
PRISONERS OF LOVE: MEDIEVAL WIVES AS HOSTAGES

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Despite a wealth of anecdotal information in both literary and chronicle sources, there is no systematic study of hostageship in the Middle Ages aimed specifically at understanding how it worked and why it continued. Hostageship is usually understood as a straightforward power transaction. The party who enjoys an advantage, generally a military one, demands hostages because it is possible. The subordinate party gives hostages because it is necessary. The ever present threat of harm to the hostages ensures that if they are valued, the hostage-giver will behave in a manner designed to appease the hostage-taker. However, the sources often do not support such a simple analysis. Hostages were given for a variety of reasons: to secure the terms of treaties and alliances, to seal promises of neutrality or loyalty to a monarch, or they could be exchanged as security for parlays. This paper deals with a special class of hostages, women who were involved in political marriages.

Betrothals and political marriages have long been recognized as important tools in the creation of social and political alliances. However, what will be argued here is that these relationships could also serve to accomplish the detention of females in the same way that straightforward hostage arrangements accomplished the detention of males. Further, while for various reasons it may appear that women did not make good detainees, in some instances they were actually *preferred* over males.

Control of bodies, especially the bodies of heiresses, facilitated

control of property, and the men who controlled the distribution of those bodies had the potential to affect the inheritances, lineages, and political activity of rivals¹. Competition for widows and heiresses could be fierce and expensive as families attempted to expand and consolidate their power by making profitable marriages. For kings, the ability to bestow largess through the awarding of marriage prizes was one of the most important sources of royal patronage. The critical importance of dowry and dower, especially when paid in land, cannot be overlooked, and it was often the quest for control of valuable and strategic properties that led to the detention of women.

The use of brides and prospective brides in place of hostages and the cases used here to illustrate the practice are, admittedly, ambiguous. It should also be noted that it is not my contention that all betrothals or marriages served this hidden purpose. Rather, the case studies cited here may provide another way of thinking about these relationships and understanding their place in medieval political thought and action.

The most immediate issue is why people bothered with the kind of elaborate arrangements surrounding betrothals and marriages if the aim was simply to obtain hostages. Throughout the period under study demands for hostages were common and women were sometimes given to meet those demands.² However, there were at least two kinds of problems with female hostages which made it necessary, or at least desirable, to camouflage their detention. First, the varying attitudes about the value of females in medieval society created ambiguities about how they should be treated. The same society that proclaimed woman weak, inferior, even dangerous to men also declared that she was entitled to special protections and condemned acts of violence against her. Hostage-receivers were concerned about damage to their personal honor should

they default on their responsibilities for their female pledges. Accepting female hostages placed an additional burden on those receiving them to behave in a circumspect manner. On the other hand, hostages-givers worried about damage to their honor as a result of the possible sexual misconduct and/or abuse of their female relatives. Further, the loss of these women, even more than the loss of males, put on public display the hostage-giver's inability to protect those under his care. It was therefore desirable to both the parties to these transactions to disguise their true nature.

The typical or preferred hostage was young, noble, and male, which would seem to prove that women were not considered suitable hostages.³ This idea is rooted in the notion, both medieval and modern, that medieval women were not so highly valued as men and that by extension, a hostage-giver would be less likely to be bound by his word if an agreement were secured by a female instead of a male pledge. However, this idea is difficult to support if we look at some of the ways in which these women *were* valued by their contemporaries. While they may have been disparaged in various ways, women nevertheless were indispensable elements in medieval society and politics, and their apparent scarcity as hostages may indeed point to greater reluctance by hostage-givers to part with women rather than hesitancy of hostage-receivers to take them.⁴

A good deal of both primary and secondary literature makes much of societal preference for sons over daughters, but arguments that parents, in particular fathers, did not care about their daughters is not wholly convincing. Parents of all classes made efforts to provide for their children's futures and concerned themselves about the well-being of their female, as well as their male children.⁵ And if their efforts seem to show callous disregard for their children's feelings, it should be remembered that like

other members of the family, children also had specific roles to play and functions to perform. A son given as a hostage to secure a peace or a daughter given in marriage to achieve the same end was fulfilling a legitimate role which benefitted the entire family.

Reluctance to give female hostages was bolstered by the danger of sexual assault and/or misconduct. The family, especially the head of it, bore responsibility for the protection of its female members and their chastity. Obviously, a woman who was out of the family's custody was also out of its control and deprived of its protection.⁶ In the Welsh law codes for example, provisions were made for inheritance by a son conceived while his mother was a hostage for her lord and/or family. This is one of only three specific instances in which sons could inherit through their mothers and one which acknowledged the vulnerability of women removed from the direct control and protection of their families.⁷

Even the most wicked and unabashed misogynist needed a woman if he wished to have a proper heir to his name and property, and women were the conduit as well for the transmission of blood and all that this notion implied in the middle ages. In *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*, Georges Duby writes that:

The key to the aristocratic system of values was probably what twelfth-century Latin texts referred to as *probitas*, a valor of body and soul that produced both prowess and magnanimity. In those days everyone thought this supreme quality was transmitted through the blood. The function of marriage was to ensure that the manly virtue of valor was passed on in honor from one

generation to the next, that blood propagated in such a way that it did not, as they said then, degenerate, i.e. lose its genetic virtues.⁸

The successful transmission of these virtues had to be constantly protected against contamination through the sexual assault or misconduct of women *and this was the case within* the familial household.⁹ How much greater was the need for protection outside of it? Legitimacy, the transmission of noble blood and qualities, the transfer of property, the building of familial empires, in short, much of the basis for the political power of the medieval nobility depended on access to and control of women. Therefore, one of the prime issues for those donating women was securing guarantees that they would not be treated in a manner which brought disgrace to the family or clouded issues of legitimacy or property.¹⁰ Guarantees that might have been difficult to obtain for hostages were fully expected for betrotheds and brides.

A related issue affecting the attitudes of hostage-givers and receivers alike was protection of their personal (in addition to familial) honor. Aside from cultural and religious strictures against holding women prisoners, the rise of chivalric culture and mores in the twelfth century brought the issue of honor to the forefront. In this instance, the question of how closely men adhered to a "code of chivalry"-- *what they did*--is less important than *how they wished to be seen* by themselves and others.¹¹ Hostage-receivers became liable for the protection of persons under their control and stood to earn the animus of a woman's relatives as well as the disapproval of their peers if the woman was harmed.¹²

In 1210, the justiciar of England Geoffrey fitz Peter, offered a substantial fine to King John of England to avoid having custody of two daughters of the king of Scotland.¹³ There are several possible explanations for this apparently curious act. It is possible,

for example, that the justiciar may have been concerned about the expense involved in maintaining the two royal charges and their entourage. This seems unlikely since he was one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom, and since their expenses were moderate because their entourage was small, consisting only of a few female attendants. Further, surviving Pipe Roll entries indicate that John himself was fairly generous in providing for the needs of the girls or in reimbursing the expenses of those who did provide for them.¹⁴ Geoffrey's reluctance to take the girls may also have sprung the fact that he was related to them, since his daughter was married to their first cousin Henry, Earl of Hereford.¹⁵ Yet, this explanation too seems implausible, partly because the kinship relationship was distant and because detainees were often lodged with relatives.¹⁶ What seems most likely is that the justiciar, a man in a better position than most to have observed John's excesses, wished to distance himself from responsibility for the well-being of the women. While any harm that came to them would probably have accrued to John, Geoffrey would have shared in the ill fame and feeling attached to his lord's actions.

These and other reasons, combined with the silences of the primary sources about female hostages, might lead us to believe that women were not used as hostages. Yet women and young girls were routinely sent away from their homes to foreign courts in order to secure treaties and alliances. Their bodies were used to establish bonds between political and kin groups and even when marriages were never solemnized, they might still be detained for years as a way of controlling the political activities and policies of their families. If we accept that women were valued in different, but no less important ways than men, then we can also challenge the conventional wisdom that they were not given and received as hostages. They were, in different

but no less important ways.

In many instances, the arrangement of an honorable marriage, betrothal, or even the promise of such, could provide an alternative way of gaining (or retaining) custody of a rival's offspring while putting a more respectable face on the detention of females. This was especially true when prospective brides were very young or when the betrothals/marriages could be delayed for long periods. In these cases, custody or control of the body facilitated control of property while limiting the options of rivals by depriving them of the means to make more advantageous alliances. The experiences of a trio of French heiresses connected to Henry II of England illustrate this point.

In 1158 Henry and Louis VII of France were at odds over the former's attempts to expand and consolidate his continental holdings, usually at the latter's expense. In addition to his difficulties with the acquisitive Henry, Louis was also troubled by his lack of a male heir. One solution which seemed to promise a lessening of tensions on both sides was the tried and true one of a political deal sealed by a marriage. Henry's prize from this deal was to be the eventual restoration of the Norman Vexin, which his father Geoffrey had bargained away in 1144.¹⁷ For Louis, the deal brought formal recognition of his status as Henry's overlord and the possibility that Plantagenet lands would once again fall under direct control of the French crown in the next generation.

The prospective bridegroom was Henry's heir presumptive, three year-old prince Henry and the bride-to-be was Louis' six month old daughter Margaret (Marguerite).¹⁸ Under the terms of the agreement Margaret's dowry, payment of which would be withheld until her marriage, was to be the Norman Vexin and three major castles, Gisors, Neaufles and Neufchatel. Until the marriage, Louis would maintain control of the Vexin while custody of the castles was vouchsafed to the Templars.¹⁹

However, late in 1160, the delicate political balance was threatened when Louis' wife Constance of Castile died after giving birth to another daughter, Alais. Louis, now the father of four girl children, but still hopeful of a male heir, immediately began a search for a new wife. His decision to marry Adela of Blois secured an alliance with her brother count Theobald of Blois whose holdings, combined with Louis', would place potentially hostile forces along two-thirds of the eastern border of Normandy.²⁰ Reacting to this threat to the security of his French lands, Henry decided to obtain immediate possession of the castles included in Margaret's dowry. He did this by arranging for the children, Henry, five, and Margaret, three, to be married right away. Roger of Wendover writes:

King Henry returning from Toulouse, betrothed his son Henry to the king of France's daughter Margaret, *whom he had in his charge* and received possession of the castle of Gisors, which he had long wished for. The king of France was indignant at this, complaining that it had been done prematurely...²¹ (my italics)

Louis's indignation notwithstanding, Henry clearly had the upper hand. He had possession of the princess²² and through her, claim to possession of the coveted Vexin and its strategic castles. Amy Kelly writes that Henry "took into his custody his infant daughter-in-law as hostage for Louis' faithful adherence to all the articles of the agreement between them."²³ Margaret was a not hostage in the sense of being in danger of losing life or limb; nevertheless she was detained -- however honorably -- and her detention effectively limited Louis' actions. He was prevented from revoking his deal with Henry, from seeking to dissolve the marriage, or from using her to make another

alliance.

At the time of the betrothal in 1158, one result of new understanding between the two monarchs was Louis' tacit approval of Henry's intervention in Brittany. Henry had gained a foothold there two years earlier when he effectively managed to split the duchy between his brother Geoffrey, who controlled Lower Brittany from Nantes and Conan IV, the earl of Richmond who ruled Upper Brittany from Rennes. When Geoffrey died in July 1158, Conan seized the entire duchy in defiance of Henry's claims; however, the new accord between France and England (as well as the army mustered by Henry with Louis' approval) convinced him to submit.

Restless under the best of circumstances, Brittany was especially turbulent from 1164 forward, with Conan either unable or unwilling to quell active rebellion against Henry's overlordship. In 1166 Henry personally intervened once again, using the occasion to depose Conan and to force him to hand over his four year old heiress Constance. The child was immediately betrothed to Henry's fourth son, eight year old Geoffrey, and Henry immediately took control of the entire duchy as the administrator of her inheritance.²⁴ In this instance, Henry's newest daughter-in-law clearly was also his hostage. Her betrothal to Geoffrey added the veneer of respectability to his occupation of her lands and should Conan decide to contest the settlement of Upper Brittany, Henry could position himself as champion of the legal heiress and her "husband". Further, as with Margaret, his possession of her person prevented the Capets or even the child's relatives from arranging another marriage more in keeping with their own interests.²⁵

Finally, Constance and Louis' second daughter, Alais, was destined for a similar fate with the Plantagenets. Nine year-old Alais was promised to Richard in 1169 at Montmirail with parts of

the strategic county of Berry as her dowry. She served as the visible symbol of a newly reinforced bond between Poitou and Aquitaine (Richard was heir to both) and the Capetian monarchy. Further, her betrothal set the seal on a general peace between the two kingdoms which allowed both sides to gracefully withdraw from active conflict. Alais was given into the care of Henry and Eleanor as soon as the bargain was struck and spent the next twenty-six years of her life as a pawn in the game of power politics between the Plantagenets and the Capets.

Unlike Margaret and Constance, Alais was never married to her contracted husband, but instead languished as Henry's mistress,²⁶ earning Eleanor's enmity and Richard's rejection. Although the Capets had complained sharply about the premature marriage of Margaret, they now had good reason to make the opposite complaint about Alais' prolonged engagement, especially since Henry in typical fashion had intervened in Berry at his earliest opportunity. By 1177 Louis' complaints had drawn the attention of Pope Alexander III, who dispatched a papal legate to demand, under threat of interdict, that the marriage be formalized.²⁷ Henry's rather unique counter-proposal was that he would expedite the marriage of Richard and Alais *after* Louis had relinquished to him all of Margaret's dowry, now expanded to include the entire Vexin, as well as giving up control of the important city of Bourges in Berry! The two kings failed to make a final settlement because their negotiations took a backseat to a call for a new crusade, but it was hardly a dead issue. Between 1177 and 1191 Henry and later Richard promised on no less than six occasions that the marriage would be expedited, but it never was.

In 1183, after the death of the "Young Henry," the Plantagenet heir presumptive, Philip II²⁸ added a new wrinkle to

the negotiations by agreeing to give up the entire Vexin as Alais' dowry provided she was married right away to either Richard *or* John. Philip's aim was to stir up more trouble between Henry and his sons since it was tacitly understood that the son who married Alais was to be the one who inherited England. Again promises were made, but no action was forthcoming, since Henry was not inclined to give up the property or the woman. Nor indeed did he have to do so. With or without a marriage, Alais remained a valuable hostage since, so long as she remained in England, Henry's claims to her land remained viable.

Henry II's death in 1189 brought Alais' position as a hostage more clearly into focus, and any remaining illusions about her position were swept away by Richard's betrothal to Berengaria of Navarre in 1191. Alais was closely confined from 1189 to 1195 when Richard finally honored his part of an 1191 agreement with Philip II which called for her release and return to France in return for two castles and the Norman Vexin.²⁹

Margaret, Constance and Alais were all officially the wives or betrotheds of Henry's sons, but contemporaries would surely have recognized their double status as pledges for the transfer of property. Margaret's husband, the "young king," took pains to ensure that she was in Paris in 1183 prior to his final rebellion against his father. His clear intent was to keep his wife from becoming his father's hostage as she had in 1173 when she was taken at Poitiers with the rest of Eleanor's household.³⁰ Margaret was widowed in 1183 and in 1185 Philip arranged for his sister to marry Bela, King of Hungary. However, the terms were even more beneficial to England than they were to France. Her dowry, the Norman Vexin and its castles, was transferred to Alais, and Margaret was settled with a promise of a lump sum payment of 2,700 Angevin pounds.³¹ Almost predictably, it was never paid.

The "unfortunate Alais" remained essentially a non-entity. She

was not an heiress like Constance or a honored widow like her older sister. After her return to France, her brother married her to William de Ponthieu, a loyal vassal but one beneath Alais' station and dignity. It is worth noting that Philip was a child of four when his stepsister Alais was given as Richard's bride. He could hardly have known her, yet he fought long and hard to recover not only her dowry, but her person as well. To be sure, concern for the royal (familial) dignity as well his personal honor were at stake, but he also realized that her physical presence in English custody reinforced their demands for territory. The Plantagenets also understood this -- first Henry, and then Richard refused to release her until a territorial settlement favorable to their interests had been made.

Constance finally managed to elude Plantagenet control after Henry's death and was fierce in her defense of her son Arthur and his "rights" to the Plantagenet domains in France and England. She was particularly determined that her son not be raised under their influence. In 1199 she abandoned the husband Henry II had forced her to marry after Geoffrey's death and took a third husband in an alliance which put her firmly in the camp of Philip II whose protection she sought for her son.³² Unlike Margaret and Alais, she was able to achieve some measure of independence, but that independence rested largely on her ability to dispose of her own person to form associations which offered her protection and support.

These three highly visible cases from the mid-twelfth century are representative of the practices and the ambiguities which governed both marriages and hostageship. While not every arranged marriage was conceived as a way of obtaining female hostages, there are certainly enough similarities between the goals and results of the two institutions to rule out mere coincidence in their uses. Like hostageship, matrimonial

practices straddled the boundary between guest and prisoner, for while the hostage and the bride might expect to be treated honorably, changes in policy or shifts in alliances might also place either in imminent danger.

Being killed, maimed or placed in harsh and strict confinement were among the dangers faced by the male hostage. The bride faced dangers of a different sort. Her nuptials might be delayed until her youth and value were squandered. If married, she could be annulled or repudiated, which in addition to threatening the legitimacy and inheritance of her children, might also force her to return to a home where she would be a less than welcome burden. Arguably, these dangers were less daunting (although more likely) than the specter of losing life or limb, but like their male counterparts, brides also found themselves in situations where their fate was controlled by others and subject to the precarious and sometimes cruel demands of politics.

Notes

1. The same could be said under some circumstances about the control of male heirs as well. cf Orderic's account how William of Poitou gained custody of the young heir to the county of Anjou in 1106 and refused to release the boy until he had gained control of certain valuable castles "regardless of law and the dishonour he would bring upon himself..." Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1978), 6: 77 (hereafter OV). However, a crucial difference is that women and their property married out of one family and into another. Male heirs were expected to come into full possession of their property when they came of age.

2. cf Daughter of the Earl of Caithness given as a hostage to William the Lion in 1214, Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, 6 vols. (Aberdeen, 1987), 4: 472; Joanna, the sister of Henry III was held

as a hostage by her former betrothed Hugh le Brun ca. 1220, Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History 500-1286*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1922), 2: 445; the daughters of several Welsh nobles were included among the hostages mutilated by Henry II in 1165, *Chronicle of Melrose in The Church Historians of England vol. 4 pt. 1*, (London, 1856), 130; Eleanor of Brittany, held the dubious distinction of twice being a hostage, once for the payment of Richard I's ransom and then being held by King John from 1202 until her death in ca. 1242; also during John's reign, an unnamed Scottish hostage listed only as "Alan of Galweya's daughter" who died, probably of natural causes, while in custody, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland 1108-1272* (Edinburgh, 1881), 100-1, #574; the daughter of Eudo de Porhoet whom Henry II was rumored to have seduced while she was his hostage W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (Berkeley, 1973), 119.

3. The overwhelming majority of cases that I have noted in the chronicles describe hostages fitting this description.

4. cf Georges Duby, "Women and Power" in *Cultures of Power*, ed. Thomas Bisson (Philadelphia, 1995), 70 on the value of women in medieval society, esp. as transmitters of power and lordship; also on political influence, Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, "The Power of Women Through the Family in Medieval Europe," in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, 1988), 82-101; Lois L. Huneycutt, "Intercession and the High Medieval Queen," and John Carmi Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in the Thirteenth Century England," in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana, 1995), 126-146, 147-177; and Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, 1983).

5. See Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990) for discussions of parental preferences (43-45); parental love (169-170); role of noble fathers in the upbringing and education of their boys (209-19) and girls (220-223); emotional ties between fathers and daughters (223); for similar discussions among the gentry and peasantry (225-258); also for discussion of gender preferences or the lack thereof see sections on abandonment and infanticide (121-139), sickness (145-148) and bereavement (149-155). See also John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers* (New York, 1988), 36-8, esp. n.86 on parental affection and Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry* (London, 1984), 106-9 on the education of female children.

6. *A History of Private Life Vol. II - Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Philippe Aries and Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, 1988).

In "Aristocratic Households in Feudal France" Duby writes that "...honor was a major preoccupation of the lord, who was responsible for maintaining order at home and protecting the glorious family name. *Honor, although an affair of men, a public matter connected with shame, was essentially dependant on the conduct of women, that is, on private behavior.*" (82) (my italics)

Also Barbara Hanawalt, "At the Margin of Women's Space in Medieval Europe," in *Matrons and Marginal Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Robert R. Edwards and Vickie Ziegler (Woodbridge, 1995), 1-18 on the issue of women and the dangers confronting them when out of their assigned "spaces".

7. *Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales* (London, 1841).

"Three women whose sons are to have the privilege of maternity according to law: the son of a Welsh female given to an *alltud* (foreigner); *the son of a woman given as a hostage by her kindred and her lord*; and of a woman whom an *alltud* shall have

committed rape.” (47 - Venedotian Code Bk. II, Chap. I #61)

The law, nevertheless says that, there are three women, whose sons are to have property by maternity: one of them is, a woman whom her family shall give legally to an *alltud*; the second is, a woman openly violated by an *alltud*; the law says that since she has not lost her privilege, her son does not lose his right by maternity; the third is, *a woman whom her family shall give as a hostage to a foreign country, and, that in that condition of a hostage, she bear a son by an alltud; that son is entitled to inheritance by maternity.* (85 - Bk. II, Chap. XV #3). See also Dimetian Code 215 - Bk.II, Chap. VIII #21; Gwentian Code 378 - Bk. II, Chap. XXXIX #1 and 386 - #55; and Anomalous Laws 533 Bk. IX, Chap. XXX #1 and 535, 764 Bk. XIV, Chap. XLVI #1 and Chap. VII #20 for additional references to the inheritance rights of sons of mothers given as hostages. (my italics)

8. Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* trans. by Barbara Bray (New York, 1983), 37.

9. Duby *Private Life*. See Duby's discussion of women and honor in noble households, 81-2.

10. With some rare exceptions, e.g. Wales, legitimacy was always an issue of paramount concern since both “blood” and inheritance had to be protected from outsiders.

11. cf C. Stephen Jaeger, “Courtliness and Social Change” in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status and Power in Twelfth-Century Europe*. ed. Thomas Bisson, (Philadelphia, 1995), 287-309.

12. The same could be said of males who were harmed while in the custody of others. **OV** gives an account of a son of one of Henry I's castellans, Ralph Harenc who was blinded by Henry's son-in-law Eustace de Breteuil who held the boy hostage.

Outraged by the mutilation of his son, Ralph complained to Henry who in turn handed over Eustace's young daughters (his own granddaughters) to Ralph to be similarly punished. 6: 210. However, violence against females was generally considered more heinous. It seems that for males, the possibility of injury and/or death came with the territory.

13. The Introduction to the Pipe Roll, 11 John notes that: "Of the successful termination of the expedition [to Scotland in 1209] the Pipe Roll gives no further hint than the fine made by the Justiciar, Geoffrey fitz Peter. He owed ten palfreys and ten hawks 'that the daughters of the king of Scots may *not* be committed to his custody...' " (my italics).

"G. f. Petei [Geoffrey fitz Peter, king John's justiciar] debet x palefridos. et x ostur'. per sic quod filiae R. Scotie non committantur ei in custodia. set recordatum est per P. Winton' quod palefridi non debent exigi set osturi. quia R. ei perdonavit palefridos."

The Great Pipe Roll for the Eleventh Year of the Reign of King John Michaelmas 1209 (PR 55) ed., Dorothy M. Stenton (London, 1949), 198.

14. See Bain, #s 482, 487, 495, 530, 559, 562, 563, 564, 565, 567, 570, 572, 579, 581, 602, 609, 612, and 646.

15. "Henry, 1st Earl of Hereford (1176?-1220) [son of William the Lion's sister Margaret by her second husband Humphrey de Bohun]; he married Matilda (d. 1236), daughter of Geoffrey FitzPiers, Earl of Essex..." Alison Weir, *Britain's Royal Families: The Complete Genealogy* (London, 1989), 195.

16. Along with the king of Scotland's daughters, thirteen other hostages, all young noble males who were the sons of noble Scottish households, were also sent to England. They were dispersed throughout the kingdom in the households of relatives in

England for their care and upbringing. (See Bain, 574). See also **OV** on Henry I's decision to entrust William Clito to the care of Helias of Maine the boy's brother-in-law. Significantly, Orderic notes that Henry decided to do so "for fear that it would be held against him if the boy came to any harm while in his hands..." 6: 93.

17. The northern or Norman Vexin was actually given away in stages, partly in 1144 by Geoffrey and partly by Henry in 1151. In both cases, the land was the price for the French crown's recognition of the Plantagenets as the dukes of Normandy.

18. Thomas Becket went to Paris in the summer of 1158 to complete negotiations for the marriage and the infant princess was turned over to Henry in the fall of the same year during his own visit to Paris.

19. James H. Ramsay, *The Angevin Empire or the Three Reigns of Henry II, Richard I, and John (A.D. 1154-1216)* (New York, 1903), 23-4. See also Roger Hoveden, *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden comprising the History of England and of other countries of Europe from A.D. 732 to A.D. 1201*, 2 vols. (London, 1853), (hereafter **RH**) who notes the arrangement for custody of the castles to remain with the Templars (Robert de Pirou, Tostes de Saint Omer and Richard de Hastings) until the marriages took place and that the Templars named were present at the wedding of the children and immediately thereafter turned the castles over to Henry. Louis is described as being so angry that he banished the Templars, who fled into England where they were received and rewarded by Henry.

20. See Warren, 89-90 for a discussion of the political ramifications of the alliance between Louis VII and Adela's brothers the counts of Blois and Champagne.

21. Roger of Wendover, *Flowers of History* (formerly ascribed to Matthew Paris) (London, 1849) 2 vols. 1: 533 (hereafter **RW**.)

See also **RH** vol. 1, 257-8: "Henry king of England, caused his son Henry to be married to Margaret, the daughter of the king of France, although they were as yet little children, crying in the cradle." He places the marriage in 1161 and couples it with the betrothal of Richard and Alais which is probably incorrect. While the children were too young to give consent and consummate the marriage, their formal betrothal would have been legally and ecclesiastically recognized as a binding marriage. The consummation of the marriage would come when they were of age. Therefore under strict interpretation, the young prince (or his guardian) was entitled to possession of his bride's dowry and she in turn was entitled to dower had been agreed upon for her.

This is a tricky area since the definition of what constituted a legal marriage was still in a state of flux. Further, imprecision of language and of translations sometimes create additional barriers to understanding whether what is being discussed is a promise to marry, a formal (i.e. binding) betrothal or a marriage, (compare translations of **RW** "betrothed" (*desponsari fecit*) and **RH** "caused ... to be married" (*fecit ... desponsare*). The church official position on child-marriages was that unions contracted by children under the age of seven were not valid. However, in this case, two papal legates were present at the ceremony (and may have been empowered to approve the marriage) and Louis' objections seemed to be based not on the legality of the marriage, but rather on its timing and the fact the he was not notified/consulted until it was a *fait accompli*.

See Henrietta Leyser *Medieval Women A Social History of Women in England 450-1500*. (London, 1995) 107-109 for a summary of the mid-twelfth and early thirteenth century debate on

what made a marriage and a model of "a marriage where all the formalities were observed." Also, Duby *Knight*. pps. 63 and 70 for a discussion of the debate over the binding nature of betrothal (*desponsatio*) centering on Ivo of Chartres in the late eleventh century; Chris Given-Wilson and Alice Curteis in *Royal Bastards of England* (London, 1984) 21, 29, provide a excellent, if somewhat cursory discussion of the rules surrounding consent; James Brundage *Medieval Canon Law* (London, 1995) 73; *Women's Lives In Medieval Europe*, ed. Emily Amt (New York, 1993) the following translated excerpt from Gratian:

"Betrothals may not be contracted before the age of seven. For only the consent is contracted, which cannot happen unless it is understood by each party what is being done between them. Therefore it is shown that betrothals cannot be contracted between children, whose weakness of age does not admit consent. The same is attested by Pope Nicholas: before the time of consent a marriage cannot be contracted. He says, 'Where there is no consent from either party, there is no marriage. Therefore those who give girls to boys while they are still in the cradle, and vice versa, achieve nothing, even if the father and mother are willing and do this, unless both of the children consent after they have reached the age of understanding.'" (80)

Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis, 2 vols. (London, 1962), 2: 23-7 (hereafter **MVSH**) relates the story of a marriage forbidden by Bishop Hugh because (among other reasons) the proposed bride was under age. The marriage is performed despite the prohibition although everyone involved is eventually punished in one way or another.

And, Michael M. Sheehan, "Marriage Theory and Practice in

the Conciliar Legislation and Diocesan Statutes of Medieval England." in *Mediaeval Studies*, Vol. XL, 1978 408-490, esp. 411, 420-1, 427-8.

22. Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge, 1950) 108, notes that in 1158 "the infant was consigned to the keeping of Robert of Newburgh, the dapifer and justice of Normandy ... A few understandable stipulations the Capets seem to have made: first, that the princess should not be bred, as feudal custom might have dictated, in the household of Queen Eleanor, but in certain Norman castles near the marches of the French domain..."

Immediately after the marriage Henry removed Margaret from Newburgh to Le Mans in Anjou and later installed the children in Thomas Becket's household.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Ramsay, 89-90 writes: "An advance into the interior of Brittany followed, and then the unfortunate Conan had to consent to the immediate celebration of a *marriage* between the two infants, Geoffrey and Constance." (90). (my italics)

He goes on to add in a footnote that: "Papal dispensation [the marriage was consanguineous, and the children's ages may also have been an issue] for the marriage was obtained late in the year [1166] by John of Oxford; it is spoken of as confirming the marriage (*Becket*, VI. 170); if so the marriage must have been celebrated earlier, W. Newb., I. 46." (90, n.2)

What makes this noteworthy is that one of the offers that Henry made to Geoffrey in 1173 (during the latter's rebellion) was that "Geoffrey would have the inheritance of his bride as soon as the marriage with Constance could be celebrated." (172) This is an example of the confusion between betrothals and marriages noted above. In this instance, it seems that what Conan was forced to

agree to in 1166 had been the betrothal of Constance to Geoffrey, which was binding -- contemporaries might well think of it as a "marriage" -- but provided an out when the couple reached the age of consent. The fact that Constance and Geoffrey still weren't "married" in 1177 when she was about 15 and Geoffrey about 19 seems to indicate that the final solemnization was being delayed by Henry in order to maintain his hold on Brittany and its revenues which he could do since he had custody of its officially unmarried heiress.

25. One relative who may have been especially interested in securing another match for Constance was her maternal uncle, William king of Scotland. His sister, Margaret was Constance's mother. An alliance with a house friendlier to the Capets might have benefitted Scotland as well as the French.

26. The question of whether or not Alais was Henry's mistress is yet another one on which historians disagree. In *Henry II*, Warren notes that: "Why Richard was not married to Alice is one of the minor mysteries of Henry II's reign. They had been betrothed in 1161 [this is per **RH** and questionable] as part of the peace arranged at Freteval, and Alice had ever since been in Henry's care, although little was heard of her. Rumour said that Richard would not marry her because his father had made her his mistress; but the rumour comes from prejudiced sources and finds no support in French chronicles." (611) Echols and Williams, *The Annotated Index of Medieval Women* (New York: Markus Weiner Publishing, 1992), 33-4 concur that there is no concrete evidence linking Henry and Alais, however, Weir, 63 states that Alais bore four children by Henry, all of whom died young.

27. Ramsay, 198.

28. Louis VI had died in 1180.

29. Ramsay, 289 gives details of the 1191 compromise between Richard and Philip at Messina:

"... another treaty was sealed by which King Philip in consideration of 10,000 marks to be paid by certain installments released Richard from his engagement

to Alais Richard promising to restore her to her friends on his return to Normandy. With regard to Gisors, Neufchatel, and the Norman Vexin a curious compromise was arranged, the territory being settled on Richard and the heirs male (*sic*) of his body by Berengaria, with remainder to the heirs male of the body of Philip; failing such issue the lands to revert to the Duke of Normandy for the time being."

This arrangement does seem a bit curious on the surface, but in this case Philip was probably being pragmatic. Since Richard already possessed Gisors, Neufchatel and the Norman Vexin it was easier to accept momentarily the *status quo* than to try and wrest the territory away from him by force or negotiation. His patience was rewarded in 1200 by the Peace of Le Goulet made with John in which the French crown recovered the Norman Vexin and Evreux.

30. *Ibid.* He specifically notes that of all the members of the household Margaret and Eleanor were "in custody," 175.

To Henry's annoyance, Margaret had also retired to Paris for her confinement in 1177. The baby, a boy named William, died three days after his birth, but both the young king and his father-in-law clearly were concerned that the heir be kept out of Henry's reach.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Geoffrey was killed in 1186 and Henry married Constance to Ranulf of Chester in 1187.