, IV, 200; Mabel of Bellême, OV, III, 152 and 160 as well as OV, V, 132.

³⁵ OV, VI, 212-4 and 230. See below Chapter 3.

³⁶ OV, VI, 532-4. See below Chapter 6.

³⁷ OV, IV, 290. See below this chapter.

and advising their husbands and supporters. “On one occasion some knights were taking their ease, amusing themselves and chatting together in the hall of Conches, and were discussing various topics in the presence of the lady Isabel, as men do.”³⁸ Orderic’s language here stresses that it was normal for women to interact with the knights and to take part in every aspect of the military life. In order to hold a castle or lead troops into battle, women would have learned about military actions and received advice through discussions with knights in the hall of the household.

Orderic continues the story of Isabel talking with the knights, further showcasing her importance amongst them. Three knights, including the future Baldwin I of Jerusalem, laid out some dreams that had been bothering them. Isabel pleads with them to hear more and was clearly engaged in the casual, yet important, conversation of the day. The dreams ended up being warnings of their future, for “not long afterwards the three knights suffered different fates corresponding to what they had told.”³⁹

Orderic’s treatment of Helwise, like his opinion of her above, is both positive and negative. Orderic praises Helwise, giving her credit for encouraging her husband to make gifts to the Church. William of Évreux “followed the advice of his countess, Helwise, and resolved to build a monastery in his own patrimony.”⁴⁰ As discussed above, when Helwise and Isabel breached the peace, Orderic was less than pleased with her ability to sway her husband.

Furthermore, Orderic feels that Helwise made a mistake by not listening to others when helping to administer to her husband’s lands.

³⁸ OV, IV, 216-8.

³⁹ OV, IV, 218.

⁴⁰ OV, VI, 146.

He [William] was partially incapacitated by both age and character, and his wife administered the whole county and placed more reliance than she should have done on her own judgement... Ignoring the counsel of her husband's barons, she relied on her own judgement, often rushed into difficulties in secular affairs, and was too ready to plunge into rash enterprises. She was heartily disliked for her woman's presumption by Robert, count of Meulan, and other Normans.⁴¹

Orderic does not believe that women were unable or should not administer the lands of their husbands. In doing so, however, they needed to listen to their husbands' men. The relationship between lord and vassal was one of give and take. This passage echoes the complaints the author of the *Gesta Stephani* had against the Empress Matilda: "she no longer relied on their advice, as she should have and promised them, but arranged everything as she herself saw fit and according to her own arbitrary will."⁴² The Anglo-Norman chroniclers would have criticized a man for similar actions. Women, whether members of the royalty or of the lower nobility, were extremely active in the politics of the day, giving advice and even participating in military actions.

Noblewomen and the Household

Noblewomen relied on more than their husband's men when acting in society; royal women, in particular, were likely to have a complex household of their own. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers hint at these households in their pages although charter evidence and the *Domesday Book* give a more complete picture of those who served the queens. Queen Emma is the earliest queen for whom a household can be reconstructed although the evidence is patchy. Normans certainly accompanied Emma to England,⁴³ and these Normans might have formed some of her household. There is evidence of a

⁴¹ OV, VI, 148.

⁴² GS, 80.

⁴³ OV, VI, 168.

Norman, Hugh, serving as Emma's reeve at Exeter.⁴⁴ Many of her servants administered her lands; other than Hugh, Wulfweard the White, Ælfric son of Wihtgar, Leofgifu, and Harding all served Emma.⁴⁵ The most documented of Emma's servants was her chaplain, Stigand, later archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁶ Stigand used his position in Emma's household to build on his career in the church, leaving her service to become bishop of Winchester in 1047.⁴⁷

Pauline Stafford reconstructed the household of Queen Edith from a variety of sources, finding that "[her household] was on occasion separate, on occasion part of the larger royal one, so that her own household did not exclude her from a role in the royal household."⁴⁸ Queen Edith's household included: a butler Harding, a steward Godwine, and numerous chaplains, Ælfgar, Walter and Sigar. She also had a lady of the bedchamber, Matilda, and employed numerous craftsmen at one time or another.⁴⁹ Using the *Domesday Book*, Stafford was also able to reconstruct those who were employed by the queen to administer her lands locally.⁵⁰ "Seventy to eighty people can be associated with her [household] with varying degrees of certainty."⁵¹

Using mostly charter evidence, Lois Huneycutt has similarly ferreted out the members of Edith Matilda's household. "She employed a staff of (at minimum) about

⁴⁴ Stafford, 111. There is also evidence of his service in the Anglo-Norman chronicles: *ASC*, E and F, 1003; *HH*, 342.

⁴⁵ Stafford, 111-2.

⁴⁶ Stafford, 112-3. Orderic identifies Stigand as her chaplain but gives no further information about their relationship. *OV*, VI, 320.

⁴⁷ Stafford, 113.

⁴⁸ Stafford, 108.

⁴⁹ Stafford, 109-10.

⁵⁰ Stafford, 109-10 and also see Appendix II where the *Domesday* evidence is reprinted and interpreted.

⁵¹ Stafford, 110.

four men at any given time.”⁵² This staff included a chancellor, a chamberlain, and multiple chaplains and does not include those who administered her lands. Edith Matilda had two chancellors, first Reinhelm and then later Bernard, a former clerk for the queen.⁵³ “His duties may have included serving as a liaison between the queen’s officers and those of the king.”⁵⁴ Aldwin was Edith Matilda’s chamberlain and had a measure of control over the queen’s lands. Edith Matilda had numerous chaplains: Geoffrey, Odo Moricus or Moire, Albin, and John.⁵⁵ While not an official part of the queen’s household per se, Edith Matilda also had three ladies-in-waiting, Emma, Christina, and Gunhilda, all of whom chose to enter the church at the queen’s death.⁵⁶

While no one has reconstructed her household, Adeliza of Louvain, the second wife of Henry I, must have had a similarly large household, and there is some evidence of its members in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. Like Queen Emma before her, a number of people followed Adeliza from Louvain to England.⁵⁷ Godfrey, Adeliza’s chancellor was one of those followers.⁵⁸ Another of her servants, Simon, is alternatively listed as clerk, chaplain, and chancellor.⁵⁹ This may represent some confusion over his exact position or it represents some promotion within the household. Godfrey was made bishop of Bath which may have made place for Simon to become chancellor.⁶⁰ Eventually Simon left the

⁵² *Matilda of Scotland*, 99.

⁵³ *Matilda of Scotland*, 99. There is chronicle evidence for both. Reinhelm: JW, III, 102 and Eadmer, 144. Bernard: JW, III, 136-8.

⁵⁴ *Matilda of Scotland*, 99.

⁵⁵ *Matilda of Scotland*, 100.

⁵⁶ *Matilda of Scotland*, 101.

⁵⁷ Her followers are described in both: *ASC*, E, 1123 and *OV*, III, 260.

⁵⁸ Godfrey is called her chancellor in both *ASC*, E, 1123 and *HH*, 470 although only the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* lists him as being from Louvain.

⁵⁹ As her clerk: *HH*, 472. As her chaplain: *GPA*, 196. As her chancellor, JW, III, 156.

⁶⁰ *HH*, 470.

queen's service to become bishop of Worcester.⁶¹ Adeliza of Louvain also had at least one lady-in-waiting, Juliana, who had come from Louvain.⁶²

Matilda of Boulogne, the queen of King Stephen, had a large number of servants although her household followed the same general plan as those of the queens before her. Matilda of Boulogne had two chamberlains, Hubert and Robert.⁶³ She also had three different chancellors: Ranulf, Thomas, and another unnamed servant.⁶⁴ There were also a number of clerks who served her, sometimes simultaneously: Alius, Alfred, Odo, Peter, and Christian.⁶⁵ In addition, Richard of Boulogne served as a clerk for both the king and queen.⁶⁶ Matilda of Boulogne had at least three chaplains: Peter, Thomas, and Robert.⁶⁷ Peter and Thomas served the queen simultaneously, and there may have been others who did not attest to charters or make appearances in the Anglo-Norman chronicles.

Just like the other queens, Matilda of Boulogne had a large number of men who administered her lands. Since Matilda was an heiress and appears to have retained total control of those lands throughout her marriage, she had a man, Walchelin, who served as marshal over these extensive holdings in both France and England.⁶⁸ There is also

⁶¹ HH, 472.

⁶² OV, III, 260.

⁶³ Hubert is evidenced in a number of charters, *RRAN*, III, #207, 509, 510, 541, and 554. Little is known of Robert; see *RRAN*, III, xix.

⁶⁴ For Ranulf, see *RRAN*, III, #207, 208 and 239b. For Thomas, see *RRAN*, III, #26. The unknown chancellor, whose name begins with A, appears in a document that was damaged by fire; see *RRAN*, III, #503.

⁶⁵ For Alius, see *RRAN*, III, #553. For Alfred, see *RRAN*, III, #554. For Odo, see *RRAN*, III, #196 and 200. For Peter, see *RRAN*, III, #196, and 541. For Christian, see *HN*, 520.

⁶⁶ For Richard as clerk for the queen, see *RRAN*, III, #196, 198, and 243. For Richard as Stephen's clerk, see *RRAN*, III, xii.

⁶⁷ For Peter, see *RRAN*, III, #541. For Thomas, see *RRAN*, III, #196, 198, 503, and 541. For Robert, see *RRAN*, III, #556.

⁶⁸ See *RRAN*, III, #814.

evidence of her administering her lands and sending orders into her lands even if it is unclear exactly for whom those orders were intended.⁶⁹

Henry's daughter, Matilda, had a household in Germany as the empress of Henry V and later in England when she was challenging Stephen for the throne during the Anarchy. Matilda was married to the Holy Roman emperor while she was still quite young, but as is seen among other foreign marriages, Anglo-Normans followed her to Germany.⁷⁰ "The handful of acts surviving from before 1125 show that, while she had her own clerks and chaplains, whatever she did was underwritten by the imperial chancellor."⁷¹

Once married to Geoffrey of Anjou and particularly after her father's death in 1135, there is more evidence for a complex and separate household. Marjorie Chibnall finds evidence of at least two stewards, Robert de Courcy and Humphrey de Bohun. The Empress Matilda also had chamberlains: William du Pont de l'Arche, William Mauduit, and Drogo "of Polwheile." She also had at least one chancellor, William fitz Gilbert.⁷² The empress was served by numerous clerks and chaplains including Richard de Bohun, Herbert, Lawrence, and possibly Roger le Norman.⁷³ While she was pushing for control of England, she also appointed a number of constables over territories she had gained:

⁶⁹ See *RRAN*, III, #224, 239d, 243, 530, 539, 541, 548, 550, 556, and 557. Also see an additional charter found by Davis after the printing of the *RRAN*. In this charter, numbered 207b, Matilda gives orders to her officials in Dover, Wissant, and Boulogne, "M. dei gratia regina Angl(orum) ministries suis de Doure et de Wisant et de Bolun(is)." R H C Davis, *King Stephen, 1135-1154*, 3rd edition (New York: Longman, 1990), 167. For administration of her lands, see below Chapter 4.

⁷⁰ *OV*, VI, 168 and *GND*, II, 218.

⁷¹ *The Empress Matilda*, 174.

⁷² *The Empress Matilda*, 174.

⁷³ *The Empress Matilda*, 175.

Miles of Gloucester, Robert d'Oilli, William de Beauchamp, William Peverel, Humphrey fitz Odo, John fitz Gilbert, Brian fitz Count.⁷⁴

As can be seen from the list of constables above, the Empress Matilda's household grew while she was challenging King Stephen directly. Despite this, it is clear that as the king's daughter, the wife of a count, and later as the mother of a count and king, she kept a household throughout every stage in her life. Chibnall describes her household as more "local" during the periods of her life when she was not trying to become a queen.⁷⁵ While the empress was royalty as well as a powerful countess, her smaller household illustrates that even lesser noblewoman were served by household officials.

Adela of Blois, much like the Empress Matilda, was both a countess and a princess, as the daughter of William the Conqueror. Clearly during her husband's absence and after his death, she had a large household to administer Blois, Champagne and Chartres. While Stephen of Blois was on crusade, members of his household traveled with him and were therefore not a part of Adela's household. Upon Stephen's death, Adela replaced some of Stephen's servants with her own.

Kimberly LoPrete has reconstituted a detailed and rather large household for Adela of Blois. She had a chancellor, Roger, who had previously been her clerk and certainly came from England. Adela replaced Stephen's chamberlain, Robert, with Guy. Stephen's steward, Guermond, was similarly replaced by Godfrey of Oulchy. Guarner Maingot served as a seneschal for Stephen and later for Adela. There were two other

⁷⁴ *The Empress Matilda*, 174-5.

⁷⁵ *The Empress Matilda*, 175. Chibnall does not define local or explain the implications.

seneschals who served Adela alone: Robert and Hugh Mansellus. Adela had a large number of clerks and chaplains: Alexander, Durand, Rainaldus/ Raginaldus, Guibert, Hunfridus, and the aforementioned Roger.⁷⁶

As LoPrete found, Adela of Blois also had filled a number of offices that were somewhat unique to Blois. Caballarius served as her *bannarius*; Henry and later Pagan held the office of *hostiarius*; Hugh, Solomon, and Raoul were pantlers; Stephen served as *claviger* and may be the same man who is later called a moneyer. Many of the duties attached are unclear although these offices certainly entailed some sort of work looking after and dispensing money and goods belonging to the countess' residences. The counts also had a system of provosts, one each for Blois, Chartres and Champagne, as well as other provosts for major castles and the surrounding city or countryside. Adela's household also included these provosts although most of these offices were hereditary.⁷⁷

If Adela of Blois and the Empress Matilda, as countesses, had households then it is likely that other countesses had households as well. The households of other countesses would have been small and intertwined with their husbands' households. Such a household would have included clerks and chaplains and little else. If noblewomen were serving as regents, however, then they certainly would have relied on not just their household, but also their husbands' men as well.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers hint at the households of non-royal members of the nobility as well. Even though she was never a regent, Orderic describes Mabel of Bellême having a number of household servants who did her bidding, including

⁷⁶ *Adela of Blois*, 156-9.

⁷⁷ *Adela of Blois*, 160-2.

procuring and administering poison.⁷⁸ Elsewhere, Orderic complains that Mabel of Bellême had descended upon St Évroul with a large retinue of knights demanding hospitality from Abbot Thierry. Mabel, without her husband Roger, was accompanied by enough household knights that the monks groaned under the strain.⁷⁹ “With great toil and expense,” Aubrée of Ivry hired Lanfred, an architect, as well as builders to construct the castle of Ivry.⁸⁰ In Orderic’s telling of the story of St Judoc, “a certain matron” sent a number of messengers back and forth to the saint.⁸¹

Despite chronicle evidence, little work has been done on the charter evidence of the nobility in order to back up these conclusions. Susan Johns, whose work examines the use of landed wealth and power in the Anglo-Norman realm, relies on charters to provide evidence for lands passing through women’s hands. She examines the ways in which women manipulated landed wealth to wield power. Johns does not try, however, to reconstruct the households of any of her subjects.

Susan Johns, despite not addressing the household, does focus on women’s use of seals. The seals were visual representations of legitimacy and landed power, attached to the charters to seal and prove the authenticity of the document. As might be expected, a number of the twelfth century queens of England had seals, including: Edith Matilda, Adeliza of Louvain, and Matilda of Boulogne. The Empress Matilda’s seal, proclaiming her as the queen of the Romans, was used not while she was empress, but while she was

⁷⁸ OV, II, 122.

⁷⁹ OV, II, 54.

⁸⁰ OV, IV, 290.

⁸¹ OV, III, 296.

challenging the power of King Stephen.⁸² There is no evidence for women using seals before the late eleventh century.

Susan Johns uncovered numerous seals from other noblewomen, as well. There are over one hundred forty women's seals from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. Clearly there was an increasing trend for using these seals under the reigns of Henry II, Richard, and John. Only a handful of these seals, however, belong to noblewomen during the period of this study. The ten extant seals from the appropriate period are listed below along with the approximate date of their usage: Agnes, the daughter of William constable of Chester (1150-57), Alice, wife of Gilbert fitz Richard of Clare (1136-38), Alice de Gant (between 1144-55), Rohais, countess of Lincoln (1149-56), Amice, countess of Leicester (1150-3), Alice, countess of Northampton (1140-60), Ada, countess of Northumbria (1153-78), Matilda de Wallingford (1122-47), Hawis de -----fort (1150-82), and ----- of the Pincerna or Butler family (1150).⁸³ The last two are difficult to date and identify because of damage to the seals. Even their names are damaged. Johns' list of seals is incomplete for the period of this study. There is at least one more seal, that of Beatrice de Mandeville.⁸⁴

The seals of these noblewomen were originally attached to charters, many of which have become separated. The seals of the lower nobility emulated those of the royal women, and it appears that the use of seals occurred earlier in England than in France.⁸⁵ These noblewomen were not the most powerful women in England. Together with the damage to two of the seals and the incomplete nature of Johns' list, one can conclude that

⁸² Johns, Appendix I, 203-4.

⁸³ Johns, Appendix I, 204-230.

⁸⁴ British Library, Seals, cx. 41.

⁸⁵ Johns, 127.

more seals existed even in the twelfth century. Furthermore, noblewomen using seals, separate from their husbands, shows these women's level of independence and sophistication in administering lands and patronizing the Church. Several of these seals exist without the accompanying charter, and it can be inferred that there were more charters made by women that have been lost over time. Furthermore, if women spent the time and money to have these seals designed, these noblewomen planned to make extensive and important use of them.

Piety and Patronage

Noblewomen heavily patronized the Church and were expected to show a level of piety befitting their station. Queens frequently made not only gifts but began foundations, while lower members of the nobility made smaller donations, from smaller parcels of land to objects used within the church. This aspect of being a noblewoman is quite possibly the best documented as many charters are extant from the time period or were recorded within the chronicles.

Acting independently of their husbands, a number of queens set high standards for giving to the Church, and the Anglo-Norman chroniclers focused on a number of these gifts. Queen Emma donated the arm of St Bartholomew to Christchurch at Canterbury⁸⁶ a cup of gold and various textiles to the monks at Ely,⁸⁷ and lands to abbeys at Bury, Ramsey, Wells, the Old Minster at Westminster, and Christchurch.⁸⁸ Queen Edith granted lands to numerous churches such as Peterborough and Westminster, although

⁸⁶ Eadmer, 107 and Stafford, 146.

⁸⁷ Stafford, 145.

⁸⁸ Stafford, 147.

some of these grants were contested later.⁸⁹ Matilda of Flanders, as the countess of Normandy, founded the church of Holy Trinity at Caen.⁹⁰ As queen she made gifts of a chasuble and cantor's cope to St Évrout,⁹¹ was responsible for beginning to build a rectory at Notre-Dame-du-Pré,⁹² and she was also praised for her almsgiving⁹³

Edith Matilda and the Empress Matilda continued the patronage patterns begun by earlier queens. Edith Matilda was most famous for her pious actions, such as serving lepers,⁹⁴ washing the feet of the diseased,⁹⁵ and providing for the needs of Anselm as he traveled.⁹⁶ She founded two leprosaria at St Giles and at Chichester.⁹⁷ She also founded a church of Holy Trinity at Aldgate.⁹⁸ The Empress Matilda's piety was compared with that of her mother, Edith Matilda.⁹⁹ She was a very dedicated patron of Le Bec.¹⁰⁰ The Empress Matilda was a frequent supporter of Augustinian canons, giving gifts to several of their priories.¹⁰¹ Later in her life, she began to support the Cistercians although those foundations were complicated by the Anarchy.¹⁰²

Matilda of Boulogne founded the hospital of St Katherine in London in honor of her two children who had died while very young, and the queen continued to endow it

⁸⁹ Stafford, 147-8.

⁹⁰ OV, II, 130, *GRA*, 494, HH, 406, and *GND*, II, 132 and 146-8

⁹¹ OV, II, 240.

⁹² Henry I completed the building project that his mother had begun. OV, VI, 450 HH, 490, and *GND*, II, 252.

⁹³ OV, II, 224; *GND*, II, 70.

⁹⁴ *Matilda of Scotland*, 104-5.

⁹⁵ *GRA*, 754-8.

⁹⁶ Eadmer, 183.

⁹⁷ *Matilda of Scotland*, 105-6.

⁹⁸ *Matilda of Scotland*, 109.

⁹⁹ *GRA*, 782.

¹⁰⁰ *GND*, II, 244-6; *The Empress Matilda*, 178-9 and 189-90.

¹⁰¹ These include: Merton Priory, Llanthony Prima, Oostbroek, and Nostell Priory. *The Empress Matilda*, 179.

¹⁰² For all full discussion of both her gifts and reaffirmation as well as the complications caused by the Anarchy, see *The Empress Matilda*, 181-5.

throughout her life.¹⁰³ Matilda had co-founded Faversham Abbey with her husband, but she also gave it additional lands and a portion of the True Cross which she had procured from the Holy Land, where her two uncles were both kings.¹⁰⁴ She also independently founded and endowed abbeys at Cressing, Temple Cowley, and Coggeshall.¹⁰⁵ Matilda of Boulogne supported the Templars in England through a number of gifts.¹⁰⁶

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers described some of the gifts given by women who, while not royalty, still had moderate wealth at their disposal. Adela of Blois gave generous sums to the pope while he traveled through her lands.¹⁰⁷ Judith, the wife of Richard II of Normandy, founded the monastery of St Mary's at Bernay.¹⁰⁸ Lesceline, countess of Eu, founded the abbey of St-Pierre-sur-Dive.¹⁰⁹

Other noblewomen emulated the kind of gifts that queens made to the Church even if they did not have the wealth to make large foundations. Much of what is known of the patronage of the lower nobility comes from Orderic's descriptions of the supporters of St Évrout. Nearly forty women gave gifts with their husbands and sometimes sons.¹¹⁰ Orderic describes the gifts of six noblewomen of moderate wealth who gave to St Évrout independently of their families much like the queens above: Eremburge gave gospel books;¹¹¹ Adeline gave an alb;¹¹² Bertsenda gave an altar

¹⁰³ *RRAN*, III, #512.

¹⁰⁴ See Norah Lofts, 30; *Annales of Bermondsey*, 438; *Annales of Dunstaple*, 16; *RRAN*, III, #301 and 302.

¹⁰⁵ For Cressing, see Christopher Holdsworth, "The Church" in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed Edmund King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 207-230 and 220. For Temple Cowley, see *RRAN*, III, # 850. For Coggeshall, see *RRAN*, III, # 207.

¹⁰⁶ *RRAN*, III, # 844 and 845.

¹⁰⁷ *OV*, VI, 42.

¹⁰⁸ *OV*, II, 8 and *GND*, II, 134.

¹⁰⁹ *OV*, II, 354 and *GND*, II, 132.

¹¹⁰ *OV*, II, 10, 46-8, and 66; *OV*, III, 126, 132, 134, 140, 146-8, 154, 158, 162, 164-6, 174-6, 184-6, 186, 188, 190, 190-2, 200, 202, 208, 210, 230, 246-8, 250, and 250-2.

¹¹¹ *OV*, III, 192.

cloth;¹¹³ others gave lands, mostly from their marriage portions.¹¹⁴ Even these lowly women wanted to set themselves apart and to prove the strength of their piety despite not having massive wealth at their disposal.

Another avenue of patronage was the support that women, from queens to members of the lower nobility, gave to writers and book production. Queen Emma bestowed a psalter upon her brother Robert, archbishop of Rouen.¹¹⁵ Emma, as queen dowager, also had an unidentified author write an apology of her position around 1140 when she supported her younger son over her older son in the scramble for the crown of England.¹¹⁶

Wanting to know more about the mother who died while she was still so young, Edith Matilda had a *vita* of St Margaret, her mother, written. She asked unidentified monks at Durham who had known her mother to give her more information, and Edith Matilda seemed to have genuinely wished to know more about her mother.¹¹⁷ In fact, the *vita* “is too worldly and personal to be pure hagiography, too muddled in detail to serve as a satisfactory biography.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Edith Matilda wanted to show how important her mother had been and also how Margaret served as a link to the Anglo-Saxon kings of old. Edith Matilda’s descent from the Anglo-Saxon kings had been part of

¹¹² OV, III, 240.

¹¹³ OV, II, 160.

¹¹⁴ Orderic describes the other three women, Helvise, Avise of Auffay, and Tessa who gave lands in OV, III, 156, 250-58 and 202-4 respectively.

¹¹⁵ OV, II, 42.

¹¹⁶ For descriptions of the author, see *EER*, xiv. For his dedication to the queen and a hint at the propagandist aim of the work, see *EER*, 7-9.

¹¹⁷ Huneycutt argues for the authorship and dating for the long version of the *Life of St Margaret*. Lois L. Huneycutt, “The Idea of the Perfect Princess: the *Life of St Margaret* in the Reign of Matilda II (1100-1118) in *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, volume XII, edited by Marjorie Chibnall (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1989), 85. See also GND, II, 242. For the *Life of St Margaret*, see British Library, Cotton Tiberius Dii.

¹¹⁸ “The Idea of the Perfect Princess,” 88.

the reason Henry I had sought her hand in marriage. In having the *vita* written, she showed not only interest in personal matters but also in politics.

Queens also served as patrons for less personal works. In addition to a life of her mother, Edith Matilda also encouraged William of Malmesbury to write his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*.¹¹⁹ The *Voyage of St Brendan* was commissioned by one of the queens of Henry I. It is unclear whether the patroness was Edith Matilda or Adeliza of Louvain.¹²⁰ Matilda of Boulogne gave support to Ralph of Coggeshall to write a history.¹²¹

While patronizing book production could not have been as pervasive as noblewoman's patronage of the Church, it was another possibility. Women of the nobility based their support of book production on the example set by queens. Hildebert of Lavardin wrote poems to various women in hopes of garnering their support. In one of two brief poems contained in a longer letter, he stresses that he seeks favor from Adela of Blois.¹²² He had also written poems for others, including three to Edith Matilda.¹²³ Hugh of Fleury, dedicated a history to Adela of Blois and promised her another.¹²⁴ Marbod, bishop of Rennes, sent Ermengarde, countess of Brittany a long poem around 1096.¹²⁵

Vanity, the special sin of noblewomen

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers accused many noblewomen, at every level, of some form of vanity. Mostly the authors complained that women wore costly clothing

¹¹⁹ *GRA*, 14.

¹²⁰ Huneycutt argues that it was more likely Edith Matilda. *Matilda of Scotland*, 139-40.

¹²¹ Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, Roll Series, no 66 (Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1964).

¹²² Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, *Carmina Minora*, edited by A Brian Scott (Leipzig: Teubner, 1969), 10 and 15.

¹²³ *Carmina Minora*, 4 and 35 as well as PL 171, cl 1444-45.

¹²⁴ Hugh of Fleury, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, edited Geor H Pertz and others (Hannover: 1876-) *Scriptores* 9, pages 349-51 and 353.

¹²⁵ *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, edited by J P Migne, 221 vol.s (Paris, 1844-64) vol. 171, poem 23 c. 1659-60. He had also written one for Edith Matilda, c1660.

and jewelry, that they were more concerned with this life rather than the next. While the chroniclers focus on this sin as something distinctly feminine, they occasionally describe men as being vain; although in this case, the men were usually called effeminate as well. A few rare descriptions praise noblewomen for not being vain.

Being beautiful was part of being a member of the nobility. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers refer to over thirty women as being beautiful even though they had never set eyes on most of these noblewomen.¹²⁶ Despite these expectations, too much attention to luxuries was unacceptable.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers only mention one queen, Edith Matilda, in connection with vanity. In her case, however, William of Malmesbury uses the queen as an exemplar: “she was a woman of exceptional holiness, and by no means negligible beauty, in piety her mother’s [St Margaret’s] rival, and in her own character exempt from all evil influence... Under her royal robes she wore a shift of hair-cloth, and trod the church floors barefooted during Lent.”¹²⁷

Despite the above example, most of the women of the lower nobility did not fare so well. Orderic singled out four women for their vanity: Juliana of Breteuil, Isabel of Conches, Adela of Blois, and Mabel of Bellême. Adela of Blois, “began to meditate in her heart on the dread hour of dark death, after enjoying great riches and many luxuries amongst which multitudes of sins arise to stain and destroy the soul, she resolved to

¹²⁶ These include OV, II, 118, 224, 262; OV, III, 256-8, 260; OV, IV, 212, 230, 260; OV, V, 282; OV, VI, 20, 308, 330, 332; *GND*, I, 58, 128; *GND*, II, 10, 14, 28, 128, 174, 222, 266; *GRA*, 218-20, 252, 262-8, 310-12, 338, 352-4, 730-2, 754-6; *GPA*, 202; HH, 462, 466-8, 560-2; and WP, 62. Outside of the nobility, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers only refer to a few other women, all concubines, as beautiful.

¹²⁷ *GRA*, 756.

renounce the deceitful allurements and vain pomp of the world” and became a nun at Marcigny.¹²⁸

The accounts of Juliana of Breteuil and Isabel of Conches mirror this passage: “Juliana some years later abandoned the self-indulgent life she had led for the religious life and, becoming a nun, served the Lord God in the new abbey of Fontevrault.”¹²⁹ Isabel of Conches “repenting the mortal sin of luxury in which she had indulged in her youth, left the world and took the veil in the nunnery of Haute-Bruyère.”¹³⁰

Orderic also accuses other noblewomen of being too worldly. The author describes Isabel of Conches as worldly, or *saecularis*, in one passage.¹³¹ Elsewhere, Orderic records Mabel of Bellême’s epitaph as written by the monks of Troarn. Despite attempts to sing her praises, the monks write that Mabel was “lavish in spending, dressed with dignity.”¹³² Mabel did not have a chance to renounce her past or join a nunnery as she was murdered at the height of her power.¹³³

Walchelin, a priest at Bonneval, had a vision of hell that Orderic records. The first and second groups of people who march in front of Walchelin represent various sinners from the neighborhood and their punishments in purgatory. These two groups, comprised of both men and women, represent various sinners who are guilty of stealing, plundering the church, and even murdering a priest.

Next came a troop of women, who seemed to the priest to be without number, riding in women’s fashion on side-saddles which were studded with burning nails... Indeed it was for the seductions

¹²⁸ OV, VI, 44.

¹²⁹ OV, VI, 278.

¹³⁰ OV, III, 128.

¹³¹ OV, II, 48.

¹³² OV, III, 136.

¹³³ OV, II, 136 and OV, III, 160.

and obscene delights in which they had wallowed without restraint on earth that they now endured the fire and stench and other agonies too many to enumerate... The priest recognized a number of noble women in this troop, and also saw the horses and mules with empty women's litters belonging to many who were still alive.¹³⁴

These women are followed by a group of clergy who had hoped to hide their sins from God to no avail. Yet another group of knights, who are guilty of lying and unjustly taking lands from others, follow the clergy.¹³⁵ According to Chibnall, "it is not surprising to find the vice of *luxuria* attributed to the only troop of women."¹³⁶ The vision illustrates that noblemen were accused of far worse crimes, but vanity was not one of them.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers are harsh on men who paid too much attention to their appearance or who seemed to be paying too much attention to their looks. In numerous passages, Orderic attacks men for wearing long hair and beards.¹³⁷ He is also not fond of the new fashion in shoes, which resembled the "tails of scorpions."¹³⁸ Eadmer echoes Orderic in complaints of long hair and beards.¹³⁹ Eadmer goes further saying that "with locks well combed, glancing about them and winking in ungodly fashion, they would daily walk abroad with delicate steps and mincing gait."¹⁴⁰ While Eadmer blames the trend on the liberality of the reign of William Rufus, Orderic observes the same fashions in the court of Henry I.¹⁴¹

The chroniclers frequently linked the fashions with a loss of strength and godliness. Orderic claims "all of you wear your hair in woman's fashions, which is not

¹³⁴ OV, IV, 238-40.

¹³⁵ OV, IV, 240-250.

¹³⁶ "Women in Orderic Vitalis," 110.

¹³⁷ OV, IV, 188 and VI, 64-66.

¹³⁸ OV, VI, 66. Elsewhere, he complained specifically that Fulk IV of Anjou wore "womanly" shoes. OV, IV, 186.

¹³⁹ Eadmer, 48 and 209.

¹⁴⁰ Eadmer, 48.

¹⁴¹ Compare Eadmer, 43 and 48 with OV, VI, 64-6.

seemly for you who are made in the image of God and ought to use your strength like men.”¹⁴² He relates that they appear like Saracens¹⁴³ or harlots.¹⁴⁴ In a number of passages, the author of the *Gesta Stephani* feels that those who gave up power and were unsuccessful in war were effeminate, or *vir mollis*.¹⁴⁵

The Boundaries on Women’s Behavior

As shown above, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers depicted women doing a wide variety of tasks: advising their husbands on issues moral and practical, managing estates, taking part in military action, and patronizing the church. This leads modern historians to question where the boundaries on women’s behaviors lay. Here it will be argued that as long as women were acting within the needs of their families, they could do almost anything. It was even acceptable for women to kill others.

There are a number of accounts of women who killed and got away with such extreme behavior. In total, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe fourteen different women who killed others. Most used poison¹⁴⁶ although some gave the order for others to kill.¹⁴⁷ The Anglo-Norman chroniclers also blame a few further deaths on women without any real description of how or why.¹⁴⁸

Tales of poisoning are frequent throughout the era often masking what must have been simply sudden, natural deaths, and Anglo-Norman authors were just as likely to

¹⁴² OV, VI, 64.

¹⁴³ OV, VI, 66.

¹⁴⁴ OV, IV, 188.

¹⁴⁵ William the son of Robert of Gloucester, *GS*, 139-40; Miles de Beauchamp, *GS*, 77. Robert de Oilli, *GS*, 78.

¹⁴⁶ Adelasia del Vasto, OV, VI, 432; Sichelgaita of Salerno, OV, IV, 28-32; Rowena, HH, 476; Bertrada de Montfort, OV, VI, 50-4; Mabel of Bellême, OV, II, 122; Adelaide, OV, II, 80;

¹⁴⁷ Ælfthryth, *GRA*, 262-8, HH, 324-6 and JW, III, 302; Aubrée of Ivry, OV, IV, 290; Judith, *GPA*, 10-11; Cwenthryth, *GPA*, 199.

¹⁴⁸ Alhflead, HH, 198; the wife of the Byzantine Emperor Nicephorous, OV, III, 82; Gondolovea, HH, 560-2; Rosamund, OV, III, 72.

blame men as women. Both Marjorie Chibnall and David Douglas note the high incidence of rumors of poisoning, particularly in Normandy. Both men and women were at fault.¹⁴⁹ Many of the poisonings have been discussed above, such as Sichelgaita of Salerno and Bertrada de Montfort's attempts to poison their stepsons.¹⁵⁰ Other cases were more about unseating political rivals, such as the actions of Mabel of Bellême or Adelaide.¹⁵¹

Orderic's account of Aubrée of Ivry illustrates the usual pattern of women who ordered the deaths of others:

The story goes that Aubrée had as architect Lanfred, who was then famous above all other architects in France for his skill, and after his construction of the tower of Pithiviers had been appointed as master of the works; and that after she had completed the castle of Ivry with great toil and expense she had him executed so that he could never design a castle like it anywhere else.¹⁵²

While this may seem extreme, killing over design, someone carried out Aubrée's order. There is no mention of anyone in the account judging Aubrée's actions, and even Orderic does not condemn the execution:

Afterwards she herself was slain by her husband on account of that very castle, because she had attempted to expel [her husband, Ralph of Bayeux] from it.

So the wheel of fortune turns each day and the condition of the world is subject to many changes. The fool is blind indeed if, constantly seeing such things he is not chastened, but puts his trust in that which crumbles in a moment. Man sends his fellow man to death, and, having driven him to his ruin, follows by the same path, deservedly, alas, losing the power to help himself or others.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ David C Douglass, *William the Conqueror: The Norman Impact on England*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964) 408-15; "Women in Orderic Vitalis," 108.

¹⁵⁰ See above, Chapter 6.

¹⁵¹ See above, Chapter 3.

¹⁵² OV, IV, 290

¹⁵³ OV, IV, 290.

Orderic used the imagery of the wheel of fortune over and over again throughout the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and the device serves him again here. Clearly, Orderic does not approve of her actions even if he finds them foolish. Just as she had killed another, she was killed by her husband, Ralph of Bayeux. Her husband punished her for denying him access to the family's castle, yet there is no mention of Ralph's reaction to the killing of Lanfred.

Orderic's response to Aubrée of Ivry is fairly typical of how he responds to the other murderesses. The other Anglo-Norman chroniclers are similarly detached and reserve judgment of the murderesses. Some of this detachment may be a result of the years dividing the chroniclers from their subjects. Aside from Orderic, the others were only writing about the murders of Anglo-Saxon women. Despite some detachment, all of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers castigate the stepmothers, Anglo-Saxon or otherwise, who killed. As long as women were acting for the needs of their family, instead of against them, it was acceptable if not advisable to kill.

Regardless of their place within the order of *bellatores*, Anglo-Norman chroniclers expected similar things from the women who fought. They took part in military actions and held castles. Royal women and other large land holding women had households. These women exhibited their piety by extensive patronage of the church. Some even patronized poetry and other writings. The chroniclers attribute the noblewomen with beauty but castigated them for being vain. Actually, the Anglo-Norman chronicles give few limitations on their behaviors.

Chapter 9: *Laborares*: Women Who Worked

It is usually assumed that the Anglo-Norman chronicles could not possibly have left much of a record of women of the order of *laborares*, those who worked, but this is a mistake. The authors tell numerous and interesting stories about these women although their names or exact circumstances cannot be reconstructed. The chroniclers most frequently describe these women taking part in group actions which also makes it more of a challenge to describe these women as individuals. The Anglo-Norman authors, however, often measured the women who worked against the same standards as the women in the previous chapter. These women were active participants in their world even if their actions did not seem as important and were not the focus of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers.

The order of *laborares* included a wide variety of women. There were certainly women in this order who had a measure of wealth and might even have had better standards of living or more influence on their world than some of the women who occupied the lower rungs of the *bellatores*, or those who fight. This group of women would have included the wives of merchants, artisans, and other townspeople, as well as peasants working the land.

It has long been assumed that any attempt to address the lives of the *laborares* would be doomed to failure from a lack of evidence. While this order is least represented

in the Anglo-Norman chronicles, there still remains enough evidence to reconstruct certain aspects of their lives. Orderic Vitalis, in particular, writes about the women among the *laborares* throughout his volumes. While a few of the women he describes are mere mentions, Orderic also includes a number of longer stories which are quite telling. This part of the study relies heavily on Orderic, but other Anglo-Norman chroniclers help to complete the portrait of the women of the *laborares*.

The women who worked resembled those who fought in a number of key ways. Good women were supposed to be pious, wives were supposed to be supportive, and all women were expected to be active in society. Their existence was difficult, but the women who worked were pragmatic and tried to eke out more than just a meager existence. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers also touch upon a number of ways in which women could escape from being one of the women who worked.

Piety and Patronage

Just as with the other women in this study, women who worked showed their piety, perhaps in smaller, but no less important ways. After describing the various gifts that the nobility gave to St Évroul, Orderic relates that “many other men and women made gift offerings of various kinds to the monastery and earnestly sought to share in the spiritual benefits which were there bestowed by the creator of the universe.”¹ Elsewhere, Orderic records that there were over four thousand men and women at St Évroul for its rededication.² While his numbers may be an exaggeration, even if the real number was

¹ OV, III, 240.

² OV, III, 342.

half of that, this marks the presence of many members of the *laborares*. Orderic stresses the participation of both men and women and the pious actions of the gathered crowd.

A number of women among the *laborares* make appearances in the story of St Judoc, which Orderic relates within his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.³ A blind girl named Julia was healed when she washed in the same water in which St Judoc had washed his hands earlier.⁴ An elderly woman prayed over and over at the tomb of St Judoc for her husband's deafness to be healed. Later, the unnamed woman washed her husband's head with the same water that had cured Julia. The man was healed.⁵ Other women in the miracle stories are specifically labeled as member of the nobility, so it is clear these women are not noblewomen. By illustrating the attendance at shrines of these lowly women and the importance of their prayers, Orderic stresses the significance of piety across the orders.

The story of the elderly couple healed by St Judoc also illustrates the relationship between husbands and wives. Even though they were members of the order that worked, Orderic's writing displays a certain tenderness as the wife sought healing for her husband, leads him, and eventually washes his head. Just like the noblewomen, this working wife was dedicated to serving her husband and helping him to regain his hearing.

The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* tells the story of a peasant couple who ran afoul of Rollo, duke of Normandy; the story further illuminates the relationship between husbands and wives among the *laborares*. Rollo had passed serious restrictions against

³ Orderic recaps the life of St Judoc, OV, II, 156-168.

⁴ OV, II, 156.

⁵ OV, II, 164.

thieves. A peasant's iron ploughshares went missing, and the peasant went to Rollo's court seeking restitution. When he complained to Rollo, the duke gave the man money to replace his loss. Once he returned home, it became obvious that the wife had hidden the ploughshares without her husband's knowledge.⁶

There are two versions of the story which give two separate endings to what so far had only minor differences. In the earliest version, Rollo's men whipped a confession out of the peasant's wife. Rollo then asked the peasant if he had known his wife was a thief. When the peasant replied that he had known, Rollo had the couple hung.⁷ In the later version, the wife confesses and is blinded as punishment. When she returned to her husband, he told her, "I do not want you to steal anymore; from now on you shall learn to obey the duke's laws."⁸

The impetus behind telling this story is clearly to discuss the penalties of disturbing the duke's peace; however, the story does describe the relationship between the husband and wife. Not only had the bad wife tried to cheat Rollo, but both versions focus on the idea that a greater sin was committed when the wife went behind her husband's back. She did not consult her husband, a sin for any wife regardless of the order to which one belonged. In the earliest version of the story, the peasant is doomed by his wife's deeds. It was implied that he should have known better what kind of woman he had married and also that he should have kept track of her actions. The later version stresses the wife's actions, her betrayal, rather than any flaws in her husband. Because of

⁶ There are two versions of the story: *GND*, I, 70 and *GND*, II, 286-8.

⁷ *GND*, I, 70

⁸ *GND*, II, 288.

this, the husband is not punished and rather admonishes his wife on top of all the punishments doled out by the duke's men.

Husbands consulting wives is a frequent theme in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. This aspect of noble wives has been dealt with above,⁹ but the story of the peasant couple reiterates the theme amongst the *laborares*. Orderic elsewhere comments, "Upon William [the Conqueror]'s death, the realm was thrown into chaos. Everyone rushed hither and thither to ask his wife or acquaintance or friend what he ought to do."¹⁰ At every level of society, the advice that wives gave to their husbands was highly valued. In this case, it is mentioned above the advice of acquaintances and friends.

The preceding story also illustrates that even peasants could apply to, and get, justice from the duke's court. Rollo gave the couple money to replace the stolen goods. Orderic also relates how William Goel "had done injury to a certain woman at Pacy, and when she lodged a complaint with William of Breteuil he, as a just lord should, sat in judgement on the contumacious youth."¹¹ These actions caused a great deal of tension and rivalry between the men of Goel and Breteuil, which is the main reason that Orderic includes it in his history. Even at the risk of causing tension, William of Breteuil delivered justice for this unnamed woman of lowly origins. Peasants and other members of the *laborares* were not helpless or without recourse even when up against a member of the *bellatores*.

Noblewoman met predicaments with a certain pragmatism, and this same pragmatism served the women of the *laborares*. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers praised

⁹ See above, Chapter 4.

¹⁰ OV, IV, 102.

¹¹ OV, IV, 286.

wise women regardless of their place in the orders. A great deal of rain caused severe flooding in September and October 1134. The flooding had caused problems for “countless thousands of men and women of every order and rank in a common catastrophe.”¹² In the midst of the chaos,

one poor woman, who had recently given birth to a child, heard the roar of the raging water and leapt from her bed terrified, but she kept her head, snatched up the baby and a hen with its chickens, and quickly climbed on top of a haystack that was outside her cottage. The force of the rushing water, which was submerging everything, lifted up the hay and carried the stack for a long distance, eddying to and fro. So, by the pity of merciful God, the woman was saved from imminent death and snatched to safety by heaven, with the few poor possessions she had with her.¹³

Even though Orderic credits God with saving the pitiful group, it is the peasant’s actions, not prayers or goodness, which earned the mercy of God. There is a certain practicality to saving not simply herself and her baby but also the chickens. While the story of the peasant wife who stole the ploughshares was negative, showing a certain clever scheming, this story stresses a more positive pragmatism.

A number of the stories about women of the laborares include supernatural elements. The idea of a floating haystack is somewhat improbable and miraculous, however, Orderic delves further into these odd almost legendary tales involving sorcery and the devil, which are quoted at greater length since their style and content are rather atypical.

At that time the devil appeared in Brittany to a certain woman who was lying in bed after childbirth and, appearing in the likeness of her husband, brought her food for which she had asked him. Seeing what seemed to be her husband she was deceived and ate; and after she had dined the devil

¹² OV, VI, 440.

¹³ OV, VI, 440.

vanished. A little later her husband came, heard what had happened, and, horrified, informed the priest. The priest touched the woman, calling on the Lord's name, sprinkled her with holy water, and taught her what to say if the tempter returned. Once more Satan came, and she asked as she had been instructed to do, "What was the meaning of that dreadful gale which caused such havoc just before last Christmas, and frightened us to death? It tore the roofs off the churches and houses, swept away the tops of towers, and flattened many mighty oak trees in the woods." He replied, "The Lord had decreed that the greater part of the human race should perish, but the prayers of the heavenly host succeeded in persuading him to spare the men and sweep away many of the trees. However, you must fear a great tribulation on earth within three years, and several exalted persons will be destroyed." When he had said this the woman sprinkled holy water, and the demon instantly vanished.¹⁴

Orderic's interest in the tale was clearly to illustrate the power of God and Satan in the everyday lives of mankind. Medieval people believed that powerful acts of weather or nature were portents. It would not have been odd for Satan to appear in their midst or for him to make warnings about the future.

The tale of Satan in Brittany illustrates a number of points about women among the *laborares*. Both this story and the tale of the flooded peasant illustrate the lying-in that occurred after childbirth. The period of lying-in left them particularly weakened, open to many outside threats, whether flooding or visitations from Satan. The husband from Brittany was taking care of his wife during this time. He sought help from the outside world, a priest, once he realized things had gone seriously awry.

It is unclear why Satan was offering up dinner or why this was viewed as such a threat, a temptation. The priest took a number of precautions to protect the woman, using holy water and teaching her words. Orderic implies that the priest was teaching her some sort of prayer or protective words, and not simply preparing her to ask the all-important

¹⁴ OV, VI, 186.

question. Once again, it is the woman who takes action, facing Satan alone, bravely getting the answers the community sought, as well as banishing Satan with holy water. Orderic follows this passage with other portents from around the area, both in and out of Normandy, including piglets born to a cow in Ely. According to Orderic, Satan's pronouncements came to fruition. He finds that the three exalted persons were William, count of Évreux, Queen Edith Matilda, and Robert of Meulan.¹⁵

Orderic also tells the tale of the mother of Ranulf Flambard, who proved to be a witch. Ranulf Flambard had become bishop of Durham in 1099, but he was "from low origins."¹⁶ After Orderic rails against Flambard for turning against Archbishop Anselm, he spins the tale of the bishop's mother:

Flambard's mother, who was a sorceress and had often conversed with the devil, losing an eye through this infamous familiarity, was conveyed across the sea to Normandy in another ship with her son's treasure. Her companions in the boat mocked her with crude gestures for her accursed incantations.

In the course of the voyage pirates attacked the ship and plundered all the treasure, so that the old witch was deposited, naked and sorrowing, with the mariners and guards on the Norman shore.¹⁷

Flambard and his mother had a cooperative relationship. Anselm and his supporters were chasing Flambard, and there were strong indications that he was about to be imprisoned. Flambard fled in one direction, while his mother took a ship in the other direction with his treasure.

While the above is typical of a mother helping her son, the accusation of sorcery is anything but typical. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers very rarely accuse women of

¹⁵ OV, VI, 186-8.

¹⁶ OV, V, 310.

¹⁷ "*Mater vero Flambardi quæ sortilega erat.*" OV, V, 312. Orderic uses the term *sortilega* here which implies some sort of prophetic powers.

sorcery. There are only two other instances, both told by William of Malmesbury, of such accusations and in both of those cases, the women accused were women of the upper nobility. Cwenthryth, the sister of King Cœnwulf of Kent, murdered her nephew and then tried to conceal her involvement and capture through sorcery.¹⁸

Both Flambard's mother and Cwenthryth link sorcery with tales of a missing eye. In the passage above, Orderic states that Flambard's mother had lost an eye due to her sorcery. When the people of Winchcombe discovered that Cwenthryth had killed her nephew, Kenelm, they tried to apprehend her.

Roused by the sonorous chanting of the clergy and the laity's enthusiastic cheers, the murderess put her head out of the window of the chamber in which she was standing; she happened to have a psalter in her hands, and in the course of her reading had reached the psalm "Hold not thy tongue, O God, of my praise." This she recited backwards, hoping by some nefarious trick to mar the singers' rejoicing. Then heaven showed its power: the eyeballs of that witch were wrenched from their hollow sockets.¹⁹

Both stories also seem to link sorcery and the losing of an eye with pagan practice. According to Viking legend, the god Odin sacrificed an eye in order to gain knowledge of the past.²⁰

William of Malmesbury also relates that Cnut had given up an early attempt to invade England because the winds would not cooperate. After "attributing the problems of his crossing to witchcraft," he carried out his successful invasion.²¹ Cnut fined several

¹⁸ For the fullest version of the story, see *GPA*, 199, although it is mentioned briefly elsewhere, *GRA*, 140.

¹⁹ William of Malmesbury claims her psalter could still be seen marked with blood from the incident. *GRA*, 392.

²⁰ For this legend see the *Gylfingning* in Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*. Even though Sturluson was writing early in the thirteenth century, his writings were based on older, oral traditions.

²¹ *GRA*, 480-2.

of his nobles “whose womenfolk were held responsible.”²² Orderic does mention a few men who practiced sorcery.²³ Flambard’s mother was not called a sorceress simply because she was a woman nor because of her low status. While Flambard’s mother was not treated very respectfully, Orderic is explicit that this was because of her accursed incantations and not because of her sex or status.

Orderic and other Anglo-Norman chroniclers relate tales of a number of peasant women who were killed in supernatural and meteorological ways. Orderic describes a thunderstorm on August 9, 1134 in which there were great whirlwinds. The storm killed a number of women in different places throughout Northern France. According to Orderic, “I have heard that no male perished in this chastisement, but the female sex alone in both human beings and brute beasts bore the weight of the portentous scourge.”²⁴

Orderic does not include the reason for the chastisement or what message the killing of these females was meant to convey. He only briefly and simply writes, “many calamities occurred on earth. Some men were punished by them, as their sins deserved, while others who looked on at the strange and terrible happenings grew pale and trembled in fear.”²⁵ When Orderic refers to the men here who were punished, the author is clearly referring to all mankind. The entire society suffered from flooding and heatwaves, devastating for the harvest; however, women were the only ones reported to have died.

A group of reapers were working near the village of Guêprei when a thunderstorm moved into the area. The men ordered a peasant girl to fetch their cloaks. “She eagerly obeyed and immediately set off, but at the first step, I believe, a thunderbolt fell and

²² *GRA*, 482.

²³ *OV*, IV, 38 and *OV*, VI, 52.

²⁴ *OV*, VI, 436

²⁵ *OV*, VI, 434.

stretched her dead on the spot.”²⁶ The storm left the reapers unscathed which is not all that surprising given the distance between the workers and the girl going to grab their cloaks.

In the same group of storms, Orderic had first-hand knowledge of one of the victims near the village of Planches, and this time, proximity made the story of the deaths more intriguing.

A certain young man called William Blanchard was driving home a wagon from a near-by field, with his sister sitting among the sheaves of oats. As the young man, alarmed by the torrents of rain, was hurrying as fast as possible towards his mother’s cottage near at hand, a thunderbolt suddenly fell on the haunches of the mare which was drawing the wagon. It killed at one stroke the mare herself with the filly foal that was running behind and the girl in the vehicle. The young man, however, who was seated in the saddle and was guiding the beast with the reins escaped unscathed by God’s mercy, although he was thrown to the ground in utter terror. I saw the ashes of them next day and the corpse of the dead girl on a bier, for I was staying at the time at Le Melerault and hurried to the spot in order to be certain of the facts before recording for posterity how the blow fell from heaven.²⁷

Orderic stresses both the veracity of his report as well as God’s role in chastising women. He gives a detailed description of the aftermath, although he does not give any explanation of why God would strike females dead. Despite this, the story also provides a glimpse into the normal lives of peasants, driving a wagon-load of oats in from the field with family.

Orderic does briefly describe a lightning strike at the church of Lisieux that killed both men and women. This storm occurred much earlier, in July 1077. This passage, detailing the death of eight men and one woman, is more descriptive than those above:

²⁶ OV, VI, 438.

²⁷ OV, VI, 436-8.

It struck the cross on the top of the tower and shattered it; then crashing into the church itself it struck the rood, breaking off a hand and foot of Christ and tearing the nails from the cross in an amazing way. Black smoke half-blinded the trembling populace and flickers of lightning flashed through the church killing eight men and one woman. It burned the beards and pubic and other hair on the bodies of men and women, suffocating the crowd with the foul stench.²⁸

Not only did the lightning strike cause death, but it gave a vision to another woman: “One woman named Mary remained standing, petrified with fright, in a corner of the church, and trembling saw the whole congregation stretched out as if dead on the stone floor of the church.”²⁹ Once again, commoners, both men and women, were in attendance at the church.

While Orderic had previously not explained the reasons behind the proclaimed chastisement, he is clear here. Vanity was the sin:

Shallow men are too readily intoxicated by transient good fortune, and are blown hither and thither like weak reeds bending before the winds of adversity; so God, the governor of all things, wisely mixes the rough with the smooth, and thus restrains and moderates the fickle endeavors of mortal men. Therefore while Duke William was puffed up with worldly pride, and the people of Normandy were wallowing shamefully in every kind of luxury, giving no thought to the expiation of their countless sins.³⁰

Orderic, as he does in so many passages throughout the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, uses nature metaphors and the idea of fickle fortune. While these individuals may not have been most guilty, society as a whole had to be punished for their wicked ways. It is possible that more men were killed in this instance since the sin was begun with William’s conquest, a mostly masculine endeavor.

²⁸ OV, III, 14.

²⁹ OV, III, 14.

³⁰ OV, III, 12-4.

Orderic was not the only Anglo-Norman chronicler to mention this type of supernatural punishment of women. John of Worcester also describes a string of these meteorological deaths although, unlike Orderic, he does not call these deaths a chastisement. A group of people were returning home after Geoffrey, bishop of Hereford, dedicated the church at Morville when a storm developed. A group of three men and two women were caught in the storm, but only the women suffered. One woman was killed instantly, but “the other also fell, shaken and scorched most pitifully from the navel to the soles of her feet. The men only just escaped with their lives.”³¹ A number of horses were also killed, although the chronicler does not state whether they were female or male. John of Worcester does not make conclusions about whether this was a chastisement from God or hint at any other message to be gained from the incident. The story was just a side-note to his discussion of the church dedication.

Not long afterwards, John of Worcester tells of another storm that killed a single woman near Wellesborne in Warwickshire. Like the stories from Orderic’s writings, there were high winds, although in this case hail, not lightning, was the mode of death. According to John of Worcester, “hailstones as large as a pigeon’s egg fell down and one hit and killed a woman.”³² The incident was part of a larger description of storms that had hit in February of 1141. Here again, John of Worcester does link the strange weather to a chastisement. The author sees the weather itself as God’s punishment for the Anarchy during Stephen’s reign. While the writer did not place blame directly on the shoulders of

³¹ JW, III, 144.

³² JW, III, 296 and see note 5 for location information.

the peasants who either experienced damage or who died as a result of the storms, he feels that the peasants were collateral damage.

Peasants as Collateral Damage

Frequently, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers told stories in which the peasants, both men and women, appear as collateral damage of the constant squabbles of the *bellatores* or were devastated by natural disasters. Peasants lived very close to the level of subsistence, and their lives were greatly affected by any disruption. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers, especially Orderic, briefly describe the problems of peasants with the purpose of stressing that a particular hardship affected every order within society. By stressing the plight of men and women alike, the authors make consequences even more horrific. While these short passages follow a pattern, the descriptions do give some individuated information.

Orderic makes use of the peasants to illustrate collateral damage more than any other of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. When describing the disorder that broke out during the coronation of William the Conqueror in 1066, Orderic says that some of William's men set fire to some outbuildings near the church. He then writes, "men and women of all ranks ran out of the church in panic."³³ Elsewhere, Orderic relates that Robert of Bellême had burnt the church of Tournay with forty-five men and women still inside it.³⁴ With this sort of tale, clearly the people attending William the Conqueror's coronation had every right to flee. In both cases, these actions were not aimed at peasants, but they bore the brunt of the consequences.

³³ OV, II, 184.

³⁴ OV, VI, 62.

Many times war caused death and destruction even among non-combatants. As William the Conqueror lay on his deathbed in 1087, Orderic inserts a long speech in which the dying man recounts his reign. By his own words, William the Conqueror admits, “I treated the native inhabitants of the kingdom [of England] with unreasonable severity, cruelly oppressed high and low, unjustly disinherited many, and caused the death of thousands by starvation and war, especially in Yorkshire.”³⁵ William justified his actions, blaming all those who had unjustly tried to deny his rights to England. In particular, William felt that the North had “welcomed the army of Swein king of Denmark.”³⁶ Clearly it was the nobility, not the peasants, who had done the welcoming, but William still “chastised a great multitude of men and women with the lash of starvation.”³⁷

Orderic goes further. When Robert Curthose and Henry I were squabbling over their father’s lands around 1104, fighting in Normandy affected the peasants. “It is impossible to describe the destruction wrought by vicious men of the region; they scarred the whole province with slaughter and rapine and, after carrying off booty and butchering men, they burnt down houses everywhere. Peasants fled to France with their wives and children, and suffered great hardships in exile.”³⁸

The rulers of England and Normandy were not the only ones whose actions caused disaster for peasants. As part of the chaos during the aforementioned civil war, Gilbert of Laigle attacked Rouen. The battle threw Rouen into complete disorder and Laigle’s men killed many. “Grief and fear walked abroad in the city, as men struggled

³⁵ OV, IV, 94.

³⁶ OV, IV, 94.

³⁷ OV, IV, 94.

³⁸ OV, VI, 58.

and fell or fled, and women wept and wailed. Innocent and guilty alike perished, or took flight, or were captured.”³⁹ The women within the city included a few of the nobility, but mainly it was women of the *laborares*, whether peasant women at market or the wives of burgers and artisans, who suffered.

While many of the problems faced by the peasants could be manmade, Orderic describes even more instances where nature was the problem. The stories of the women killed by storms, as discussed above, obviously fall within this category, although there are more examples in Orderic’s writings still. Flooding in Flanders in 1134 caused problems for many: “the flood swept away all, fair and ugly, men and women alike and, choking them with water, quickly dragged them down to death.”⁴⁰

Orderic mentions peasants more than any other Anglo-Norman chronicler, but others describe the peasants as collateral damage, as well. During the Anarchy of Stephen’s reign, famine was once more a problem, especially in 1143. According to the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, “you could have seen villages extremely well-known standing lonely and almost empty because the peasants of both sexes and all ages were dead.”⁴¹ The chronicler blames the famine and other problems in the kingdom on the sins of those rebelling against King Stephen.

John of Worcester also uses this same pattern a number of times, especially when describing the Anarchy of Stephen’s reign. At the Battle of Cadigan in October 1136, a Welsh uprising caused “such a slaughter that besides those men taken into captivity there

³⁹ OV, IV, 224.

⁴⁰ OV, VI, 440. This is the same flooding in which the peasant woman floated to safety on a haystack. See above.

⁴¹ GS, 101-2.

remained 10,000 captive women.”⁴² While these numbers are certainly exaggerated, clearly there were a great number of women in close proximity to the battle. Elsewhere, in an attack on Nottingham, the citizens of the town, “with their wives and children,” fled to a church.⁴³ The rebels burnt the church and “nearly all perished as the fire raged everywhere.”⁴⁴ Worcester was also threatened by rebels. According to the chronicler, “the principal monastic house of the diocese became a hostel... Within the clergy chant, outside the infants wail. The cries of sucklings and of sorrowful mothers mingle with the singing of choirs.”⁴⁵ Their lives were hard, but the women of the *laborares* did have some choices and ways of changing their lives.

Escaping the Intended Path

Everyone was born into an order, but a number of women who were born into the *laborares* did not want to stay there and used various avenues to escape the drudgery and uncertainty of such lives. Some chose service, in the household of the nobility or to the Church, as a way of earning rewards and escaping the life into which they had been born. Other women became concubines or contracted favorable marriages, hoping to use a relationship with powerful men to give themselves and their children a new life.

Social mobility was never easy but was certainly within reach. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers frequently stressed that despite abilities and feats, quite a few people were still of low birth. William of Jumièges specifically states that he chose not to record the genealogy of Rollo because his parents were both without status as well as heathen.⁴⁶

⁴² JW, III, 220.

⁴³ JW, III, 290.

⁴⁴ JW, III, 292.

⁴⁵ JW, III, 272.

⁴⁶ GND, I, 6.

Robert fitz Hildebrand was “a man of low birth but tried military qualities.”⁴⁷ A number of modern historians have noted that the rulers of the Anglo-Norman realm had made use of and promoted quite a few men of new birth.⁴⁸

Women of the laborares had a certain measure of social mobility through service as well. Johns uncovered a charter in which Hawisa, countess of Aumale gave forty bovates of land to her wet-nurse, Agnes de Preston, for her service. Aside from illustrating Hawisa’s personal attachment for her wet-nurse, as Johns writes it further shows “her obligation to reward her.”⁴⁹ The charter dates to the 1180’s, but Anna provided services at least twenty years before the charter was issued.

The Church was another avenue for social mobility. First, when someone entered into service of the Church, they became member of the third order, *oratores*. All women became the brides of Christ. Theoretically, the order which they left was no longer important although in practice noblewomen had more prestige and privilege within the abbeys. Nevertheless, women retained ties to their families outside of the Church.

Another story comes from Orderic and concerns the Latin Crusader Kingdoms. The crusading lords Geoffrey le Grêle and Joscelin had been captured in battle by the Muslim leader, Belek. The two men escaped and were helped by a peasant and his wife, whom they met up with along the road. The peasants were traveling with a mule and their six year-old daughter. These peasants helped Geoffrey and Joscelin get back to friendly lands mostly by giving them food, water and disguises. The two crusaders, “had the

⁴⁷ *GS*, 100.

⁴⁸ For descriptions of Henry’s new men, see Judith A Green, *The Aristocracy of Norman England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Charlotte Newman, *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: The Second Generation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1998). For Stephen’s reign, see *GS*, 15.

⁴⁹ Johns, 80, note 118.

whole family baptized and enriched husband and wife with great possessions; as for the little girl whom he had carried in his arms when disguised to outwit the heathen tribes, he betrothed her with great honor to a Christian knight.”⁵⁰ The entire peasant family was elevated, husband, wife and daughter because of services rendered.

Frequently, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers described marriages or concubinage as a means of escaping being a *laborare*. When the crusaders betrothed the peasants’ daughter to a Christian knight, they were making her a member of the *bellatores*. William the Conqueror’s mother, Herleve, was the daughter of Fulbert, who prepared bodies for burial. Not only did Herleve’s status change, but Duke Robert made Fulbert a chamberlain at court.⁵¹

According to Orderic, William Clito was sleeping with a local peasant girl. When he went to visit her, William found her crying as she washed her hair. William asked the girl why she was crying, and the concubine answered that there was a plot afoot to kill William while he visited her.

Springing up, with his bodyguard, his hair still uncombed, he seized his arms. He carried her off with him for fear that her life would be in danger and sent her in the care of a certain abbot to William, duke of Poitou, a fellow knight of his own age, asking him to treat his preserver as a sister and bestow her in honourable marriage. And so it was done. William then passed safely through all the ambushed and angrily condemned the public enemies.⁵²

While William Clito, who loved the girl, did not take her as his wife, he did make sure that she had an honorable marriage. This meant that she went from being a member of the *laborares* to being a member of the *bellatores*.

⁵⁰ OV, VI, 116.

⁵¹ Elisabeth M C van Houts, “The Origins of Herleva, Mother of William the Conqueror” in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 101, no 399 (April 1986), 399-404.

⁵² OV, VI, 374.

William of Malmesbury relates a similar tale about the concubine of Edgar, the tenth century king of England. When Edgar had been told about a beautiful nobleman's daughter, he traveled to Andover to see the girl. He demanded that the girl become his concubine. When he went to bed that night, the girl's mother sent a servant girl in to Edgar instead of her own daughter. In the dark, Edgar did not know the difference. When the servant girl sprang up in the morning to her duties, Edgar realized the ruse. The girl

fell at the king's feet, bewailing the miseries of her present status and begging him, in return for their night together, to give her back her freedom; it was to be expected of his generosity, she said, that one who had shared the king's pleasure should groan no longer under the commands of cruel masters... Soon she was mistress of her ancient masters, whether they would or no: he raised her to a position of high honour, and loved her and her only.⁵³

Although the girl and king are both Anglo-Saxon, William of Malmesbury chooses to tell the tale to his contemporary audience. Clearly, his readers would have recognized the truth of Edgar's actions in rewarding his concubine. These same readers would have been entertained that the mother's trickery and cruelty in throwing her servant to Edgar's mercy had so spectacularly backfired.

The Actions of Common Women

Orderic tells another tale of a concubine, Rosie, who tried to control her own destiny. A clerk named Ansered,

kept company with a common woman, and not content with her made love to another called Rosie, with whom he agreed to go to the shrine of St Gilles. In this way he hoped to keep his passion for her from his family and friends. He agreed upon a place where she was to join him, so that they could go on their way together, and took the road with a group of pilgrims journeying to the shrine of St Gilles. She, unknown to him, broke her word and consorted with another clerk... Going by

⁵³ *GRA*, 258-60.

night to the woman's lodging he found the two in bed together. She at once gave warning of his coming to her lover, and he, snatching up an axe, struck Ansered on the head and laid him dead on the floor.⁵⁴

Rosie acted in her own interest and used the men around her. Interestingly enough, Orderic does not blame Rosie for any of these actions: sleeping with not one, but two, churchmen, lying to Ansered, and even being an accomplice to his murder. Orderic does attack Ansered accusing him of "heaping sin on sin."⁵⁵ He holds the man of the cloth to higher standards. Orderic also pays special attention to Rosie; he names her despite hardly ever naming other women of the *laborares*.

Even women of the *laborares* were not powerless, and some did more than simply react to their environment. Orderic also describes some group actions among peasant women. When Geoffrey of Anjou invaded Normandy, he prepared to besiege the castle of Bonneville by taking control of the nearby city of Touques.

Meanwhile, in the dead of night, while the enemy were resting securely in the occupied houses, William Trussebut, the castellan of Bonneville, cunningly took swift action to prevent the execution of the enemy's rash plans. He called the townspeople to him, urged them passionately to great deeds of daring, and sent poor boys and common women to Touques, with careful instructions, precisely worked out, about what they were to do. They dispersed through the town secretly and boldly kindled fires in [forty-six] places in all four quarters of the town.⁵⁶

These peasant women and young boys forced the Angevins out of the area. Obscured by the smoke of the burning town, William attacked the confused Angevins as they fled. The fleeing men left behind all of their goods, which in part may have compensated for some of the loss of the burning of the town.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ OV, II, 44.

⁵⁵ OV, II, 44.

⁵⁶ OV, VI, 526. Chibnall reconstructs and gives the number forty-six here.

⁵⁷ OV, VI, 526.

While peasant women could move around virtually invisibly, sometimes the *bellatores* could use these women as cover, as well. Orderic reports on some unrest in England in 1123. Plotters hoped to take advantage of some unrest in the reign of Henry I. Orderic relates that “soldiers mingling with the throngs of peasants and women who were hurrying to market from the surrounding villages, entered the town without obstruction; they were innocently received as guests in the houses of the townspeople.”⁵⁸ Their ruse allowed rebels to assassinate King Henry I of England’s castellan and take control of the castle at Candos.⁵⁹

Even though many have assumed that it is nearly impossible to reconstruct the lives of those who work, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers do describe the *laborares* in numerous passages. Like other women described in this study, the chroniclers portray working women as pious, active and pragmatic in solving everyday problems. Just as with the women from the other orders, the *laborares* had options for escaping their order. Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe working women taking part in group actions and frequently portrayed them as victims of collateral damage.

⁵⁸ OV, VI, 342.

⁵⁹ OV, VI, 342-4.

Chapter 10: Conclusion: Pragmatism, Patronage, Piety and Participation

Beneath lies the body of Avice, born nobly;
May Christ help her to heaven, to have life eternal.
To her Lord while she lived she looked with great longing
And practiced his precepts, abiding in probity.
Most fair of face, well-spoken and full of wisdom,
She strove without ceasing to share in God's service;
For holy masses and hours she was daily hearing.
So as a modest maid she modeled her living.
After, when she was wedded to the noble knight Walter,
For fifteen more years she lived in felicity
And gave him in gladness twelve goodly children.
Specially she shone with the light of sound morals;
The cult of the church she steadfastly cherished,
Bestowing her best jewels for the benefit of the altar.
Generous in giving to priests, monks, and all God's needy,
To widows, waifs, and the sick she was gentle and well-doing;
So chaste and so constant that not the most craven
Dared to breathe one base word against her bright honor.
On the feast of St Peter, falling in February,
Came dark death upon her and closed her devotions.
Men of Auffay lament for the loss of this lady;
May God grant her soul gladness and glory eternal. Amen.¹

Orderic wrote this epitaph of Avice of Auffay, one of the benefactors of his abbey at St Évrout. He touched briefly on every stage of her life: a modest and pious daughter, a wise and beautiful wife, a mother to twelve children. Orderic stressed her high morals, her piety and her patronage of the Church. Avice, as Orderic portrays her here, represents the model woman.

¹ OV, III, 256-8.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers wrote about women who were active, wise, pious, obedient, bold, and chaste. The authors were not misogynistic but rather praised women. While the works of modern historians highlight an important few of these women, making them seem exceptional, the chroniclers described over a thousand women at every stage of life and from every order in society. This study has examined the Anglo-Norman chronicles in a more holistic manner, revealing forgotten women who proved to be just as exceptional as the few highlighted by modern historians.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers used antecedents from the Bible, Greek and Roman myth, and a history just outside of memory to serve as models for contemporary women. Since the chronicles were intended to instruct as much as describe, the inclusion of antecedents is important and telling. The Anglo-Norman writers chose antecedents who were pious, active and wise.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers wrote about women at every stage of life. While young girls were not as visible in the chronicles, the authors praised daughters who were obedient and pious. Since the chroniclers expected women to be wise, education was an important part of preparing girls for their future lives. As girls reached marriageable age, they became more visible. Marriages had little to do with love and created a lasting link between two families frequently weaving peace or strengthening already existent ties. Daughters could be torn, however, between the family into which they were born and the family into which they had married.

Once daughters became wives, these women entered the most visible part of their lives. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers stressed that wives needed to be wise, obedient, chaste, and pious. Most importantly, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers described wives as

being able to help their husbands in almost any task necessary to administer their lands, from worrying over ploughshares to holding castles. Wives acted independently of their husbands.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers also described concubines whose relationships ranged from simple extramarital sex to women who were wives in all but name. It may seem that churchmen writers would have shied away from discussing such salaciousness; the Anglo-Norman writers, however, not only described them but mostly refrained from castigating them.

Producing children was one of the most important aspects of being a wife. Even though it is impossible to estimate family size, women gave birth to many children and spent much of their lives mothering. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers described mothers educating their children and giving them advice long after they had grown up. Mothers nurtured their children and protected their interests, especially during regencies. The authors praised many mothers but also showed their opposite, the archetypal evil stepmother, who tried to push her own son above the son of her husband's first wife. While the Anglo-Norman chroniclers praised wisdom in mothers, they rejected the scheming of stepmothers.

Once their husbands died, many women, whether young or old, became widows. Many of these women remarried, although the Anglo-Norman chroniclers also portrayed women who remained single, either serving as regents for young children or joining the Church. While widows could be portrayed as the weakest portion of society, the Anglo-Norman writers also described widows who were anything but powerless.

While the Anglo-Norman chroniclers wrote most about royal women, and indeed modern historians have studied them more, these women are not as exceptional as one might think. The lives of the lower members of this order closely resembled those of the royal women. To show their piety, noblewomen made gifts to the church and even patronized writers and poets. For the *bellatores*, those who fought, there was not much that these women could not do.

Many scholars assume that trying to reconstruct the lives of those who worked is nearly impossible, but the Anglo-Norman chroniclers did write about these women. Just like with women from the other orders, the Anglo-Norman writers praised the *laborares*, the women who worked, for being wise, pious and active in society. The chroniclers also explained a number of ways in which *laborares* could better their lives.

Even though people have assumed that churchmen would be misogynistic, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers were positive towards women. Regardless of which stage of life or which order, the chroniclers held up women who were pious and pragmatic, who patronized the church and participated in society. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers wrote extensively about women, even though this has been overlooked by many previous historians.

Appendix I: The Muddled Case of William the Conqueror's Daughters

Even in a high-status family, such as that of William the Conqueror, the details of his daughters can be lost to the sands of time. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers could not agree on the exact number or the fate of these women, and historians have disagreed ever since. Three of the girls can be identified without causing much debate: Cecilia, abbess at Caen; Constance, who married Alan of Brittany; and Adela of Blois. The rest is a tangled web of possibilities. There were at least four daughters and as many as six.

The exact date of the marriage of William to Matilda of Flanders provides the first major area of contention. The couple was married between 1049, when the marriage is first mentioned as upcoming, and 1053, when the couple witnessed a charter as husband and wife. David C. Douglas finds the most support for the marriage to have taken place in 1052 or 3, with their eldest son Robert Curthose born circa 1054.¹

Without knowing when they were married, it is difficult to ascertain how many children were possibly born in the early years of their marriage. On the other end of the spectrum, it is unclear how many children were born in the later years of the marriage. Matilda of Flanders certainly remained in the child bearing years long enough to have four sons and six daughters.

¹David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror: The Norman Impact Upon England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 391. Douglas lays out the arguments and the opinions of previous historians in Appendix C which discusses both the marriage of William and Matilda as well as their children, pages 391-395. Also see David Bates, *Normandy Before 1066* (New York: Longman, 1986), 76. Bates argues for a narrower range of dates for the marriage and argues it most likely occurred in 1051.

The sons of the Conqueror are relatively easy to sort out; historians are fairly certain of both the birth order as well as the birth years. The eldest was Robert Curthose mentioned above. A second son, Richard, died in his teens in an accident in the New Forest in the 1070's. The couple also had at least two other sons, William Rufus and the youngest, Henry, both later kings of England. While the exact dates of their births are not known, historians do not question the birth order.

William and Matilda had at least four daughters and perhaps six. Orderic lists four daughters, Adelaide, Constance, Cecilia, and Adela, in one passage.² Elsewhere, he lists five: Agatha, Constance, Adelaide, Adela and Cecilia.³ In a third passage, Orderic writes brief biographies of four daughters: Agatha, Adelaide, Constance and Adela.⁴ Robert of Torigni gives four: Cecilia, Constance, Adelida, and Adela.⁵ William of Malmesbury writes that there were five daughters: Cecilia, Constance, Adela, and "the names of two I have forgotten."⁶ The possible sixth daughter, Matilda, is only named in the *Domesday Book*.⁷ Clearly, no birth order can be implied from these lists. The daughters are discussed below in no particular order.

Cecilia was an oblate given by her parents to the abbey of Holy Trinity at Caen.⁸ Her presentation was a part of the abbey's dedication in 1066.⁹ At that time she was a small child, although how young or old cannot be determined. She took the veil,

² OV, II, 104.

³ OV, II, 224.

⁴ OV, III, 114-6.

⁵ GND, II, 260-2.

⁶ GRA, 504.

⁷ See entries for Hampshire, 1 and 67.

⁸ For a discussion of oblates in general and Cecilia's situation in particular, see above, Chapter 3. In one passage she is called the eldest of Henry's sisters although this could also mean the eldest still living. GND, II, 260.

⁹ GND, II, 148 and note 3 and 260.

presumably upon reaching adulthood, in 1075.¹⁰ Cecilia later served as an abbess there, taking over after the death of Holy Trinity's first abbess, Matilda, in 1113.¹¹ Cecilia appears to have helped in the administration of the abbey once Matilda became infirm. While little else is known about her, it is clear that she lived a long and productive life at Holy Trinity.¹² She remained abbess until her own death in 1127.¹³

Adela of Blois is perhaps the most well known of the Conqueror's daughters. Adela was born after William's conquest of England but is not mentioned by the Anglo-Norman writers until her marriage to Stephen of Blois in 1083. While much is unknown about her early life, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers describe Adela in numerous passages from her marriage until her death in 1137. As discussed in this study, Adela exerted considerable control over Blois, Champagne, Troyes, and Meaux while Stephen was on crusade and also after his death. Her long periods of regency produced innumerable charters and letters that, aside from the Anglo-Norman and French chronicles, attest to every aspect of her life in Blois.¹⁴

Constance certainly married Alan, count of Brittany, but little else is known about her. It is unclear when she was born or how old she was at the time of her marriage. According to Orderic, William gave Constance to Alan to create a lasting friendship between Brittany and Normandy. Orderic confusingly says she was countess for fifteen

¹⁰ OV, III, 8-10 and see Chibnall's notes.

¹¹ OV, IV, 46.

¹² Cecilia issued and witnessed a number of charters for the abbey. These charters illustrate her power even before Matilda's death. For these, see Lucien Musset, *Les Actes de Guillaume le Conquerant et de la reine Mathilde pour les Abbayes Caennaises* (Caen: 1967).

¹³ OV, III, 10; OV, IV, 46.

¹⁴ Adela of Blois is discussed in a number of places in this work. Also refer to *Adela of Blois*.

years, but she and Alan were married in 1086 and she died in 1090.¹⁵ The couple was apparently childless.¹⁶ Clearly the marriage was just long enough to have established important kinship ties between William the Conqueror and Brittany, which kept her memory fresh in the minds of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. The same cannot be said for her other sisters.

The existence of Agatha, Adelaide, and Matilda is the second major point of contention. Is Agatha one daughter with two appellations or two separate daughters? Is Matilda yet another daughter or another appellation? If this is a single daughter, then the Anglo-Norman chroniclers write she was betrothed to Harold Godwineson, a Spanish king, Herbert II, count of Maine, and Edwin, the son of Earl Ælfgar of Mercia. It seems most plausible that there are actually two or more daughters: Agatha who was betrothed to a Spanish king and Adelaide who may or may not have been betrothed to Harold Godwineson. Both died young and before any marriage or marriages could take place. It appears doubtful that a single daughter would have been betrothed to three, possibly four, separate men and yet still die so young. Another daughter Matilda could have been betrothed to one of these men. Douglas feels that there were six daughters although he has Agatha betrothed to Harold Godwineson, a Spanish king, and possibly Herbert of Maine. While he believes that Adelaide, whom he calls Adeliza, and Matilda existed, he does not assign any of these betrothals to either daughter.¹⁷

Despite not remembering their names, William of Malmesbury writes that there were two unnamed daughters: one who “was promised to Harold, died before she was old

¹⁵ OV, II, 352 and note 4.

¹⁶ OV, II, 352 and *GND*, II, 260.

¹⁷ Douglas, 394-5.

enough to marry, the other, who had been betrothed through envoys to King Alfonso of Galicia, died as a virgin in answer to her prayers.”¹⁸ Orderic contradicts this writing that Agatha had been betrothed to Harold Godwineson but was later sent off to marry Amfurcus, king of Galicia.¹⁹ Despite writing that passage, Orderic lists both Agatha and Adelaide as daughters of William and Matilda in another passage.²⁰ He also has Agatha becoming a nun and dying young, which makes it even less likely that one daughter could be all things.²¹

It is most likely that William betrothed one of two daughters, Agatha, to a Spanish king. While William of Malmesbury has her betrothed to Alfonso of Galicia, Orderic calls the king Amfurcus. William of Poitiers describes a slightly different scenario: two Spanish kings, both unnamed, competed for her “so that by this alliance they could add luster to their kingdom and their descendents.”²² In any case, Orderic claims that Agatha, “was terrified of the Spanish husband she had never seen. So she besought the Almighty with tears that he would rather take her to himself than suffer her to be led away to Spain. She prayed and was heard; on the way she died a virgin.”²³ Since William of Poitiers was writing in the 1070’s, the betrothal was fresh in his mind, but might not have been so for other, later writers.

Neither Orderic nor William of Poitiers had much knowledge of this betrothal, and both writers certainly make the tale fit into larger ideas about the piety of young

¹⁸ *GRA*, 504.

¹⁹ *OV*, III, 114. For further discussion of the betrothal, see *OV*, III, 114-5, note 1.

²⁰ *OV*, II, 224.

²¹ *OV*, III, 114.

²² *WP*, 94-6. The two kings were probably Sancho, king of Castile, Galicia, and Portugal, and Alfonso, king of Leon. *WP*, 94-5, note 2.

²³ *OV*, III, 114.

daughters.²⁴ It is clear, however, that the marriage would have been carried out if not for her death despite any leanings she may have had towards a religious life. Her early death was a lost opportunity for the Conqueror's family.

Whether or not William had betrothed one of his daughters to Harold Godwineson was yet another area of dispute both in the Anglo-Norman chronicles and much later. The breaking of this questionable betrothal is one of several things charged against Harold Godwineson in those chronicles that were pro-Norman. Henry of Huntingdon, Robert of Torigni, and Orderic Vitalis all write that Harold found himself at William's mercy after being captured by the count of Ponthieu around 1059. At this point an agreement was made between William and Harold in which William would gain England upon the death of Edward the Confessor. Harold would then become William's most important tenant. William betrothed Adelaide to Harold to seal the agreement.²⁵

In another scenario, Harold was betrothed to Adelaide, but Harold had reason to question the agreement. According to William of Malmesbury, Adelaide died before 1066. As the marriage did not occur, Harold felt freed from the agreement and went on to claim the throne of England. When William pressed Harold over the issue, Harold pointed to Adelaide's death.²⁶ Robert of Torigni, however, stresses that Adelaide outlived Harold Godwineson although she did die early.²⁷ Orderic also seems to imply that Adelaide became a nun after Harold's death.²⁸

²⁴ For further discussion of the piety of daughters, see Chapter 3.

²⁵ HH, 380; *GND*, II, 160; and OV, II, 136.

²⁶ *GRA*, 446.

²⁷ *GND*, II, 262.

²⁸ OV, III, 114.

The Anglo-Norman chroniclers mention two further betrothals that have yet to be discussed. William of Poitiers writes that an unnamed daughter was betrothed to Herbert II of Maine. Before reaching a marriageable age, the girl became ill and died, predeceasing Herbert.²⁹ After Herbert's death in 1062, William continued to claim the county of Maine both because of this betrothal as well as another betrothal between Herbert's sister, Margaret, and Robert Curthose. Margaret also died while too young to marry. Because William's unnamed daughter predeceased Herbert, she cannot have been betrothed to Harold Godwineson or a Spanish king. Douglas feels that Agatha must be the one who was betrothed to Herbert although he questions the betrothal itself.³⁰ If there was a betrothal, however, then the betrothed cannot be Agatha. Either William of Poitiers has confused some of the facts, or this is yet another daughter. None of the other chroniclers mention this betrothal although all discuss the relations between Maine and Normandy.

Orderic briefly writes that William had promised one of his daughters to Edwin, earl of Mercia. "Listening to the dishonest counsels of his envious and greedy Norman followers, he [William] withheld the maiden from the noble youth who greatly desired her and had long waited for her."³¹ Feeling slighted, Edwin rebelled against William in 1068 or 9.³² Clearly, the timing allows for this daughter to later be betrothed to a Spanish king or to perhaps have been previously betrothed to another before 1066. Neither Chibnall nor Davis even attempt to identify the daughter mentioned in the passage.

²⁹ WP, 58-60.

³⁰ Douglas, 395.

³¹ OV, II, 214-6.

³² OV, II, 216-20.

Theoretically this daughter could even be Constance or Adela who were likely yet betrothed to Alan Fergant or Stephen of Blois by 1068.

The last major point of contention is the possible existence of a sixth daughter, Matilda. The only true evidence for this daughter, as mentioned above, comes from the *Domesday Book*. It is still possible that Matilda is simply another appellation for one of the other daughters. It is hard to believe that a daughter who had always been called Matilda escaped the notice of all the Anglo-Norman chroniclers. It is, however, possible because of the incomplete nature of William of Poitiers' account, the only contemporary account. It is further curious that the *Domesday Book* provides no other connections, neither naming a husband or a church affiliation. Parents frequently named a daughter after the mother, which makes Matilda's existence even more tantalizing.

Confusion over the number of girls and their names can be explained in a number of simple ways. It is possible these girls were not remembered because of a number of premature deaths. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers mention the betrothals because they showed the importance of Normandy and William even prior to the Conquest, but since the marriages never occurred the prestige was short-lived.

The contentions discussed above illustrate that even in a high-profile family like that of William the Conqueror there remains much confusion. While the evidence can be confusing, there probably were six daughters. Identifying other women in the Anglo-Norman chronicles can be just as trying and exhibit similar problems as the case of the daughters of William the Conqueror.

Select Bibliography

Manuscript Sources

London, British Library

Add 35112.

Add 33816.

Add 40000.

Additional Charter 28347.

Cotton Manuscripts:

Vespasian A, xviii.

Eg., 2951.

Seals, cx, 41.

Primary Sources

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Translated and edited by Michael Swanton. New York: Routledge. 1998.

Bede. *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Edited by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1969.

De B. Ida Vitae in Acta Sanctorum. 60 vol.s. Edited by J. Bollandus and G. Henschenius. Atwerp: 1643. April 13, pp. 139-150.

Domesday Book. 38 volumes. Translated and edited by John Morris. Chichester: Phillimore Press. 1975.

Dudo of St Quentin. *De Moribus et Actis Primorum Normanniae Ducum*.

Translated by E. Christiansen. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press. 1998.

Eadmer. *History of Recent Events in England*. Translated by G. Bosanquet.

Philadelphia: Dufour. 1965.

-----*Historia Novorum in Anglia, et opuscula duo De Vita Sancti Anselmi et Quibusdam*

Miraculis Ejus. Edited by Martin Rule. Roll Series. vol 81. Wiesbaden: Kraus

Reprint. 1965.

Encomium Emma Reginae. Edited by Alistair Campbell. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press. 1998.

Gesta Stephani, Regis Anglorum. Translated by K. R. Potter. Oxford: Clarendon

Press. 1976.

Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumieges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert

Of Torigni. 2 vols. Translated by Elisabeth M C van Houts. New York:

Oxford University Press. 1992.

Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*.

Translated and edited by Diana Greenway. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1996.

John of Salisbury. *The Letters of John of Salisbury*. Vol 1. New York: Thomas

Nelson & Sons, Ltd. 1955.

-----*Historia Pontificalis*. ed. Marjorie Chibnall. NY: Thomas Nelson & Sons,

Ltd. 1962.

John of Worcester. *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*. Vol 2 and 3. Translated by

Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk. New York: Clarendon Press. 1995-8.

The Normans in Europe. Edited and translated by Elizabeth van Houts. Manchester:

- Manchester University Press. 2000.
- Ordericus Vitalis. *Historia Ecclesiastica*. 6 vols. Translated by Marjorie Chibnall.
New York: Oxford University Press. 1969-83.
- Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid*. Translated
with an introduction by Sean Gilsdorf. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic
University Press. 2004.
- Ralph of Coggeshall. *Chronicon Anglicanum*. Roll Series, no. 66. Wiesbaden:
Kraus Reprint. 1965.
- Recueil des Actes des Ducs de Normandie de 911 á 1066*. Edited by Marie Fauroux.
Caen: Société d' Impressions. 1961.
- Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*. Edited by Bouquet.
Paris: 1866.
- Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154*. Vol. III. Edited by H W C Davis.
Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1913.
- William of Malmesbury. *The Chronicles of William of Malmesbury*. Translated by
J. A. Giles. London: Bohn. 1968.
- The Early History of Glastonbury: an Edition, Translation, and Study of William
Of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*. Edited and translated
By John Scott. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press. 1981.
- Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*. Translated by David Preest. Woodbridge, Suffolk:
Boydell Press. 2002.
- Gesta Regum Anglorum*, vol. 1. Edited and translated by R. A. B.
Mynors. Completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom. Oxford:

Clarendon Press. 2006.

William of Poitiers. *Gesta Guillelmi of William Poitiers*. Edited and translated by

R. H. C. Davis & M. Chibnall. New York: Oxford University Press. 1998.

Wace. *The History of the Norman People: Wace's Roman de Rou*. Translated by

Glyn S. Burgess with notes by Burgess and Elisabeth van Houts. Woodbridge:

Boydell Press. 2004.

Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: an Anthology of Medieval Texts. Edited by

Alcuin Blamires. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1992.

Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500. translated and edited by Jennifer

Ward. New York: Manchester University Press. 1995.

Secondary Literature

Ashdown, Dulcie M. *Royal Children*. London: Robert Hale, Ltd. 1979.

Bagshawe, Frederic G. *The History of the Royal Family of England*. St Louis,

MO: Sand & Co. 1912.

Baldwin, John W. "Five Discourses on Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Northern

France around 1200" in *Speculum* 66, no 4 (October 1991): 797-819.

-----*The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200*.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1996.

Barlow, Frank. *The Feudal Kingdom of England: 1042-1216*. NY: McKay Co., Inc.

1961.

Bearman, Robert. "Baldwin de Redvers: Some Aspects of a Baronial Career in

- the Reign of King Stephen.” *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, 18. ed. Christopher Harper-Bill. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1995:19-46.
- Black, Edward. *Royal Brides: Queens of England in the Middle Ages*. Sussex: The Book Guild. 1987.
- Blamires, Alcuin. *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1997.
- Bouchard, Constance B. “Consanguinity and Noble Marriages in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries” in *Speculum* 56, no. 2 (April 1981): 268-87.
- Those of my Blood: Constructing Noble Families in Medieval Francia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2001.
- Brand, Paul A., Paul R. Hyams, and Rosamond Faith. “Seigneurial Control of Women’s Marriage” in *Past and Present* 99 (May 1983): 123-48.
- Buckstaff, F.G. *Married Women’s Property in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Law and the Origins of Common Law Dower*. American Academy of Political And Social Science. 1894.
- Bur, Michel. *La Formation du Comté de Champagne, 950-1150*. Nancy: Presses l’Université de Nancy II. 1977.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1987.
- Chibnall, Marjorie. *Anglo-Norman England, 1066-1166*. Oxford: 1986.
- The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother, and Lady of the English*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. 1991.

- Piety, Power, and History in Medieval England and Normandy*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate. 2000.
- The World of Orderic Vitalis*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1984.
- "Women in Orderic Vitalis" in *The Haskins Society Journal: Studies in Medieval History*, vol. 2, edited by Robert Patterson. London: Hambledon Press. 1990.
- Cook, Petronelle. *Queen Consorts of England: the Power Behind the Throne*. New York: Facts On File, Inc. 1993.
- Crouch, David. *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century*. London: Cambridge University Press. 1986.
- DeAragon, RaGena C. "In Pursuit of Aristocratic Women: A Key to Success in Norman England" in *Albion* 14 (Winter 1982): 258-66.
- Davis, R. H. C. *King Stephen: 1135-1154*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman, Inc. 1990.
- "The Authorship of the Gesta Stephani" in *English Historical Review*. Harlow, England: Langman, Green, & Co.
- Duby, Georges. *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: the making of modern marriage in medieval France*. Translated by Barbara Bray. NY: Pantheon. 1983.
- Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth Century France*. Translated by Elborg Forster. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. 1978.
- Women of the Twelfth Century*. 3 vols. Translated by Jean Birrell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1997-.
- Duby, Georges and Michelle Perrot, editors. *A History of Women in the West*. 5 vols. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1992-.

- Dunbabin, Jean. *France in the Making, 843-1180*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000.
- Evergates, Theodore, ed. *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1999.
- Fuhrman, Horst. *Germany in the High Middle Ages, c 1050 to 1200*. Translated by Timothy Reuter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1986.
- Galbraith, V H. *Kings and Chroniclers: Essays in Medieval History*. London: Hambledon Press. 1982.
- Gameson, Richard. *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c. 1066-1130)*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999.
- Gies, Frances and Joseph Gies. *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages*. New York: Harper Collins. 1987.
- *Women in the Middle Ages*. New York: Crowell. 1978.
- Gransden, Antonia. *Historical Writing in England, c 550-c 1307*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1974.
- Green, Judith A. *The Aristocracy of Norman England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997.
- “Aristocratic Loyalties on the Northern Frontier of England, circa 1100-1174.” *England in the Twelfth Century*. Edited by Daniel Williams. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1990: 83-100.
- “Aristocratic Women in the Early Twelfth Century.” *Anglo-Norman Political Culture in the Twelfth Century Renaissance*. Edited by C. Warren Hollister. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1997: 59-82.

- “Family Matters: Family and Formation of the Empress’ Party in South-West England.” in *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: the Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*. Edited by K. S. B. Keats-Rohan. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1997: 147-164.
- “Women and Inheritance in Norman England: The Case of Geva Ridel” in *Prosopon* 12 (August 2001): 1-8.
- Green, Mary Ann Everett. *Lives of the Princesses of England*. London: 1849.
- Hagger, Mark S. *The Fortunes of a Norman Family: the de Verduns in England, Ireland and Wales, 1066-1316*. Portland: Four Courts Press. 2001.
- Handbook of Dates for Students of English History*. Edited by C. R. Cheney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996.
- Handbook of British Chronology*. 3rd ed. Edited by E. B. Fryde, D. E. Greenway, S. Porter and I. Roy. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996.
- Harrison, Dick. *The Age of Abbesses and Queens: Gender and Political Culture in Medieval Europe*. Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press. 1998.
- Herlihy, David. *Women, Family, and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978-1991*. Oxford: Berghahn Books. 1995.
- Holt, J. C. *Colonial England, 1066-1215*. Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press. 1997.
- Huneycutt, Lois L. “The Idea of the Perfect Princess: the *Life of St Margaret* in the Reign of Matilda II (1100-1118)” in *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, 12. edited by M. Chibnall. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1990: 81-98.

-----*Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press. 2003.

Jewell, Helen M. *Women in Dark Age and Early Medieval Europe, c. 500-1200*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

-----*Women in Medieval England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.

Johns, Susan M. *Noblewomen, Aristocracy, and Power in the Twelfth Century Anglo-Norman Realm*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Karkov, Catherine E. *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*. Anglo-Saxon Studies 3. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press. 2004.

King, Edmund. "Stephen of Blois, Count of Mortain and Boulogne" in the *English Historical Review* 115, no 461 (April 2000): 271-296.

Labarge, Margaret Wade. *A Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1986.

Larson, Wendy R. "Who is the Master of This Narrative? Maternal Patronage of the Cult of St Margaret." in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*. Edited by Mary C Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2003.

Lawler, Jennifer. *Encyclopedia of Women in the Middle Ages*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland. 2001.

Lewis, Katherine J., Noël James Menuge, and Kim M Philips, ed. *Young Medieval Women*. New York: St Martin's Press. 1999.

LoPrete, Kimberly A. *Adela of Blois: Countess and Lord, c 1067-1137*. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2007.

- Lofts, Norah. *Queens of England*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1977.
- Leyser, Helen. *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500*. New York: St Martin's Press. 1995.
- Meale, Carol M. ed. *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 1993.
- McKitterick, Rosamond. *The Frankish Kingdoms Under the Carolingians, 751-987*. New York: Longman Press. 1983.
- Moers, Stephanie. "Networks of Power in Anglo-Norman England" in *Medieval Prosopography* 7:2 (1986): 25-54.
- Newman, Charlotte A. *The Anglo-Norman Nobility in the Reign of Henry I: the Second Generation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1988.
- "Family and Royal Favor in Henry I's England" in *Albion* 14 (Winter 1982): 293-306.
- Nip, Renée. "Godelieve of Gistel and Ida of Boulogne". *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages*. Edited by Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1995: 191-224.
- Nolan, Kathleen. ed. *Capetian Women*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 2003.
- O'Neal, Amy. "Matilda of Boulogne: The Makings of a Queen." unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Houston. 2000.
- Painter, Sidney. "The Family and the Feudal System in Twelfth Century England" in *Speculum* 35 (January 1960): 1-16.
- Parsons, John Carmi, ed. *Medieval Queenship*. New York: St Martin's Press. 1993.

- Ray, Roger. "Orderic Vitalis and His Readers" in *Studia Monastica* 14 (1972): 2-33.
- Rosenthal, Joel T. ed. *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press. 1990.
- Ross, Margaret Clunies. "Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England" in *Past and Present* 108 (August 1985): 3-34.
- Searle, Eleanor. "Freedom and Marriage in Medieval England: An Alternative Hypothesis" in *The Economic History Review*, new series 29, no. 3 (August 1976): 482-486.
- Predatory Kinship and the Creation of Norman Power, 840-1066*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1988.
- "Seigneurial Control of Women's Marriage: the Antecedents and Function of Merchet in England" in *Past and Present*, 82 (February 1979), 3-43.
- "Seigneurial Control of Women's Marriage: a Rejoinder" in *Past and Present* 99 (May 1983): 148-160.
- Scammel, Jean. "Freedom and Marriage in Medieval England" in *The Economic History Review*, new series 27, no. 4 (November 1974): 523-537.
- "Wife-Rents and Merchet" in *The Economic History Review*, new series 29, no. 3 (August 1976): 487-490.
- Schulenburg, Jane Tibbetts. *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, c 500-1100*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. 1998.
- Shahar, Shulamit. *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*. Revised Edition. London: Routledge. 2003.

Stafford, Pauline. "Powerful Women in the Early Middle Ages: Queens and Abbesses"

in *The Medieval World*. Edited by P Linehan and J L Nelson. New York:

Routledge. 2001.

-----*Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in*

Eleventh Century England. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2001.

Strachan, Isabella. *Emma, Twice Crowned Queen: England in the Viking Age*. London:

Peter Owen Publisher. 2004.

Strickland, Agnes. *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest* in eight

Volumes. Philadelphia: J B Lippincott Company. 1892.

Stuard, Susan Mosher ed. *Women in Medieval Society*. Philadelphia: University of

Pennsylvania Press. 1976.

Tabuteau, Emily Zack. *Transfers of Property in Eleventh Century Norman Law*.

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Truax, Jean. "Anglo-Norman Women at War: Valliant Soldiers, Prudent Strategists,

or Charismatic Leaders?" in *The Circles of War in the Middle Ages: Essays*

on Medieval Military and Naval History. Edited by Donald J Kagay and

L J Andrew Villalon. Woodbridge: Boydell Press. 1999.

Vaughn, Sally N. *St Anselm and the Handmaidens of God: A Study of Anselm's*

Correspondence with Women. Turnhout, Belguim: Brepols Publishers. 2002.

van Houts, Elisabeth M. C. *History and Family Traditions in England and the Continent,*

1000-1200. Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 1999.

-----*Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200*. Toronto: University of

Toronto Press, 1999.

-----“The Origins of Herleva, Mother of William the Conqueror” in the
English Historical Review 101, no. 399 (April 1986): 399-404.

Ward, Jennifer. *Women in England in the Middle Ages*. London: Hambledon Press.
2006.

-----*Women in Medieval Europe*. London: Longman Press. 2002.

----- *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500*. New York:
Manchester Press. 1995.

Wheeler, Bonnie and John Carmi Parsons, ed. *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*.
New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 2003.