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## **Abstract**

Illegitimacy and Power: 12<sup>th</sup> Century Anglo-Norman and Angevin Illegitimate Family Members within Aristocratic Society

By James Turner

The Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings of the twelfth century were supported in the pursuit of their political and hegemonic activities by individual illegitimate members of the royal family. Illegitimate royal family members represented a cadre of auxiliary family members from which Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings, throughout the twelfth century, deployed specific members as a means of advancing their shared interests. The role of royal bastards within a royal familial identity and their usefulness to their legitimate family members, as potential dynastic and political resources, was informed and indeed enhanced by their illegitimate status. While Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate family members' inclusion and participation within a royal familial enterprise was highly conditional and consequently varied, individual royal bastards were fully or partially integrated participants within a collective familial identity, sharing a personal affinity with their legitimate family members. The inclusion of illegitimate family members in familial identity and dynastic activity, however, was not necessarily systematic and was primarily determined by the potential usefulness that illegitimate offspring represented to their legitimate family members. The most successful and contemporarily prominent Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards were elevated to their positions of trust and authority in reaction to times of crisis and political instability in which their legitimate royal family members perceived the need for an ally amongst the aristocracy with whom they shared a strong personal and familial affinity and who could effectively cooperate in the pursuit and defence of their mutual familial interests. This imbalance of power, as well as the existence of natural personal affinity between family members and their shared dynastic interests were fundamental to the creation of a political niche for royal illegitimate family members as participants in royal service, protecting and advancing the dynastic interests of their legitimate family members. Having been largely disqualified from even consideration for the succession, Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards ceased to be potential rivals for the throne; instead their alienation from inheritance rights and subsequent general dependence on a patron or the wider familial group, greatly increased their political utility to their legitimate relatives.

**Illegitimacy and Power:  
12th Century Anglo-Norman and  
Angevin Illegitimate Family Members  
within Aristocratic Society**

**James Turner**

**Submitted for examination for PhD, Durham  
University**

**2019**

To Ann Turner, a loving mother dearly missed.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to my supervisor Professor Giles Gasper for all his support and guidance throughout this process. Despite possible being the busiest man in the university he was always willing to lend me his time as well as the benefit of his great expertise and experience. I would also like to thank my annual progress reviewers from the history department Professor Christian Liddy, Professor Len Scales and Dr Alex Brown for their kind words of advice and support over the years. Both the Academic and Administrative Staff within the history department as a whole have helped make my experience here so enjoyable and largely painless. Particular mention must be made, and sincere thanks offered to the excellent PG Programme and Research Co-ordinator Mrs Zoë Gardiner.

Twelfth century royal bastards are of course not the only ones who can benefit from the support and cooperation of their families. I'm incredible blessed to be part of such a wonderful, loving and supportive family to whom I owe more than I can ever possible say.

Last but not least thanks to all of my friends who sat through my impromptu lectures with what has to be said were mixed levels of grace and patience. If you failed to keep me completely sane during this whole thing you all at least went mad in complimentary directions.

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## Abbreviations

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Aird, <i>Robert Curthose</i>  | William M. Aird, <i>Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, 1050-1134</i> (Woodbridge, 2008)   |
| Bartlett, <i>England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings</i>                     | Robert Bartlett, <i>England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225</i> , (Oxford, 2000)   |
| <i>Becket Materials</i>   | <i>Materials for the History of Thomas Becket</i> , eds. James C. Robertson & J. B. Shepard, (London, 1885)   |
| <i>Brundage, Law, Sex and Christian Society</i>                                 | James A. Brundage, <i>Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe</i> (Chicago, 1987)   |
| Crouch, <i>English Aristocracy</i>  | David Crouch, <i>The English Aristocracy 1070-1272: A Social Transformation</i> (New Haven, 2011)   |
| Crouch, <i>King Stephen</i>   | David Crouch, <i>The Reign of King Stephen 1135-1154</i> (London, 2000)   |
| Ralph de Diceto, <i>The Historical Works</i>                                    | Ralph de Diceto, <i>The Historical Works of Master Ralph De Diceto, Dean of London</i> , ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols (London, 1876)  |
| Farrer and Clay, <i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i>                                | <i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , Volume 8 of XXX, <i>The Honour of Warenne</i> , eds. William Farrer and Charles Travis Clay (Cambridge, 2013)                           |
| Gerald of Wales, <i>Opera</i>   | Giraldi Cambrensis, <i>Opera</i> , eds. J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and G.F. Warner, 8 vols (London, 1861–1891), cited by volume number.                                     |
| <i>Gesta Stephani</i>   | <i>Gesta Stephani</i> , ed. and trans. K.R. Potter and R.H.C. Davis (Oxford 1976)   |
| Patterson, <i>Gloucester Charters</i>   | <i>Earldom of Gloucester Charters: The Charters and Scribes of the Earls and Countesses of Gloucester to A.D. 1217</i> , ed. Robert B. Patterson (Oxford, 1973)           |
| William of Jumièges, <i>GND</i>   | <i>The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis and Robert of Torigni</i> , ed. and trans. E.M.C. van Houts, (Oxford, 1992–1995)                   |
| William of Malmesbury, <i>GRA</i>   | William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Regum Anglorum</i> (Deeds of the English Kings), ed. and trans. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998) |
| Hollister, <i>Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World</i> | C. Warren Hollister, <i>Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World</i> (The Hambledon Press, 1986)   |
| Howden, <i>Chronica magistri</i>  | <i>Chronica magistri Rogeri de Hoveden</i> , ed. William Stubbs, 4 vols (London, 1868-1871)   |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum</i>  | Henry of Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford, 1996)                  |
| Keefe, <i>The Pipe Roll Evidence</i>  | Thomas K. Keefe, 'King Henry II and the Earls: The Pipe Roll Evidence', <i>Albion</i> , Volume 13 (1981) p. 191-222                              |
| Keefe, <i>Feudal Assessment</i>   | Thomas K. Keefe, <i>Feudal Assessment and the Political Community under Henry II</i> (Berkeley, 1983)  |
| Livingstone, <i>Out of Love for My Kin</i>  | Amy Livingstone, <i>Out of Love for My Kin: Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire 1000-1200</i> (Ithaca, 2010)                      |
| Map, <i>De Nugis Curialium</i>  | Walter Map, <i>De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles</i> , eds. C.N.L Brooke & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983)                                     |
| McDougall, <i>Royal Bastards</i>  | Sara McDougall, <i>Royal Bastards: The Birth of Illegitimacy 800-1230</i> (Oxford, 2017)   |
| ODNB  | <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>   |
| Orderic Vitalis, <i>The Ecclesiastical History</i>                                    | <i>The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis</i> , 6 Vols, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1968–1980)                              |
| White, <i>The Complete Peerage</i>  | <i>The Complete Peerage</i> , ed. Geoffrey H. White. Appendix D, Volume XI, (1949)   |
| PR  | <i>The Great Rolls of the Pipe of the Reigns of Henry the second</i> , 30 vols, (Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925)                                   |
| RRAN  | <i>Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum</i> , ed. H.W.C Davis, H.A. Cronne and R.H.C. Davis, 4 vol (Oxford, 1913-1969)                                |
| Beaman, <i>Charters of the Redvers Family</i>   | <i>Charters of the Redvers Family and The Earldom of Devon 1090-1217</i> , ed. Robert Beaman, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, (1994), Vol. 37 |
| Sanders, <i>English Baronies</i>  | I.J. Sanders, <i>English Baronies: A Study of their Origins and Descent 1086-1327</i> (Oxford, 1960)   |
| Strickland, <i>The Young King</i>   | Matthew Strickland, <i>Henry the Young King 1155-1183</i> , (Newhaven, 2016)   |
| Thompson, <i>Affairs of State</i>   | Kathleen Thompson, 'Affairs of State: The Illegitimate Children of Henry I', <i>Journal of Medieval History</i> , 29 (2003), p. 129-151          |
| Robert of Torigni, <i>Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I</i> | Robert of Torigni, <i>Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I</i> , Volume 4, ed. Richard Howlett (London, 1884)             |
| John of Worcester, <i>The Chronicles</i>  | John of Worcester, <i>The Chronicle of John of Worcester</i> , Vol. III, ed. and trans. P. McGurk, (Oxford, 1998)                                |

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## Introduction

1174 was, to the extent that the two could be separated from one another, a period of political and personal crisis for Henry II (d. 1189).<sup>1</sup> He was embroiled in an ongoing rebellion centred around his eldest surviving legitimate sons and backed by his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1204), William of Scotland (d. 1214) and Louis of VII of France (d. 1180). Not all of Henry's family let him down, however. In the same year, his eldest illegitimate son, Geoffrey (d. 1212), pursued a successful military campaign in the north of England which contributed to the suppression of the rebellious Roger Mowbray (d. 1188) and the repulsion of the rebel-aligned Scots. Henry is reported to have greeted Geoffrey's arrival at court with the declaration, 'My other sons are the real bastards. He alone has proved himself legitimate and true!'.<sup>2</sup> While unlikely to be the king's actual words, recorded on this occasion by the court intimate Gerald of Wales (d. 1223), they surely represent a paraphrased and dramatized version of the king's sentiments and feelings of parental affection, given the considerable favour and preference shown to the young royal bastard and the successful nature of his considerable engagement within royal service.

Gerald's account attests to a contemporary, and probably accurate, perception within the Angevin court of the active nature of Henry and Geoffrey's relationship.<sup>3</sup> The parental praise and affirmation given to Geoffrey in response to his decisive action in protecting his father's interest and represents and acknowledgement and acceptance of royal bastards' inclusion in a royal dynastic enterprise and their role in advancing the particular political interests of the family. Indeed, in addition to Geoffrey, for whom the king revealed a strong personal affinity and made considerable efforts to integrate him into the royal court and place him in a position of influence and authority, Henry had previously promoted the career of his illegitimate paternal half-brother, Hamelin (d. 1202). A prestigious

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Latimer, 'How to Suppress a Rebellion: England 1173-1175', *Rulership and Rebellion in the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216*, eds. Paul Dalton and David Luscombe, (Farnham, 2015); John D. Hosler, *Henry II a Medieval Soldier at War 1147-1189*, (Boston, 2007), p. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, IV, p. 368.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224*, trans. David Crouch (London, 2007), p.31; David Luscombe, 'John of Salisbury and the Courtiers Trifle'. *Rulership and Rebellion in the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216*, eds. Paul Dalton and David Luscombe (Farnham, 2015); Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, p. 478.

marriage and earldom empowered Hamelin, making him a more effective support for the king during the Becket crisis (d. 1170). Nor was Henry II alone amongst the English kings of the twelfth and early thirteenth century in cultivating relationships with illegitimate family members as well as allowing, or rather actively facilitating, their engagement in royal service and the defence of their shared familial interest. Both of Henry's sons to sit on the throne, Richard (d. 1199) and John (d. 1216), invested considerable trust and authority in their illegitimate half-brother, William Longespée (d. 1226), elevating him to an earldom and an informal role as the king's close confidant and principal lieutenant, respectively.

Similarly, Henry I, who was well provisioned with illegitimate children, when faced with the political and dynastic crisis triggered by death of his only legitimate son, William Aetheling, in 1120 and the temporary severing of his alliance with Anjou, elected to elevate his eldest bastard son, Robert (d. 1147), to a position of pre-eminence within the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Raised to the newly created earldom of Gloucester by his father and invested with lands garnered through a royally brokered marriage to a wealthy heiress and direct donations from the royal demesne, Robert functioned as one of his father's primary supporters and most reliable lieutenants. Indeed, it was the career of Earl Robert and his careful cultivation of an image of royal prestige and authority that provided most the initial impetus for this project.<sup>4</sup> While certainly the most prominent and influential of Henry I's illegitimate children, Robert was far from the only one. Geoffrey White credited the king with twenty illegitimate children in his edition of the *Complete Peerage*, although more recent historiography has led to some changes in the exact number and composition of this group.<sup>5</sup> Many of these Anglo-Norman royal bastards can be identified as operating amongst the highest levels of aristocratic society, taking part in the royal court and dynastic strategy as well as forming strong mutually reciprocal relationships with their siblings. It is a notable and recognisable trend that illegitimate members of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal family in twelfth century England, in general, displayed a high level of loyalty

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<sup>4</sup> Robert B. Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and The Chronicler: Robert Earl of Gloucester and the Reigns of Henry I and Stephen* (Oxford, 2018); William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, I, p.11; Marion M. Archibald, 'The Lion Coinage of Robert Earl of Gloucester and William Earl of Gloucester', *British Numismatics Society*, 71 (2000), p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> White, *The Complete Peerage*, Appendix D, Volume XI.

and adherence to their legitimate family members and patrons. This is all the more striking within a court and wider aristocratic culture which was predisposed, as a result of dynastic and cultural circumstances, to internecine conflict and the use of rebellion as a political and diplomatic strategy.

This thesis argues that illegitimate royal family members represented a pool of potentially useful political and dynastic resources to Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings and that the nature of this utility was informed and perhaps even enhanced by their illegitimacy. That this is the case is shown through an examination of the political, and as far as it is possible to determine, personal relationships between twelfth century royal bastards within England and their legitimate relatives. However, the inclusion or acknowledgement of illegitimate royal family members as active participants and beneficiaries of either royal familial identity or their engagement in the protection and advancement of a shared dynastic enterprise was by no means systematic. Instead, there existed a significant degree of variance in the status and political careers of royal bastards throughout the twelfth century. The primary determining factors of these variances were the nature of their personal affinity and dynastic relationship with the king, as well as the political context that their family members and patrons were operating within which was to an extent compounded by the advancing social and legal relegation of illegitimacy within society. Illegitimate royal family members were elevated to positions of authority or otherwise integrated into the family's political and dynastic machinations by their legitimate and crowned relatives largely on an ad hoc basis, often in reaction to their immediate needs for the protection and advancement of familial interests. As a result of the selective manner in which Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings integrated their illegitimate family members into familial identity and royal service, they represent a distinct social category only in a descriptive sense, denoting their illegitimate status and familial relationship to the royal dynasty, rather than necessarily a prescriptive one, with set and predetermined roles with the royal court and Anglo-Norman society. Throughout this thesis, investigation and analysis of the careers of illegitimate royal family members, of both genders, across the breadth of the twelfth century whose diverse relationships with their legitimate family were often framed and influenced by the political context.

Although far from universally experienced, the creation and cultivation of strong ties of personal affinity between Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings and certain members of their illegitimate family and their inclusion within a shared family identity, was one of the principal elements of their considerable utility. Inclusion within a shared royal familial identity provided those royal bastards invested with a measure of power and authority with an incentive to engage in royal service, both as a means of protecting and advancing family interests. This close familial association ensured the loyalty of illegitimate royal family members who possessed a considerable stake in the continued success and fortune of their royal family members and patrons, as well as providing them with a means of justifying their beneficial, yet conditional, inclusion within that family identity.

It is possibly beneficial here to draw a distinction between membership and political activity on behalf of the shared familial identity of the king and his family which to an extent informed an individual's prospects and political alignment in a way similar to other aristocratic familial networks, which tended towards inclusion and cooperation between its members, rather than a specifically royal and regal identity. Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings were, however, certainly willing to use their royal status and accompanying prerogatives to more effectively deploy and capitalise upon their illegitimate family members by enhancing their power, as well as embedding them within existing aristocratic networks which increased their ability to support their legitimate family and drew aristocratic affinities into alignment with the kings' interests.

The increasingly accepted relegation of illegitimate children from any prospects of inheritance was the result of an ongoing proliferation of monastically influenced reforms to the institution of marriage and its perquisites which were adopted and spread by elements within both the Church structure and laity.<sup>6</sup> A causal effect of this redefinition of marriage and the transmission of related reforming principals throughout the Church was a sharper delineation between what constituted a licit and illicit marriage. The adoption of these ideas by lay society continued into the twelfth century, a period of notable social and

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<sup>6</sup> Conor McCarthy, *Marriage in Medieval England: Law, Literature, and Practice*, (Woodbridge, 2004); Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 179; Elisabeth van Houts, *Married Life in the Middle Ages, 900-1300*, (Oxford, 2019).

demographic change, becoming increasingly prominent in social and legal practice.<sup>7</sup> This long-running process and its widespread ramifications is examined and analysed within this work, in so far as is impacted upon the political and social context that Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards operated within, as well as their status as conditional participants within a royal family identity. Isolated from any claims to inheritance and strongly delineated from their legitimate siblings and family members, royal bastards were, outside of any maternal connections, largely dependent upon their legitimate family members for advancement. This dependency, and their often otherwise limited prospects, greatly informed the utility of illegitimate royal family members to their legitimate family members and patrons since the benefits of royal association and patronage ensured they had comparatively little to gain and much to lose from rebellion and the destabilisation of the royal family.

Another useful effect of selecting a relatively broad chronological framework, besides a possible assessment of the increased social and legal relegation of bastards upon the careers and political affinities of illegitimate royal family members, is that it allows an examination of the topic across the reigns of multiple kings, each of whom inhabited very different political and dynastic conflicts. Stephen (d. 1154) appears to have had very few illegitimate children of his own. Gervase (d. 1160), the only illegitimate child of Stephen for whom there exists substantive evidence was appointed abbot of Westminster by his father.<sup>8</sup> While this was a prestigious position which significantly increased the abbey's alignment with the king, granting him more influence over the use and distribution of the abbey's considerable resources when compared to other twelfth century kings of England, this appointment represents only a limited engagement and political utilisation of illegitimate royal family members. Nevertheless, his reign is still of considerable interest as a time of dynastic conflict and rivalry within the royal family in which illegitimate family members and their conceptions of a shared and mutually beneficial dynastic enterprise played a significant role. This applies

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<sup>7</sup> Elisabeth M.C. Houts 'Intermarriage in Eleventh-Century England', *Normandy and its Neighbours. Essays in Honour of David Bates*, D. Crouch and K. Thompson eds. (Turnhout, 2011); *A Social History of England, 900–1200*, Julia Crick, Elisabeth van Houts eds. (Cambridge, 2011); John Hudson, *The Formation of English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta* (London, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Emma Mason, *Westminster Abbey and its People 1050-1216*, (Woodbridge, 1996), p. 37.

particularly to the careers of Robert of Gloucester and Reginald of Cornwall (d. 1175) whose access to and inclusion in familial identity manifested itself in the formation of a coalition with their legitimate half-sister, the Empress Matilda (d. 1167).

It is, of course, the case that a broader issue of definition remains in the examination of the careers of royal bastards and the manner in which their legitimate patrons and relatives cultivated and capitalised upon their relationships with these auxiliary family members. As discussed below, an exploration and analysis of contemporary conceptions of familial relationships and the parameters of illegitimacy are undertaken in the first and second chapters as a necessary preliminary to the manner in which they informed the relationship between royal illegitimate family members and their legitimate patrons. However, any distinctions and categorisations created through the deconstruction and analysis of a topic as complex as the personal and politically active relationships experienced by Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards and their legitimate family members are by their nature artificial. Such relationships and the empowerment and deployment of illegitimate family members were highly variable and conditional, being predicated upon a variety of personal and contextual factors. As a result of the ad hoc manner in which individual illegitimate royal family members were integrated and permitted to participate within royal familial identity, their status and inclusion with royal family identity varied considerably. The position and role of royal bastards was highly plastic and primarily determined by the degree of personal affinity they shared with their legitimate family and that patron's immediate political and dynastic needs.

Illegitimate royal children, their careers and the implications of their auxiliary role in royal governance and dynastic strategy, have in recent years enjoyed an increased, although perhaps still fragmented, attention within the historiography. Possibly the scholarly work that exerts the most influence on the current study and its form is Kathleen Thompson's article, 'Affairs of State: The Illegitimate Children of Henry I' which is partially structured around an analysis and interrogation of William of Malmesbury's (d. 1143) fascinating assertion that



Henry I fathered so many illegitimate children out of a sense of dynastic duty.<sup>9</sup> The examination of this statement, carrying as it does, the suggestion of a conception amongst contemporary observers and Anglo-Norman aristocratic culture of the potential utility of illegitimate family members is of a central importance to this thesis. Featuring a survey and overview of Henry I's illegitimate children that builds upon and revises that of White's earlier survey, its methodology is of considerable value to the study of the topic. Thompson evaluates William of Malmesbury's assertion, principally through an examination of the familial affinities of known royal mistresses as well as the nature and political implications of their relationship with the king. In order to evaluate and ascertain the character and potential political use of the relationship between Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings and their illegitimate family members, this study utilises in part a broadened version of this methodological approach, expanding to include the illegitimate children of Henry II and their participation in wider aristocratic networks. *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* by Chris Given-Wilson and Alice Curteis provides a well-researched useful overview of the lives and careers of illegitimate royal family members during this period, although it seems that it was primarily intended for public rather than scholarly consumption and features only a limited analysis of the topic.<sup>10</sup> Sara McDougall's *Royal Bastards: The Birth of Illegitimacy 800-1230* is a more recent, and for the purposes of this study, influential work on the topic of illegitimate royal family members.<sup>11</sup> Rather than the potential political and dynastic value royal bastards represented to their legitimate family members, McDougall's foremost concern within this work is an examination and analysis of the process through which illegitimacy as a social and legal category was formulated and formalised. Throughout the work McDougall cogently and convincingly argues that rather than a purely ecclesiastical endeavour, perpetrated by reforming elements within the Church to which secular society acquiesced, the changing definitions and increased formalisation of illegitimacy as a legal and social category was driven by the dynastic needs and political inclinations of the aristocracy. To better facilitate this focus and explore the changing conceptions and

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<sup>9</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 152.

<sup>10</sup> Alice Curteis and Chris Given-Wilson, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*.

ramifications of illegitimacy within aristocratic society and networks of power, she examines the topic through a relatively wide geographical and chronological framework with only its fourth chapter explicitly examining this topic in the context of Anglo-Norman illegitimate family members within the first half of the twelfth century. The discussion in *Royal Bastards: The Birth of Illegitimacy 800-1230* of both evolving conceptions of illegitimacy as well as the importance of aristocratic networks and dynastic affinities to this increased definition is of great scholarly value and a significant contribution to the topic which informs and compliments this study's methodology and focus.

In reflection of the contemporary prominence attained by several illegitimate royal family members within twelfth century aristocratic social and political networks, through the access to royal patronage, a select number of royal bastards who benefited from strong personal and political ties with their legitimate family are the subject of a number of historiographical works.

Several recent biographies of members of the twelfth century Anglo-Norman royal family such as Catherine Hanley's *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior* and Robert B. Patterson's *The Earl, The Kings, and the Chronicler: Robert Earl of Gloucester and the Reigns of Henry I and Stephen* while still retaining their focus on an individual have attributed a greater degree of significance to the position of royal bastards within royal familial identity and the implications of their illegitimacy to this familial cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

The thesis is, at its core, a textual analysis, assembling a wide variety of often familiar sources which are themselves the subject of a considerable body of historiography. Re-examining these sources, their content and context, from a focused perspective allows the nature of the relationship between twelfth century English kings and their illegitimate family members to be explored. As a result of this approach, the thesis makes use of and rests upon the analysis of several different kinds of primarily sources, using contemporary financial and administrative records such as the Pipe Rolls of the Exchequer or the politically framed charter evidence that survives from royal bastards and their legitimate

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<sup>12</sup> Catherine Hanley, *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior* (New Haven, 2019); Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and the Chronicler*.

patrons, alongside an examination of many of the prominent twelfth century chroniclers.

The thesis is organised into four main chapters, each of which explores and analyses an aspect of the relationships between Anglo-Norman and Angevin rulers and their illegitimate family members. The initial plan for the thesis included a chapter dedicated to the study and examination of the careers of Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal illegitimate daughters, focusing upon the degree to which they were permitted to participate within royal family identity and the means and mechanisms through which this affinity, once established, was maintained and deployed as part of their legitimate family members' political and dynastic strategy.<sup>13</sup> This approach and the isolation of the study of illegitimate royal daughters was structurally cumbersome and analytically crude, serving to detract from the central argument of the thesis by obscuring the role they often played as active and recognised members of a shared dynastic enterprise. While royal bastard sons and daughters were not necessarily utilised by their legitimate relatives in the same way, their separation distracted from the shared circumstances and issues surrounding their illegitimate status and the communality of experience it had upon the construction of a royal family affinity and its ramifications upon their position within wider aristocratic networks. Additionally, it made it difficult to properly analyse the effects of chronology upon their prospects, both as a result of the increasing entrenchment of social and legal stigma and the differing strategies by various kings, shaped by dynastic and political circumstances, further disrupting the flow and continuity of argument.

The thesis and its constituent chapters have been arranged and internally structured to expand upon each other's conclusions and through layering on top of one another construct, and by stages trace, the central contention of the thesis that the legal relegation of royal bastards, combined with the conditional nature of their acceptance and participation within royal family identity, made them a useful and

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<sup>13</sup> Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the twelfth -Century Anglo-Norman Realm*, (Manchester, 2003), p. 53; Kathleen Thompson, 'Dowry and Inheritance Patterns: Some Examples from the Descendants of King Henry I of England', *Medieval Prosopography*, 17 (1996), p. 49; McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 126.

versatile resource to their legitimate relatives who could be integrated, to a variable extent, into royal dynastic and political strategies as circumstances dictated.

The first chapter is an analysis and evaluation of the formation and continuity of personal affinity between Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards and their legitimate family members. The existence of a mutual personal affinity and its formative role in the acknowledgement of individual illegitimate royal family members' inclusion in royal family identity, as well as their empowerment to contribute to the advancement of a shared dynastic enterprise, is a foundational factor in the relationship between royal bastards and their legitimate patrons. As a result of this importance, the chapter seeks to examine the extent and variance of illegitimate royal bastards' personal and political engagement with their legitimate family members. An important part of this process is an analysis of the criteria for the inclusion and establishment of bastards within familial identity which were impacted to a significant extent, not only by personal and dynastic concerns such as the degree and nature of the relationship between individual royal bastards and their family legitimate member, but also by the advancing social and political context which they operated within.

The chapter also attempts to explore and establish the mechanisms and strategies through which twelfth century kings of England attempted to cultivate and maintain these crucial ties of personal affinity, a shared and bilateral connection which alongside royal bastards' interrelated dependence on their legitimate relatives for advancement, formed the basis of the political utility and reliability that they represented to their royal relatives. Aristocratic and familial networks of power within the twelfth century in general trended towards inclusivity, functioning as they did as the primary means of managing and distributing the shared pool of family's resources and landed interests; a portfolio of interest which could be further expanded and protected through cooperation with family members. The Anglo-Norman and later Angevin royal family also adhered to this pattern, *mutatis mutandis*, and while not necessarily part of a universally applied strategy, a number of illegitimate family members were fully or partially integrated participants within the collective familial identity and could be seen to benefit from a considerable degree of personal affinity with their legitimate family members. Individual royal bastards throughout the twelfth century were acknowledged participants within

courtly culture and activities as well as engaging with wider aristocratic regional and familial networks; this acceptance was facilitated by their personal affinity with members of their family both reflecting and reinforcing their mutually beneficial politically and socially active pursuit of shared familial interests.

Indeed royal family identity and affinity were relatively inclusive, particularly in the reign of Henry I in which several illegitimate members of the royal family not only experienced a degree of affinity with the king, their immediate patron, functioning as members of his court but also experienced a level of affinity and cooperation with both their legitimate and illegitimate siblings as part of a wider more cohesive familial unit. Royal bastards shared personal affinity with legitimate family members and their access to and investment in familial identity and interests incentivised them to advance these interests by acting as political allies of their legitimate family and conduits of royal authority. However, with a few notable exceptions, they were limited to operating within the supporting roles and functions in which they were placed, alluding to their connection to royal authority rather than participating in it; their illegitimacy reflecting the permeable and blurred, but still extant, distinction between familial and royal identity. Further, the existence of ties of affinity between Anglo-Norman or Angevin kings and their illegitimate family was not necessarily systematically applied or all-encompassing, the extent of engagement within family identity and the cultivation of a mutually supportive political relationship was to a large extent dependent upon the potential usefulness that illegitimate offspring represented to their legitimate family members. This translation of familial identity and personal ties into political affinity and cooperation was often based upon personal and circumstantial factors, such as degree of personal affinity and the nature of the familial relationship between patron and royal bastard which were contextualised and catalysed by the monarch's political circumstances. Many of the most successful Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards were elevated to their positions of trust and authority during times of crisis or instability whereupon they could act as a bulwark to the royal party and more effectively pursue and defend their mutual familial interests.

The second chapter is built around an examination of the extent to which twelfth century kings of England included their illegitimate family members into a cohesive dynastic strategy as well as an examination of the uniformity and variation

in the means through which this integration was achieved. An important initial step in this process is a further exploration and analysis of the evolution of the definition of marriage and the conceptions of its precepts and boundaries throughout the twelfth century. The nature of marriage and its theological implications was the subject of long running and substantial debate within the Church, taking on particularly importance to members of the monastically influenced reform movement of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This process of evaluation and redefinition led to the proliferation and formulation of illegitimacy as a distinct legal status and social construction. Another closely related result of the growing acceptance within lay society of the alternation in perceptions and perquisites of marriage was its significant impact upon the structure and mutability of aristocratic networks of power and family affinity. These changes in the formation and inclusivity of an aristocratic familial group were adopted to better protect and control the transmission of the family's landed interests and were, alongside the increasing social and legal relegation of bastards, part of a wider cultural trend, the connotations of which informed the manner in which Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings managed and structured their personal and domestic relationships, as well as the extent to which they integrated their illegitimate family members into a dynastic strategy.

Illegitimate royal children played an important role in Anglo-Norman and Angevin dynastic strategies within the twelfth century, representing a useful resource to their legitimate relatives for the cultivation and consolidation of support both within and without the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies. Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate sons were often developed in conjunction with the use and exploitation of the king's prerogatives as a guardian of widows and heiresses to capitalise upon their resources through marriage. This practice not only furnished illegitimate royal family members with the means to more effectively support their legitimate family members and further their mutual family interests but also enmeshed the political networks of their newly adopted families with the royal bastards' own, drawing regional aristocratic family networks further into affinity with the king. Illegitimate royal daughters were, during the early twelfth century, in the reign of Henry I, utilised in a manner broadly consistent with that of their legitimate royal half-sisters and female members of aristocratic dynasties

through the formation of strategic marriages with the contextual and political factors of a dynastic connection to the royal family significantly outweighing the growing social stigma against illegitimacy. This practice did not continue under Henry II, a disjunction likely influenced not only by advancing cultural trends but because of his greater number of legitimate children to fulfil this role within royal dynastic strategy compared to the relative paucity of illegitimate ones.

The chapter also includes an examination of royal mistresses and their social and political backgrounds, analyses the possibly mutually beneficial advantages that could result from these relationships as well as the formation of such pseudo familial bonds provided. Many royal bastards operated primarily as members of, or were otherwise throughout their career's active participants in, their maternally derived family identity and networks of powers. As such, the familial connections and dynastic context of royal mistresses were not only a factor in determining the form and nature of their relationship with the king but also had a potential impact upon the way in which their children were integrated into royal dynastic strategy as a result of twelfth century English kings' attempts to capitalise upon these connections and affinities. Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings did not pursue a deliberate or coherent political or dynastic strategy when it came to their extramarital relationships. While many mistresses were drawn from the peripheries of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies, it seems that the most important factor in their selection was proximity and personal attraction. Indeed, while the majority of royal mistresses were from lower aristocratic families engaged in royal service and office holding, both Henry I, Henry II and John had illegitimate children with women who were active and accepted members of familial affinities within the upper echelons of the aristocracy. However, while not part of a predetermined strategy, Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings often capitalised upon the auxiliary family groupings their mistresses and illegitimate children represented by arranging marriages between them and royal functionaries which further consolidated royal support, drawing them and their wider familial networks deeper into alignment with the king's own interests.

The third Chapter examines the households, holdings and political networks that were constructed and managed by illegitimate members of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal family during this period. The primary focus of the Chapter is

the landed interests and political affiliations of those royal bastards who were, either through a direct creation or the brokering of marriages, elevated to the position of earldom as a result of their status as participants within royal family identity as well as a response by their legitimate relatives to the contemporary dynastic and political context. The examination of the household and networks of affinity which favoured royal bastards presided over and operated within, crucially enables a close analysis of the mutually beneficial political relationship between empowered royal bastard and their legitimate patrons. Those royal bastards who were promoted to the rank of earl are particularly useful to this analysis because, as the result of their position and personal affinity, they are the royal bastards whose relationships with Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs is the most politically active and engaged in the advancement of a royal dynastic enterprise.

Additionally, their relative prominence and importance within twelfth century society means that there is more surviving evidence, both chronicler and charter, for their activities and holdings when compared to many of their contemporaries or fellow royal bastards, with charter evidence in particular being extremely helpful in the examination of networks and landed interests. The illegitimate royal earls were elevated to the upper echelons of the aristocracy and embedded in regional and familial aristocratic networks by their legitimate family members in order to protect and advance their shared dynastic interests by simultaneously raising them to positions of power from which they could better support and protect royal interests as well as bringing their adopted affinities into closer alignment with royal interests as a natural result of their stake in these interest and participation in royal familial identity.

As part of this analysis, the chapter examines the extent to which the illegitimate royal earls integrated into local aristocratic networks and the manner in which they were anchored within these localities by their legitimate family members. Indeed, many of the developing financial practices and mechanisms of the royal exchequer were utilised by twelfth century English kings as a means of cultivating political support and solidity amongst the aristocracy by providing them with additional means of rewarding service and incentivising the development of personal and political affinities with the royal centre. Royal illegitimate children, particularly those who had been raised to earldoms and endowed with considerable



resources, were amongst the primary beneficiaries of this incentivising policy along with other close supporters and intimates of the king. A prominent concern in examining the manner in which royal bastards integrated into local familial aristocratic networks and the ramifications of their royal connections is the effect of the increasingly entrenched social stigma and legal relegation of illegitimacy. Those illegitimate royal bastards who attained their primary titles and land through marriage were often careful within their own charters to present themselves as operating on behalf of their spouse to represent and maintain their family's existing interests and connections. The extent to which Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards integrated into the local aristocratic networks and familial interests in which they operated varied somewhat and was primarily dependent upon the strength of their royal affinity as well as the political context of the regional and familial affinities they were embedded in. Many royal bastards maintained strong ties with their maternally familial networks and connections, integrating their maternal relatives into their households and networks of affinity. Those illegitimate royal family members integrated into regional aristocratic networks, as a result of royally brokered marriages or direct donations from the royal demesnes, sought to maintain and co-opt pre-existing associations and affinities; cooperation and the synthesis of dynastic and landed interests being an integral principal of aristocratic political and dynastic strategy.

Chapter four examines Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate royal family members engagement in direct service to their legitimate family members, either through their official appointment to royal offices or in their capacity as a participant in royal identity and members of the kings' inner circle, acting as royal lieutenants and proxies. Royal bastards isolated from the succession by their illegitimate status and largely dependent upon the patronage of their legitimate family members for advancement formed a potential pool of talented individuals whose fortunes were inextricably linked with those of their legitimate family. Favoured royal bastards were empowered and promoted by the Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings, fundamentally as a means of increasing their utility to their relatives by providing them the means and opportunity to contribute to royal service and the protection of the king's own political and dynastic interests. The conditional and sponsored nature of royal bastards' acceptance into a shared family identity, the

caveats of which were a result of their illegitimate status, meant that there were predisposed to loyalty towards and political affinity with their legitimate family members while also being strongly incentivised to advance royal dynastic interests.

Engagement in royal service then, was one of the most important aspects and primary motivators in the politically symbiotic relationship between royal bastards and their legitimate family members in which they could gain influence and validate their inclusion within royal family identity through their support of Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings. Royal bastards advanced their own interests by serving their legitimate patrons in a number of different ways and were as a result of their close dynastic ties and resultant political affinity prominent members with the king's inner circle and wider aristocratic society. This service to their legitimate royal family members, and the subsequently mutually beneficial protection of shared political and dynastic interests, manifested in a variety of different forms usually dependent upon the circumstances of the royal bastard engaged in service and the nature of their relationship with their legitimate family members.

Both Henry I and Henry II raised their favoured eldest illegitimate sons to positions of oversight and authority over the mechanism of royal government, although the exact means and motivations of these respective appointments differed since each king formulated his strategies for the empowerment and deployment of illegitimate family members in response to political and dynastical circumstances. A number of royal bastards were appointed to royal offices or awarded positions with a role within royal governance, such as appointment to earldoms and shrievalties. Although the extent to which Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs delegated control of these appointments and offices to their illegitimate family members varied, their participation in royal office holding and the maintenance of royal government was in itself a form of royal service; its primary purpose was to enhance the power and authority of royal bastards, increasing their capacity to engage in the protection of royal familial interests. Empowered illegitimate royal family members served to increase the king's political support amongst aristocratic networks both directly through their own support of royal policies and positions as well as by bringing the regional and dynastic affinities in which they were imbedded closer into alignment with the royal centre through their mutual association. Additionally, royal bastards engaged in royal service more directly,

their status as auxiliary family members allowing them to act as royal proxies, with a number of royal bastards throughout the twelfth century serving as envoys as well as taking a prominent role in military affairs.

# **Chapter One**

## **Familial Affinity and Identity**

Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate royal family members represented a useful resource to their legitimate family, forming a cadre of auxiliary family members from which individuals could be deployed or empowered in a variety of ways in response to the king's needs and inclinations. The degree of this utility and the considerable engagement of royal bastards throughout the twelfth century in the advancement and protection of royal interests was predicated upon the existence of a shared sense of familial and political affinity connecting illegitimate royal family members with their legitimate patrons. These personal affinities were cultivated by Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings through an acknowledgement of royal bastards' participation in family identity, most often building upon pre-existing personal connections and ties of familial affection. The acknowledgement and participation of royal bastards within a familial identity was, however, highly conditional and far from universally or systematically applied. Part of the potential usefulness of illegitimate royal family members to their legitimate family was that while their personal ties of affinity and participation in familial identity's allowed royal bastards to adhere to and protect royal political and dynastic interests, the degree of this investment in royal interests was dependent upon the king's patronage. The advancing social connotations and legal precepts of illegitimacy within the twelfth century ensured that even highly favoured and empowered royal bastards were relegated to a position of junior partners within a shared dynastic enterprise. The utilitarian nature of these political alignments and associations were, however, to an extent based upon the formation and cultivation of bonds of shared affinity between twelfth century English monarchs and their illegitimate family members.

An exploration of the depth and range of the personal and political affinities that twelfth century English monarchs experienced with various illegitimate family members, as well as an examination of the manner in which these ties were cultivated and maintained is therefore a necessary prerequisite for any study into the potential utility and role of royal bastards within royal family identity and dynastic strategy. Much like the wider study as a whole, in order for such an evaluation to be of value, it must cover the entirety of the twelfth century to better facilitate an

understanding of the relationship between both the Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings and their illegitimate family members through means of the comparison of the degree and focus of the familial bond which subsequent kings cultivated and the varying strategies and mechanisms through which these familial relationships were strengthened and expressed.

There are a number of considerable obstacles in attempting to gauge such familial affinities across the divide of legitimacy, the foremost of which is the lack of evidence. While many royal bastards, through the utilisation of their familial links and affinities, came to occupy positions of considerable personal power and authority, the majority of Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards are only tangentially represented within contemporary chronicles. The majority of chronicles, even those dedicated to individuals such as the revised and expanded version of William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* which was dedicated to Robert of Gloucester, focused, perhaps naturally given its subject matter, around the deeds and actions of the King, even within the sections covering its patron's lifetime, rendering the earl a peripheral figure outside of the work's specifically tailored epilogue.<sup>14</sup> An intriguing example is that of Gilbert, one of Henry I's numerous illegitimate sons whose existence is only attested to within a single account of Robert of Torigni's (d. 1186) later iteration of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* after which he disappears from sight completely.<sup>15</sup> Within the work, which uniquely features a census of Henry I's legitimate and illegitimate children, Robert states that Gilbert alongside his royal half-brothers, the more identifiable Reginald, son of Sibyl, later to be earl of Cornwall and Robert (d. 1174), son of Ede, was a young landless man in the 1120s<sup>16</sup>. It would be hard to imagine a more informed or better connected source than Robert of Torigni who served as both Prior of Bec and abbot of Mont-St-Michel, two of Normandy's most prestigious monastic institutions, both of which boasted strong and long standing links to the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal family. Robert's personal familiarity with the Angevin royal house and the depth of information at his disposal gives his account considerable authority and lends credence to his attestation of Gilbert's existence

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<sup>14</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*.

<sup>15</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, p. 249.

<sup>16</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, p. 249.

and status as a Anglo-Norman royal bastard, although Robert formulated his additions to the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* several decades after the event in question and based much of his account of Henry I's reign upon the work of Henry of Huntingdon (d. 1160) who makes no mention of Gilbert.<sup>17</sup>

Another related issue stemming from the relative obscurity of royal bastards within many contemporary references is the difficulty in gauging the warmth and depth of individuals' personal relationships through the limitations of the available sources, both in terms and quantity and in the style of their various mediums. Some of the chroniclers are more useful than others in this regard; Orderic Vitalis (d. 1142) in particular adopts a relatively emotive and personable writing style throughout his *Historia Ecclesiastica* which is perhaps most pronounced within the later books that chronicle the events of his own lifetime, focusing upon the reigns of William Rufus (d. 1100) and Henry I.<sup>18</sup> Orderic, who was born in England and of both Norman and Saxon descent spent most of his life as a monk at St-Evroult abbey in Normandy, extended this stylistic affectation to his treatment of royal bastards.<sup>19</sup> When discussing the death of Richard (d. 1100), one of the illegitimate sons of Duke Robert of Normandy (d. 1134) in a hunting accident in the New Forest, Orderic describes Richard as a worthy youth who was much admired within the court, an exemplar and one of several figureheads for the emerging generation of young aristocrats.<sup>20</sup> This description not only of the affection for Anglo-Norman royal bastards from their family but also of the wide respect and recognition they could enjoy from the interlaced court and wider aristocratic society, from a source as reliable as Orderic, suggests that even at a time of pronounced political tension and conflict, a sense of familial affinity remained strong enough not only to include illegitimate members of the family but also cross the divide between the two principal political camps of the family and the Anglo-Norman Realm as a whole.

A contrast is evident in the chronicle of John of Worcester (d. 1140), large sections of which may have been written by fellow monk Florence of Worcester (d.

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<sup>17</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*; 'When Did Robert of Torigni First Receive Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, and Why Does It Matter?', *The Haskins Society Journal* 26 (2014), p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*.

<sup>19</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1984), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p., X, p. 259.

1118) whose death in 1118 is specifically noted within the work. The chronicle, whose later sections are principally derived and adapted from a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, mentions Richard's death only in terms of its similarity to the deaths of his uncles William Rufus and Richard in the New Forest; a prefiguration which John uses to further express the wider moralising message of the chronicle, suggesting the New Forest is anathema to the Normans because of their earlier destruction of a church within its borders by the family's patriarch, William the Conqueror (d. 1087).<sup>21</sup> This is a narrative device which threatens to relegate and obscure the illegitimate Richard's status within his family and the wider Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Leopold Delisle's edition of the *Recueil des actes de Henry II* as well as other contemporary aristocratic charters are useful collaborative sources providing evidence of political networks and attendance of the royal court.<sup>22</sup>

This approach carries the potential danger of correlating an illegitimate family member's visibility within the sources, with the extent of familial affinity and affection they shared with their legitimate benefactors within the family. However, it can be strongly argued that there is a degree of merit to this link, representing as it does, not only correlation but also causation; after all, those royal bastards who appear most in the sources, most notably the illegitimate earls, do so because they attained considerable political power and secular prominence. Such positions which can only have been attained through the facilitation of the monarch, an elevation which implies, and to an extent fostered, significant levels of trust and affinity. Indeed, the principal of inferring and abstracting out the relationships of individuals and their position within networks of aristocratic power and obligation through an analysis of their appearance within the witness lists of charters is both common and well accepted and has attracted a considerable body of historiography focusing upon the methodology and theory of this practice.

The final problem regarding the interpretation of available sources to measure the strength of the personal relationships and existence of a familial affinity between Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings and their illegitimate children

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<sup>21</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 93.

<sup>22</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, 1916)

and siblings is that such dynamics are by their very nature particularly difficult to quantify or access from the outside; neither were such relationships fixed, rather familial affinity was fluidic and subject to a plethora of invasive circumstances and political and social tides.

This Chapter has been structured in an attempt to address and mitigate some of these limitations in the primary sources while examining the extent to which Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate family members shared an affinity with their legitimate patrons and family members as well as the extent to which they were included within a royal familial identity. Through a careful sifting of those sources pertaining to illegitimate members of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal families within the twelfth century, notable patterns emerge, both in individual reigns of kings and the across the generational divide, in the means and mechanisms through which familial affinity was cultivated amongst particular demographics of royal bastards and the manner in which this affinity was harnessed to draw them into the support of a shared familial enterprise. The first section of the Chapter contains a definition and analysis of familial identity and affinity within twelfth century aristocratic culture and the position royal illegitimate family members occupied within this larger social and political context. The second section of the Chapter focuses on an examination of the possible affinity experienced by Henry I and his numerous illegitimate children as well as the position they occupied both within royal familial identity and wider Anglo-Norman courtly society. As a result of the limitations of evidence for the lives and careers of many of these individuals this section attempts to establish the extent Henry I's illegitimate children benefited from a royal affinity and the means through which the king cultivated these personal and political associations by adopting a thematic approach. The final part of the Chapter covers several of the most favoured and contemporarily prominent royal bastards across the twelfth century, capitalising upon their relative visibility and prominence within the sources to examine their careers through the perspective of their engagement with their legitimate patrons and experience of a shared sense of familial and political affinity.

## **1.1 Familial Identity and Affinity within Aristocratic Networks**



For members of the twelfth century Western-European aristocracy, familial identity was of the utmost importance in the formulation of their personal and political identities.<sup>23</sup> Familial identity provided the political boundaries and social context within which an aristocrat's identity was articulated which formulated the framework for their engagement with wider aristocratic networks and affinities. In addition to its role as the principal mechanism for the transmission of inheritance the aggregate of a family's wealth and power, formed a portfolio of resources defining a sphere of influence through which familial identity was reinforced and nurtured. These shared conceptions of the borders and extent of family lands, while self-defined and plastic, acted as a focus for family identity and personal ambition.<sup>24</sup> The varying equilibrium of genuine familial affection and the political association created through a mutual investment in the perseveration of family landed interests could lead to the undertaking of concerted action to defend or advance the family's shared interests. From the perspective of this seminal influence it is perhaps tempting to envisage the family as the basic unit of twelfth century aristocratic society and politics, however, such a reductive categorisation quickly becomes unworkable when expanded to consider the large and diversified networks of aristocratic interests and connections each family member was by necessity embedded in. While shared familial political and landed interest were important in orientating an individual within aristocratic networks and fostering a sense of familial affinity, the familial identity built around them were by no means exclusive, intersecting with various other familial, regional and political sourced affinities.

An interesting case study of the application and repercussions of the creation of a familial affinity and connection which relates to an illegitimate member of the Anglo-Norman royal family can found in the Taillefer family and their conflict with the future King Richard I which was triggered by a perceived attempt to reassert ducal power in Eastern Aquitaine. In 1176 Richard, as duke, faced a formidable coalition of dissidents, the nucleus of which was formed by the

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<sup>23</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*; Theodore Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne, 1100-1300*, (Philadelphia, 2007), p.84; Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Those of My Blood: Constructing Noble Families In Medieval Francia*, (Philadelphia, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Leonine V. Hicks, 'The Concept of the Frontier in Norman Chronicles: A Comparative Approach', A. Jotischky and K. Stringer eds., *Norman expansion: Connections, Continuities, and Contrasts, c. 1050-1200* (Aldershot, 2013), p.143.

relatives and associates of William count of Angoulême (d. 1186). Amongst the count's foremost supporters were his brother Ademar (d. 1202), his brother-in-law Viscount Raymond of Turenne and his half-brother Viscount Aimar of Limoges (d. 1199).<sup>25</sup> Aimar had initially avoided participation in his family's intermittent resistance to ducal authority, a decision probably influenced by his dynastic connections and associations within the larger Angevin hegemony. Aimar was directly connected to Henry II and the royal family through his marriage to Sarah (d. 1216), a daughter of Earl Reginald of Cornwall, an illegitimate son of Henry I and the king's uncle. The importance of this association is informed not only by the degree of the dynastic relationship Aimar held in relation to the royal family but by its personal and political context. Earl Reginald was one of England's premier magnates as a result of his close alignment with the king and his significant contributions to the preservation and eventual triumph of the Angevin claim to the throne in the previous, disputed, reign. When following Reginald's death, Henry II elected to absorb the earldom into the royal domains, Aimar who had expected to receive a portion of his father-in-law's extensive domains swiftly abandoned the cultivation of this royal affinity in favour of that of his brothers.<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, familial coherence and co-operation, resting as it did upon an alignment of shared landed and dynastic interests was contingent and far from inviolate. In the previous century, internecine warfare was endemic to many of the lands that would later form the Anglo-Norman and later Angevin hegemonies. The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* compiled by William of Jumièges (d. 1070) and based heavily on an earlier work compiled by Dudo of Saint Quentin (d. 1026) and commissioned by Duke Richard II (d. 1026), simultaneously strives to glorify and promote the stem of the ducal family, while including numerous examples of familial conflict and violence across multiple generations.<sup>27</sup>

Such familial conflicts, often exacerbated by inter-personal relationships and almost always centred around the distribution of inheritance and the family's landed resources, remained a consistent aspect of aristocratic life in the twelfth

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<sup>25</sup> John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>26</sup> Gillingham, *Richard I*, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*; Emily Albu Hanawalt, 'Dudo of Saint-Quentin: The Heroic Past imagined', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 6 (1995), p. 111.

century persisting, in various forms, far beyond the chronological frame of this study. The sons of William the Conqueror (d. 1087) vied extensively with one another in a series of shifting alliances and escalating campaigns which eventually culminated in Henry I's (d. 1135) establishment of control over Normandy in 1106 and the lifelong imprisonment, with deprivation of the Duchy, of his elder brother, Robert Curthose (d. 1134). Another notable conflict during this period in which the principal belligerents were royal family members engaged in particularly proactive disagreement over the transmission of familial landed interests and titles was the long running and expansive dynastic conflict between Empress Matilda and her cousin, King Stephen. The goal and strategic purpose of warfare during this period, particularly in the case of rebellion, was often a fluid political mechanism to register discontent and extract concessions. The sporadic rebellions staged by Henry II's legitimate sons against their father are an interesting example of internecine warfare in that rather than strictly a dispute over inheritance, they represent a conflict motivated by grievances concerning the administration and distribution of familial landed interest by their father. In a sense then these rebellions represented a breach or reorientation of familial affinity caused by disagreement over the terms and limitations of their engagement in a shared royal dynastic enterprise.

This long running series of dynastic conflicts within the royal family, provided several illegitimate royal family members with the opportunity for political and dynastic advancement through their engagement in defending the rights and political interests of their patrons. However, because of the political and legal isolation generated by their illegitimate status, royal bastards were never the instigators in these dynastically motivated rebellions; instead having most to gain from adhering to and protecting the interests of the family member with whom they possessed the strongest political and personal affinity. This pattern of recurring familial rivalry was not limited to the royal family and its peripheries but was prevalent throughout aristocratic society. Such conflicts were often catalysed by wider political developments as was the case with the noted troubadour Bertran de Born (d. 1215) who took advantage of the confusion and disruption generated by the Young King's rebellion to seize the family castle of Hautefort from his brother Constantine.<sup>28</sup> In the lattice of aristocratic relationships, both the indulgence of

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<sup>28</sup> Gillingham, *Richard I*, p. 76.

familial grievances and the formation or activation of familial power blocks were both legitimate and widely adopted strategies dictated by a wide range of personal and contextual factors.

While closely connected and often overlapping, concepts of familial identity and familial affinity were not necessarily synonymous. Family identity referred to an acknowledgement of membership within an aristocratic family and for its legitimate members a claim to access to a portion of the family's shared inheritance and landed interests. Affinity on the other hand represented a shared personal relationship and connection which informed and often accompanied by a close political alignment. An aristocrat's participation within a familial identity, while informing and contextualising their position with aristocratic society was not necessarily prescriptive or precluded membership and cultivation of other regional, political and familial affinities. Familial affinity either in its cultivation and mobilisation or through its subversion constituted an important political tool for any twelfth century aristocrat looking to retain or expand their power and influence within the conductive networks of power in which they operated. This distinction and the exploitation of a reorientation of familial affinity for political advancement can be seen in the career of one of Robert of Gloucester younger legitimate sons, Philip (d. 1147). Philip eschewed a political alignment with his father and his familial ties to the wider Angevin faction, instead electing to seek military service with King Stephen and his royalist supporters.<sup>29</sup> While Philip, a capable politician and soldier, was perhaps closely related enough to the king to expect some degree of acknowledgement and preference, his primary value to Stephen lay in his familiarity and access to Earl Robert's traditional affinities and networks. Philip, as a known fellow participant in established familial, regional and political identities, represented a potential means of disrupting these networks by providing Stephen with a plausible and acceptable alternative to disenfranchised or disadvantaged members of the earl's affinity.

The construction and utilisation of familial affinity within the broader umbrella of family identity, in order to capitalise upon and mobilize their resource in a shared dynastic enterprise, was as vital a strategy to royal families in the twelfth

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<sup>29</sup> Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 217.

century as it was to their lesser aristocratic colleagues. This was particularly true for Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings as a result of the strongly hegemonic nature of their landed interests which encompassed multiple political and cultural identities. Both Henry I and Henry II made attempts to utilise the various dynastic resources available to them to consolidate and secure their political interests, building upon a cultivated sense of political and personal affinity through the participation of family members in a shared dynastic enterprise. Their differing approaches to this task were informed by the political circumstances they operated within as well as the drastically different composition of their families.

The relative paucity of legitimate heirs for Henry I was perhaps a deliberate strategy adopted to avoid the internecine warfare which had characterised the king's relationships with his brothers. He did, nevertheless, father a significant number of illegitimate children before and after his accession. As a result, while many of Henry's illegitimate children persisted primarily within the context of their maternal connections, others were integrated into the royal court and broader aristocratic society as part of a royal dynastic strategy. The inclusion of royal bastards within a familial identity and the fostering of a shared political and personal affinity, alongside their strategic marriages, helped to reinforce royal authority and influence throughout aristocratic networks. Henry II, in contrast, was well supplied with legitimate children of either gender to protect and advance royal interests through integration into a royal dynastic strategy and to operate as participants in a shared dynastic enterprise. However, despite their differing political circumstances, both kings experienced strong ties of affinity with their eldest illegitimate sons and made significant attempts to advantageously position them within aristocratic society.

Henry I, Henry II, Richard and John all incorporated, to varying extents, individual illegitimate family members into their dynastic and political strategies. These kings did not adhere to a consistently applied familial strategy for the selection and empowerment of their illegitimate family members, instead royal bastards were integrated into royal familial identity on an individual basis in accordance to the current needs and circumstances of their legitimate patrons. While this selectively applied process was influenced by a variety of factors and often catalysed by a political or dynastic crisis, one of the foremost factors was the

existence of strong ties of personal affinity between individual royal bastards and their legitimate patrons. The level of close co-operation and political association experienced by Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs with their illegitimate family members was influenced by their status as auxiliary family members invested in the protection and advancement of royal interests. However, this participation within royal family identity was dependent upon the approval of their legitimate patrons and was in some senses the natural extension and political expression of ties of personal and familial affinity across the divide of legitimacy. Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs capitalised upon these relationships, further fostering them through the granting of patronage and promotion in order to provide themselves with allies with whom they shared strong personal as well as political ties.

## 1.2 Affinity, Identity and the Illegitimate Children of Henry I

Henry I is the English monarch with the greatest number of illegitimate children. Unlike his closest rival, Charles II (d. 1685), of course, none of Henry's numerous progeny attempted to seize the throne from his chosen successor, perhaps suggesting the strong ties of familial affinity, fostered by Henry I, formed a far-ranging, although not necessarily meticulously planned, dynastic strategy.<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey White's *Complete Peerage* contains an appendix concerning the lives of all twenty of Henry I's known illegitimate children, although Robert of Torigni in the original later sections of his edition of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* only identifies thirteen illegitimate children, six sons and seven daughters.<sup>31</sup> While this discrepancy could be taken as an indicator of the relative contemporary obscurity of certain royal bastards, it is equally likely to be the case that it represents a limitation within the chronicle sources. Robert's account fails to name three of Henry's illegitimate daughters, rather identifying them by the order of their birth and detailing their current marriage status, further leaving out completely amongst others, Matilda, the abbess of Montivilliers, although the exact date of her creation

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<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 144.

<sup>31</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, p. 249; White, *The Complete Peerage*.

as abbess remains unclear, save that it occurred sometime before her father's death in 1135.<sup>32</sup>

The paternity of several of those included within the *Complete Peerage's* list remains somewhat dubious, most notably in the cases of Gundra de Dunstanville and Rohese, both of whom are positively identified as the sisters of one of King Henry's younger bastards, Reginald de Dunstanville, rather than as daughters of the king themselves. Gundra de Dunstanville is recorded within the Pipe Rolls of 1130 as holding property in Wiltshire granted to her by her brother, Reginald de Dunstanville.<sup>33</sup> However, Robert of Torigni attests that alongside his paternal half-brothers, Gilbert and Robert, Reginald was a landless youth in 1130.<sup>34</sup> The testimony of such a well informed and highly placed source as the abbot of Mont Saint-Michel, which held significant land in England, makes it likely that Gundra, as well as the brother who granted her such substantial land holdings belonged to an older generation of the Dunstanville family which held considerable territory throughout south eastern England and to whom the future Earl Reginald was related to through his mother.<sup>35</sup>

Reginald remained closely associated with his maternal family throughout his life and it remains possible that Rohese, who married Henry de la Pomeroy, a senior member of Henry I's household knights, was the daughter of Herbert Fitz Herbert, the son of King Henry's long serving Chamberlain who had married Reginald's mother, Sibyl Corbert, sometime after the conclusion of her relationship with the king.<sup>36</sup> The case of the Dunstanville family then and the conflation of some of its members, particularly in the case of Rohese who had strong marital links to the royal family, while likely an error in the historiography, does help to illuminate the contemporary connectivity of familial affiliation. Through Sybil's relationships with Henry I and Reginald's royal parentage, the Dunstanvilles and their extended family were brought close within the royal sphere of influence and were able to

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<sup>32</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 47; Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda* (Oxford, 1993), p. 186.

<sup>33</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family; A Calendar*, ed. L. Hull. Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, 30.

<sup>34</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> R.W. Eyton, *The Antiquities of Shropshire* (London, 1854–1860), VII, 146.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, pp. 144-5.

reap the benefits of such political proximity, including advantageous marriages for Reginald's mother and half-sister.

Of more direct relevance to the fostering of familial affinity between royal bastards and their legitimate parents and of the power and allure that their mutual beneficial empowerment through patronage held can be seen in the case of Henry (d. 1158), son of Nest (d. 1136) which attracted a degree of contemporary criticism. Nest was the daughter of the Welsh prince, Rhys ap Tewdwr (d. 1097), a connection which made her a valuable prize to her Norman husband, Gerald of Windsor (d. 1135), the castellan of Pembroke castle.<sup>37</sup> During this marriage, Nest seems to have had a number of affairs, including not only Henry I but also Stephen the constable of Cardiff, a man of similar rank to her husband.<sup>38</sup> Nest's son is usually presumed to be an illegitimate son of Henry I, a claim which is strongly supported by the account of Gerald of Wales, himself a grandson of Nest, but the narrative of the *Annales Cambriae* goes some way to throw doubt upon this, not only describing Henry as the son of her husband, Gerald, but also suggesting that his family manufactured and attempted to promote this royal link.<sup>39</sup>

### **1.2.1 Familial Names and the Establishment of Identity**

A potential signifier of the acceptance of royal or indeed any aristocratic illegitimate children within a broader familial identity was the bestowing of names derived from the family's traditional naming stock. Like many other aspects of a twelfth century aristocrat's public life, the naming of a child, illegitimate or otherwise, was an inherently political act invested with a great deal of symbolism which often denoted an appeal for familial unity and an attempt to cultivate and express affinity between the family as a whole. This is almost certainly the case with many of the numerous illegitimate children of Henry I who bore names sourced from the limited stock of family names found within the previous few generations of the stem Norman ducal family. Henry I was himself the youngest of four sons, and his brothers having exhausted the most commonly used familial naming stock of recent memory, was probably named after his mother's uncle,

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<sup>37</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, p. 130.

<sup>38</sup> Susan M. Johns, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the High Middle Ages: Nest of Deheubarth* (Manchester, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, ed. J. Williams ab Ithel (Rolls Series, 20, 1860), p. 47.



Henry I of France (d. 1060), a decision perhaps chosen to reflect that, unlike his elder brothers, he was born in the purple to a king and queen.<sup>40</sup> Henry's first child, Robert, shared the name with both Henry's grandfather and elder brother and was perhaps based on a contemporary rendering of the name of the family's famed ancestor, Rollo (d. 927), who established a power base in the area around Rouen.

Of particular note for the purpose of studying the extent of familial identity and affinity, is the link to Henry's elder brother, Robert Curthose. While the date and location of Henry's first illegitimate son, Robert's birth is unknown and while the identity of his mother is subject to heated speculation, before his father gifted him the earldom of Gloucester, he was distinguished by the toponym 'of Caen' suggesting he was either born or spent a significant amount of time within the town.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the date of Robert's marriage in 1114 alongside the fathering of a bastard of his own, Richard (d. 1142), the future Bishop of Bayeux, around 1104 suggests that Robert was born in the late 1080s, a time in which Henry had used his portion of his father's inheritance to purchase the Cotentin from his brother Robert.<sup>42</sup> This suggests that Henry, then trying to consolidate his position in northern Normandy, named his eldest son in an attempt to foster and emphasise familial affinity with his brother and now nominal overlord.

Henry also, perhaps strangely given their relative closeness in age, granted the name to a second son, Robert fitz Edith, although by the time of his birth in 1093 Henry had fallen out with Robert Curthose having been evicted from the Cotentin and was simultaneously cultivating his relationship with his brother, King William Rufus, and attempting to construct a new powerbase within Normandy, beginning with the town of Domfront which had given him shelter and renounced its former affiliation to Robert of Bellême (d. 1130). This second Robert's mother, Edith, was of Anglo-Saxon extraction, the daughter of Forne, the lord of Greystoke in Cumberland meaning the name was derived solely from the ducal name stock. Richard of Lincoln (d. 1120), born to Henry's third mistress, the mysterious

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<sup>40</sup> C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven, 2003), p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999), pp. 323–333; Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. X, p. 298, p. 440.

<sup>42</sup> Hollister, *Henry I*, p. 49; S.E. Gleason, *An Ecclesiastical Barony of the Middle Ages: The Bishopric of Bayeux, 1066–1204* (Cambridge, MA, 1936), p. 25.

Ansfride, shared his name with another of his uncles as well as three previous Norman dukes.<sup>43</sup> William de Tracy (d. 1135), a son of Henry and the grandfather of one of Thomas Becket's (d. 1170) murderers shares his name not only with yet another uncle and his paternal grandfather, William the Conqueror, but also with that of his maternal grandfather William de Tracy who held Barnstable in Devon, a familial link Henry I later exploited by marrying his son into the local aristocracy.<sup>44</sup> It is also possible given the later expressions of contemporary doubts about his patronage, that Henry, the king's son with Nest of Pembroke was given his name as a way to advertise and reinforce his alleged royal paternity.

Henry I also showed a marked fondness for the name Matilda, which was shared by his mother, the daughter of the Duke of Flanders (d. 1083) and by his first wife Matilda (d. 1118), the daughter of Malcom III of Scotland (d. 1093) and Margaret of Wessex (d. 1093), bestowing it upon no less than four of his daughters, three of whom were illegitimate. Interestingly, similar to Henry I's bestowing of the name Robert upon two of his eldest sons, two of these Matilda's were married off in the early 1110s soon after their father's accession to the throne, to Conan the Duke of Brittany (d. 1148) and Rotrou Count of Perche (d. 1144) respectively, suggesting that they were of a similar age.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, another two of Henry's daughters, Constance (d. 1170s) and Adeliza (d. 1137) were named after two of Henry's sisters. The identity of Constance's mother and her date of birth remain unclear from the available evidence, although her marriage to Roscelin, Viscount of Maine (d. 1176), in 1120 suggests she was born either after or just before her father's accession to the throne.<sup>46</sup> Adeliza was another product of Henry's liaison with Edith Greystoke (d. 1152), making it seem plausible that she was born around the same time as her brother. Interestingly for the purposes of gauging royal familial affinity with their illegitimate children and the ersatz families they formed is that Edith was only given in marriage to Robert D'Oyly, the heir to Oxford castle in 1120, signifying either an improbably long running affair or Henry's abiding proprietorial interest in his illegitimate children and the wider family and political

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<sup>43</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 593.

<sup>44</sup> L.C. Lloyd, *Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families*, (Baltimore, 1951) p. 104–106; Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, Vol. I, p. 251.  
William of Jumièges, *GND*, Vol. I, p. 251.

networks they operated in.<sup>47</sup> Other illegitimate children bore names sourced from their maternal families rather than from the Norman ducal naming stock, such as Gilbert the likely grandson of Gilbert of Gand, Reginald whose name derives from the Dunstanville family which his mother Sybil Corbert was related to and Isabel the daughter of the aristocratic Isabel de Beaumont (d. 1170) who, with the possible exception of Nest, was Henry's most highborn and independently influential mistress.<sup>48</sup>

It can be observed then through a survey of the names of Henry's illegitimate children that the eldest children, many of them well before their father's accession to the throne, were more likely to bear names derived from the traditional naming stock of the Norman ducal family. Whereas those children sired by Henry later on in his life had a greater propensity to be named from their mother's family. This could be a result of Henry's desire to cultivate, if not actual political unity, then an appeal for a greater recognition of familial identity and affiliation for his children and himself during the internecine conflict that followed the Conqueror's death in which Henry was initially badly outmatched in terms of resources by his older brothers, a need which significantly lessened after the death of William Rufus. After his accession as King of England and later Duke of Normandy, it is also possible that Henry, increasingly secure in his power after an initial flurry of rebellions, saw no need to foster further affinities amongst the younger of his illegitimate children and for their use in fostering his networks of power and affiliation lessen, already supplied as he was with a number of sons and daughters to act as potential lieutenants and dynastic fodder. It is certainly true that Henry's elder illegitimate sons were better provisioned and more heavily patronised by their father than were their younger half-brothers. It is also true that the king's eldest son, Robert of Caen, with the eventual granting of the earldom of Gloucester was elevated to the highest echelons of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy while both Richard, William de Tracy and Robert, son of Edith, were provided with lucrative

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<sup>47</sup> W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Stevens (London, 1817, repr. 1846), VI, p.251; Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 147.

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 147.

marriages suggesting a degree of familial affinity and political investment on their father's part.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, the obscurity of Henry's younger illegitimate children is most likely to have been a function of their age; the younger sons of Anglo-Norman aristocrats, illegitimate or otherwise, often remained landless well into adulthood. If their lack of names from the Norman ducal household represented a waning of interest on Henry's part in the lives of his numerous bastards, rather than simply an exhaustion of available names, it does not necessarily follow that Henry would have been blind to their potential political utility. The marriage of Sybil Corbert, the mother of Reginald de Dunstanville, one of the king's younger children to the son of his chancellor occurred in 1114, sometime after the birth of her only confirmed child by the king.<sup>50</sup> This suggests that the king remained aware not only of the role and political utility of his illegitimate children and the wider spheres which they and his extramarital ties allowed him to influence and build cohesion with but also the importance of maintaining such links through the fostering of familial affinity.

### **1.2.2 The Role of Marriage in Familial Affinity**

Marriage ties were the basic currency through which twelfth century aristocratic dynastic politics functioned and Henry I, much as he did with his legitimate daughter Matilda before seeking to establish her as his heir, deployed his illegitimate daughters by utilising their marriages to forge and secure advantageous relationships with their husbands. Dynastic links of these kind represented an expansion of family identity and consolidation of interests which were at their most advantageous when supported by ties of genuine affection and familial affinity between the bride and her family. A full survey of the range and strength of dynastic ties created by the marriage of Henry I's illegitimate children, is included elsewhere in this study as indeed is a similar survey regarding the marriage ties of the royal bastards of his grandson, Henry II. Rather than replicating this and approaching the marriages of illegitimate royal family members as components in a royal dynastic strategy and an example of their usefulness to their legitimate family members, this section examines the marriages of two of Henry I's

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<sup>49</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume IV, p.182 & Volume VI, p. 294.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 147.

illegitimate daughters and the extent to which they can be seen as an example of illegitimate family members' participation and role within a familial affinity.

Of Henry I's wide network of marriage alliances intended to build coherency and co-operation within his disparate hegemony, one of the most important and one that potentially demonstrates a strong sense of familial affinity and shared identity by the royal bastards of Henry I was the marriage between Sybil and King Alexander I of Scotland (d. 1124). Inspired by White's own analysis, it is often postulated that Sybil was the daughter of the royal mistress Sybil Corbert, mother of Reginald de Dunstanville, however, it appears that this speculation rests primarily upon their shared and hardly uncommon name.<sup>51</sup> The date of Sybil's marriage to the Scottish king is unknown, occurring sometime between 1107 following Alexander's accession to the throne and 1114 when he accompanied his father-in-law to northern Wales in a successful campaign to curb the growing power of Gruffudd Ap Cynan (d. 1137), ruler of Gwynedd and perennial opponent of Norman overlordship.<sup>52</sup> Regardless of the exact date of the marriage, in order to be old enough to marry at either end of this scale, Sybil would have to be substantially older than Reginald who by the 1130s was still described as a young man, suggesting that he and Sybil were not in fact full siblings and that she was the daughter of one of several, as yet, unidentified royal mistresses.<sup>53</sup> Alexander who succeeded his brother to the throne at a time where the malleable and ill-defined Kingdom of Scotland was experiencing the early tremors of a series of administrative and demographic changes, was the son of Malcolm III and Margaret of Wessex, which as a result of his marriage to Sybil made him simultaneously Henry's brother in law and son in law.

In addition to, or perhaps as a result of proving childless, William of Malmesbury suggests that the marriage was not a particularly happy one, going so far as to say that upon Sybil's sudden death at Loch Tay, Alexander was not particularly grief-stricken although neither did he remarry.<sup>54</sup> William attributes this martial rift to Sybil's perceived crudeness and lack of sophistication.<sup>55</sup> Assuming

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<sup>51</sup> White, *The Complete Peerage*, p. 245

<sup>52</sup> Judith Green, 'David I and Henry I', *Scottish Historical Review*, 75 (1996), p. 9 and p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 49.

<sup>54</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 484.

<sup>55</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 484.

William's portrayal of Sybil and her marriage is not merely stylistic affectation, her alleged lack of education and decorum could suggest a lack of interest in her upbringing by Henry I which could potentially speak to a lack of affinity and affection between the king and his daughter. It also seems strange that William of Malmesbury, who seems to stand alone in his criticism of the queen, would retain such an egregious condemnation of the half-sister of his later patron Robert of Gloucester, an Anglo-Norman royal bastard to whom William lavishly attributes virtues.<sup>56</sup> William's re-editing of his *Histories* and their dedication to the earl of Gloucester was finished around 1127, only five years after Sybil's death and while such a narrow chronological gap may have been enough to alleviate any potential offence on Robert's part, it remains a strong indicator that he and Sybil, while both perhaps utilising the benefits of and deeply immersed in their half royal identity, were not themselves close.

Whatever the state of her relationships with her father and eldest half-brother, there exists a strong indication that Sybil had a firm sense of familial affinity with at least one member of her family and perhaps to a degree with royal identity and the Anglo-Norman royal family as a whole. Two charters dating to the reign of her husband include within their witness lists an individual described as William, the queen's brother, suggesting that when she relocated to the Scottish court, she was either accompanied or at least visited by a brother who became a notable presence there. The first of these charters which is of an unusual format and register is the foundation charter of the priory at Scone in 1120 which additionally bestows an exclusion from all royal taxes and duties that could be levied by the king.<sup>57</sup> The foundation charter is explicitly issued jointly in the names of King Alexander and Queen Sybil, while the second charter bestows significant judicial rights and privileges upon the priory, suggesting that the royal couple, who may have co-operated more closely than William of Malmesbury credits, took a special interest in Scone, although both of them were buried at the more established Dunfermline abbey alongside Alexander's parents and elder brother.<sup>58</sup> The identity of this William who seems to have operated, however temporarily within his

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<sup>56</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 799.

<sup>57</sup> *Early Scottish Charters Prior to 1153*, ed. and trans. Sir Archibald C Lawrie, (1905) No. XXVI, p. 281.

<sup>58</sup> *Early Scottish Charters Prior to 1153*, No. XLIX, p. 297.

sister's sphere of influence, remains difficult to determine. Sybil's most prestigious half-brother, William Aetheling (d. 1120), King Henry's legitimate son and heir is an unlikely candidate, given the positioning of the Queen's brother in the witness list which was alongside an illegitimate member of the Gospatrick family and Edward son of the former earl of Northumbria, Siward, below that of the Scottish earls in attendance and Alexander's own relatives.<sup>59</sup> A figure of William Aetheling's contemporary prominence would no doubt have been afforded a more prestigious position within the witness list while the charters description as the queen's brother would seem overly perfunctory, particularly given the possibility that he had already been installed as duke of Normandy.

There also exists the inconvenient matter of William's death in November of 1120 crossing the Channel. That year William had travelled to Normandy for his formal investiture as duke as part of his father's ongoing negotiations with the French king. While it is possible that he subsequently made the journey to Scotland and his brother-in-law's court only to return to Normandy in November, it seems more likely that he remained there to secure his position and accept the homage of the duchy's nobility.<sup>60</sup> Further there exists some evidence to suggest that the second charter witnessed by Sybil's brother dates to 1124, long after the Aetheling's death which if correct conclusively rules him out as a candidate. It could be that the William identified within the Scone charters was William de Tracy. Born in the early 1090s'; very little is known about William save that his father established him in the Barony of Bradninch in Devonshire which William held some claim to through his mother's family and it is entirely possible that he spent some time in the 1110s and early 1120s within the Scottish court.<sup>61</sup> The possibility also exists that Sybil's brother referred to in the charters was either an otherwise unknown illegitimate son of Henry I, possibly a full brother of Sybil's given their contact or even that he was not a royal bastard at all but the child of Sybil's unknown mother and her possible husband. While the exact identity of this William remains uncertain, if he was a child of Henry I, his attendance upon his sister in the Scottish court suggests a substantial active affinity and familial links amongst even

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<sup>59</sup> *Early Scottish Charters Prior to 1153*, No. XLIX, p.281.

<sup>60</sup> Hollister, *Henry I*, p. 274.

<sup>61</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 65.

illegitimate members of the Anglo-Norman royal family. Indeed, Roger of Howden explicitly describes Uhtred of Galloway (d. 1174), the lord of Galloway before his death at the hands of his half-brother, as a cousin of Henry II, making it probable that Uhtred's mother was another illegitimate daughter of Henry I.<sup>62</sup> Uhtred's age and the political climate surrounding the semi-autonomous Galloway, which was increasingly exposed to Norman cultural and political influence, suggests that this unknown daughter's union with Fergus of Galloway (d. 1161) occurred around the same time as that of Alexander and Sybil.<sup>63</sup> If this is the case, this could signify a potential affinity and connection between illegitimate members of the Anglo-Norman royal house within Scotland.

Another incident anchored within the context of dynastic marriage and the conflict of competing familial and personal interests which displays the limitations as well as the resilience and tensile nature of familial affinity, shared with both fellow royal bastards and their legitimate family members, is the conflict between Henry I and his daughter Juliana (d. 1136). Juliana was born sometime around the early 1090s and was the third eldest of the seven daughters identified by Robert of Torigni.<sup>64</sup> The identity of her mother is unknown and while her similarity in age to Robert of Lincoln suggests they may have shared a mother in Ansfride, the king's third mistress, of whom little is known, the itinerant nature of the Norman court and the diffusion of his own political and landed interests, exacerbated by the political cleavage between England and Normandy, meant that even before his accession to the throne, Henry was capable of maintaining multiple liaisons across localities.<sup>65</sup> Juliana was given in marriage to Eustace of Bréteuil, the same year her elder half-sister Matilda married Rotrou, the Count of Perche.<sup>66</sup> Eustace was himself an illegitimate son of William of Bréteuil (d. 1107) whose holdings on the Norman border were strategically important as a potential staging post for incursions either into or out of Normandy.

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<sup>62</sup> R.D. Oram, 'A Family Business? Colonisation and Settlement in Twelfth and Thirteenth-Century Galloway', *Scottish Historical Review*, 72 (1993), pp. 115–116.

<sup>63</sup> Oram, 'A Family Business?', pp. 115–116.

<sup>64</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

<sup>65</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 133.

<sup>66</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.



William's death earlier that year had sparked a conflict over inheritance amongst his relatives which had begun to draw in neighbouring lords and magnates, destabilising the region.<sup>67</sup> Orderic Vitalis, who would be well informed on the matter given the proximity of Bréteuil to the abbey of St Evroult, states that William's preferred heir was his nephew William de Gael, the son of his favourite sister Emma and Ralph de Gael, the earl of East Anglia but that he was opposed by another nephew of William's from Burgundy, Reynold de Grancei, as well as by William's illegitimate son, Eustace, who promptly upon his father's death seized and fortified his holdings.<sup>68</sup> Eustace was able to garner the support of not only many of his father's most powerful tenants and vassals, such as William Alis and Ralph the Red Lord of Pont-Echanfré, but also crucially Henry I who was no doubt wary of a strategically important area falling under the auspices of a family primarily operating outside of the Anglo-Norman hegemony.<sup>69</sup> Juliana and Eustace's marriage and the creation of such a powerful link of royal affinity and support put a swift end to the matter. Henry, however, took the opportunity to install his own garrison at Ivry castle, further entrenching himself in the area, perhaps signifying a lack of faith in his new son-in-law and scepticism over the extent to which Juliana's marriage had merged the political interests of her husband and father.<sup>70</sup>

Orderic recounts that over the next decade Eustace made several entreaties to his father-in-law to recover the castle and it was as a result of these ongoing negotiations that the couple were given the son of the castle's castellan and local lord, Ralph Harenc, as a hostage in 1118.<sup>71</sup> When Eustace blinded this hostage for an unknown reason, Orderic interestingly cites the pernicious influence of his intimates, particularly Amauri de Montfort for both this act and Eustace's original grievance in a possible attempt to remit the extent of the transgressions of the king's son-in-law and daughter. Henry delivered their daughters for similar mutilation to the sorely aggrieved Ralph Harenc.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. X, p. 345.

<sup>68</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. X, p. 345.

<sup>69</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p.X, p. 345.

<sup>70</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. 465.

<sup>71</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. 465.

<sup>72</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. 465; Hollister, 'Royal Acts of Mutilation: The Case against Henry I', p. 291.

Such harsh treatment of Henry I's own grandchildren represents a clear breakdown of royal familial affinity; the conflict's origins in a territorial dispute and the resistance of the imposition and penetration of royal authority displays the limitations of links of illegitimate familial affinity at least of those created through marriage. While such connections could be mutually beneficial for both royal bastards and their spouse's family, the equilibrium of such affinities was heavily weighted in favour of the royal bastard's legitimate relatives and the potential political utility the creation and cultivation of such affinities possessed. That Henry had guardianship or at least ready access to two of his grandchildren through an illegitimate child is interesting although given the context of tension with their father, it seems likely they were given to him as part of an exchange of hostages and there are no other known examples of the children of Henry's royal bastards being placed in the king's care in this way. Following these mutual mutilations, Eustace adopted a position of active military resistance and fortified his castles, leaving Juliana in the fortress at Bréteuil.<sup>73</sup>

Probably as a result of the personal nature of his familial connection to the rebellion Henry intervened personally, travelling to Bréteuil and securing the loyalty of the burgesses, he began to enter into negotiations with his daughter directly. That Juliana's sense of familial affinity towards her father and membership in a shared enterprise was severely depleted can be seen in Orderic's account of her attempt to kill her father with a crossbow from the battlements.<sup>74</sup> Although it is possible that rather than a genuine attempt at murder, as Orderic depicts it, the incident could have been an embellished account of a simple symbolic act of defiance and indeed he makes specific and possibly salacious reference to how her hurried escape through the castle moat left her legs indecently exposed.<sup>75</sup>

Juliana and Eustace's conflict with Henry I exposes the limitations of familial links between royal bastards and their legitimate family members and its potential weakness in the face of political and personal conflict. Later in Book Twelve of his *Ecclesiastical History*, however, Orderic describes how the repentant couple were reconciled with an obstinate and unforgiving Henry through the

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<sup>73</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X p. 466.

<sup>74</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. 467.

<sup>75</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X p. 468.

intervention of both Eustace's friends within the Norman court and crucially that of Juliana's half-brother Richard of Lincoln.<sup>76</sup> Richard and his fellow petitioners evidently succeeded in mollifying his father and while the majority of the Bréteuil affinity was given to Ralph de Gael, the younger brother of the deceased William, Eustace retained the lordship of Pacy and was given a yearly stipend of three hundred silver marks to recompense him for the loss, thus facilitating the king's engagement in a well-established pattern of reconciliation and compromise often accompanied by limited punitive action with rebellious or truculent Norman aristocrats.<sup>77</sup> This intercession by one of Henry I's illegitimate children on behalf of another suggests a recognition of a mutual identity and the existence of an active and networked familial affinity despite their diaspora and disparate levels of political engagement.

### 1.2.3 The White Ship Disaster and its Ramifications

The sinking of the White Ship in 1120 had far reaching repercussions for the Anglo-Norman hegemony, sparking a succession crisis and sowing the seeds of three decades of dynastic strife between the Conqueror's grandchildren.<sup>78</sup> The disaster which naturally provoked much commentary from contemporary chronicles, illuminates the extent to which royal bastards were interwoven into the fabric of the Anglo-Norman court during the reign of Henry I, as well as the sense of affinity and family identity they shared with their legitimate family members. In late November of 1120 the Anglo-Norman royal court was in the process of crossing over from Normandy to England via the port of Barfleur, a relatively routine but logistically tiresome task given the considerable, although often fluctuating size of the court.<sup>79</sup> During this transference, a day after Henry had himself embarked for England, the ship carrying his heir, William Aetheling, was sunk after striking a rock shortly after leaving harbour.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps, as Orderic Vitalis suggests this was the result of the liberal distribution of wine to the ship's crew although Henry of Huntingdon in his own account blames the disaster upon the

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<sup>76</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History* Volume II Books III & IV, p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History* Volume II Books III & IV, p. 19; Hollister, 'The Taming of a Turbulent Earl: Henry I and William of Warenne', p. 291.

<sup>78</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p.466; Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History* Volume II Books III & IV, p. 39; John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 146.

<sup>79</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 133.

<sup>80</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 761.

illicit sexual behaviour of the court's servants.<sup>81</sup> The ship's sinking led to the death of the Aetheling, as well as almost everyone else on board including much of the crème of the Anglo-Norman aristocratic youth. The only survivor of the shipwreck was a cook who clung onto a portion of the wreckage.

William Aetheling (d. 1120), as his father's sole legitimate son had grown up in the firm expectation of inheriting the Crown. The descriptor of Aetheling was an Anglo-Saxon derived title meaning crown prince, fitting as William was through his mother Matilda of Scotland, a descendant of the house of Wessex and a great grandson of Edmund Ironsides (d. 1016).<sup>82</sup> Henry of Huntingdon describes the Aetheling, who he had met in person, as a supremely confident and splendid figure in magnificent attire who despite his lack of personal territories or access to substantial independent means, nevertheless featured as a central figure within the court<sup>83</sup>. Henry of Huntingdon would be well informed in this matter, given that he had grown up in the household of Robert Bloet, bishop of Lincoln, who as a former royal clerk of William the Conqueror and member of the inner circles of both William Rufus and Henry I and was thus intimately connected to the Anglo Norman court.<sup>84</sup> Much of this praise, however, may have been to induce a rhetorical effect as it arrives in a section in which Henry is musing about the wheel of fortune and the danger of hubris, the archdeacon adding with the benefit of hindsight that he had always believed William was a prince, so pampered, it was inevitable that he become 'food for the fire'.<sup>85</sup>

Given the itinerant nature of the Anglo-Norman court which migrated almost constantly between various royal centres and localities within the Anglo-Norman realm, both as a means of more effectively disseminating its authority and to alleviate the burden of sustaining itself in one area, its aristocratic membership was fluid, changing as members came to create, reaffirm or mobilize connections within their networks of power and authority. Within this rotating often overlapping royal sphere, the younger emerging generation of the Anglo-Norman

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<sup>81</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume II Books III & IV, p. 39; Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p.466.

<sup>82</sup> Lois L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (New York, 2003).

<sup>83</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p.593.

<sup>84</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 595.

<sup>85</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. iii.

nobility formed a distinct sub-strata which naturally crystallised and revolved around William Aetheling whose affinity and friendship would reap a huge amount of political utility and patronage upon his assumption of the throne. William of Malmesbury neatly explains the ambitions and demographic of the Prince's retinue when he describes the White Ship as holding not only the choicest of the court's knights and chaplains but also the nobles' sons who had flocked to join the prince, 'expecting no small gain in reputation if they could show the king's son some sport or do him some service'.<sup>86</sup>

The White Ship then, at the time of its sinking, contained a large number of the upper echelon of Anglo-Norman aristocratic youth who had formed their own lively and distinctive group within both the royal court and the Anglo-Norman hegemony as a whole. Indeed, Orderic recounts that several members of the court, such as the nobles Rabel de Tancarville and William de Roumare as well as a delegation of monks seeking passage to England decided not to embark upon the ship because of the overcrowding and the exuberant drinking of the youthful clique<sup>87</sup>. Amongst the clique's members on the White Ship were Earl Richard of Chester, his wife Louise, the king's niece, his brother Othuel, the Prince's tutor, Geoffrey, the archdeacon of Hereford, Gilbert viscount of Exmes and two of the Aetheling's illegitimate half siblings, Matilda, countess of Perche and Richard of Lincoln<sup>88</sup>. That two royal bastards accompanied their legitimate brother while following their father's court and were accepted members of his inner circle and the wider sub-strata of Anglo-Norman aristocratic youth, is a strong indicator of the existence and vibrancy of a shared sense of family identity and of a personal affinity between William Aetheling and at least some of his illegitimate family members.

This is particularly interesting in the case of Matilda, who had in 1107 married the celebrated crusader Rotrou, count of Perche.<sup>89</sup> Rotrou, who was amongst Henry's first supporters and played an important strategic role in securing

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<sup>86</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 761.

<sup>87</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume II Books II & IV, p. IV p. 35.

<sup>88</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, Vol. III, p. 146.

<sup>89</sup> Kathleen Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of Perche* (Woodbridge, 2002), p.54; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 144.

the Norman border with the Île-de France, was more deeply imbedded within Henry's sphere of influence than Sybil's husband, Alexander for whom the hazy and ill-defined concept of Norman over-lordship posed substantial complexities when regarding the strength and pervasiveness of familial affinity; Matilda contrasts to Julianna whose husband's fortunes were similarly entwined with the defence of their father's interests.<sup>90</sup> That Countess Matilda was a presence within the Anglo-Norman court and the fact that she seemingly maintained a close bond with her royal family members more than a decade after her marriage and installation as the countess of Perche suggests both a strong continuity of affinity and conception of familial identity even after the adoption of new signifiers of identity and interests which medieval aristocratic marriage entailed. The retention of connections to her paternal family may have been a result of the domineering presence of her mother-in-law, Beatrix de Ramerupt (d. 1129) which may have hampered her assimilation and adoption of a new role.<sup>91</sup> Beatrix continued to be referred to in charters as the countess of Perche and occasionally assumed precedence over Matilda even within those charters issued by her son.<sup>92</sup> However, it is just as possible that Rotrou, who appears to have left Normandy infrequently and who was even before the death of his wife tied strongly to the Reconquista movement in Spain, encouraged his wife's affinity with her family as a means of representing and protecting his interests within the Anglo-Norman court.<sup>93</sup>

The account of the White Ship disaster and Matilda's death presented within the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, whose author William of Malmesbury may well have known the countess who held lands nearby Malmesbury abbey, provides another powerful example of familial affinity between Anglo-Norman royal bastards and their legitimate family members.<sup>94</sup> According to William, the Aetheling initially avoided the disaster by escaping on a boat but upon hearing the screams and pleas of his half-sister returned to the wreckage in an unsuccessful attempt to rescue her.<sup>95</sup> The nature of the disaster with its singular witness means that the account of

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<sup>90</sup> Richard D. Oram, *David I: The King who Made Scotland* (Tempus, 2004), p. 39.

<sup>91</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 53.

<sup>92</sup> *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de la Sainte-Trinité de Tiron*, ed. Lucien Merlet (Chartres, 1883), no. CVI.

<sup>93</sup> Lucas Villegas-Aristizábal, *Norman and Anglo-Norman Participation in the Iberian Reconquista, c.1018–c.1248*, PhD thesis, University of Nottingham (June 2007), pp. 109–10.

<sup>94</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 53.

<sup>95</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 761.

William Aetheling's rescue attempt are almost certainly an invention on William of Malmesbury's part, although written a mere five years after the tragedy, one which must have appeared plausible and gratifying to its recipients. That William of Malmesbury expected his readers to accept that Aetheling's death trying to save his sister was a noble act and that the Prince's dedication to his half-sister would not appear strange to their contemporaries, suggesting that she was a recognised and accepted member of the royal family with considerable and well known ties of affinity to her legitimate royal family members. The other illegitimate child of Henry I on board the White Ship was Richard, who William of Malmesbury depicts as an active participant within the wider familial identity, describing him as a 'high spirited youth whose devotion had earned his father's love.'<sup>96</sup> Richard, who was born sometime around 1110, was placed by his father to be raised within the household of Bishop Robert of Lincoln, one of the Anglo-Norman realms' pre-eminent secular bishops, an environment which provided him with both an excellent education and almost peerless access to the royal court.<sup>97</sup> Such a careful upbringing which mirrored that of his elder brother, Robert of Caen, suggests that Henry envisaged an active role for Richard in supporting the family's dynastic enterprise and interests, a perquisite of which was inclusion within such an identity and an affinity with its legitimate members.

Despite his relative youth at the time of his death, Richard had already accompanied his father on a number of military campaigns including Henry's campaign of 1119 against Louis VI (d. 1137) which aimed to extricate Normandy from its historical and theoretical status as a French vassal.<sup>98</sup> Richard evidently played an active role in the fighting, Orderic Vitalis stating that the royal bastard only narrowly avoided being taken captive by the enemy because of the intervention of another of the victims of the White Ship disaster, Ralph the Red.<sup>99</sup> Richard's participation in his father's campaigns displays the mobilisation of a sense of familial identity and affinity with his father while also demonstrating his acceptance as a member of this family by both Henry and the wider Anglo-Norman aristocratic community. Indeed, Ralph the Red, a vassal of the viscount of Bréteuil

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<sup>96</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 761.

<sup>97</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 594

<sup>98</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. 482

<sup>99</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX & X, p. 471

may have been accompanying Richard during the campaign as a result of the king's intentions to wed his illegitimate son to Amicia of Gael (d. 1168), the daughter of Ralph Gael who had succeeded to the lordship of Bréteuil after it was stripped from Richard's brother-in-law, Eustace de Pacy.<sup>100</sup> Amicia was her father's only child and upon his death, her husband would inherit not only Bréteuil but considerable estates elsewhere in eastern Normandy as well as in Brittany.<sup>101</sup> While Richard died before the marriage occurred, it is notable that Henry was willing to invest his illegitimate son with such temporal power and responsibility, suggesting the existence of considerable ties of affinity and trust between father and son.

### **1.3 Robert of Gloucester and Royal Familial Affinity**

Robert of Caen, Henry I's eldest known child, was perhaps the most temporally powerful and contemporarily influential royal bastard within the twelfth century, a position he ascended to through his intimate identification with the Anglo-Norman royal family and the strong affinity he possessed with the legitimate members of his family. Born sometime in the late 1080s or early 1090s the identity of Robert's mother is unknown, although David Crouch suggests that she was a member of the Gai family in Oxfordshire, a wealthy area in the upper Thames where it appears Henry drew multiple mistresses from, a theory based upon the identification of Philip Gai as Robert's cousin, although it does not preclude the possibility of a broader more diffuse connection between Robert's mother and Philip's father, Stephen Gai, such as if Stephen's unknown spouse was a sister or some other close relative of Robert's mother.<sup>102</sup> Henry I arranged for his eldest son to marry Mabel Fitzhamon (d. 1157), the daughter of the deceased Robert Fitzhamon (d. 1107) whose considerable land holdings both in Normandy and the British Isles, with the nucleus of his landed interests located within the Welsh Marches.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume IV, p. 49

<sup>101</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume IV, p. 49

<sup>102</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', pp. 323–333.

<sup>103</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V & VI, p. 157.



Strangely for such a well informed and connected source, Robert of Torigni seems to conflate Mabel with her mother Sybil, the daughter of Robert of Montgomery, a confusion which may have arisen from Henry's gift of the trading town of Torigni which was traditionally affiliated with Sybil's paternal family to his son.<sup>104</sup> This provisioning for and empowerment of Robert by his royal father suggests a degree of mutual trust and familial affinity between the two as does Robert's central place in Henry's political consolidation and reorientation following the destabilisation caused by the death of his only legitimate male heir on the White Ship. Robert was further granted the lands of his wife's uncle, Sheriff Haimo within England as well as elevation to the newly created earldom of Gloucester which Robert of Torigni, submits was bestowed as a result of his role as a principle lieutenant of the king as well as his royal parentage writing that, '... it was not enough for a son of a king to possess enormous wealth without the title of honour or some public dignity'.<sup>105</sup> That Robert's highest promotion came in the wake of the significant political upheaval following the Aetheling's death, when Henry I had need of the stabilising influence of powerful and resolute allies, shows both the limitations of and the enormous beneficial effects that the cultivation of a strong familial affinity offered Anglo-Norman royal bastards in the twelfth century.

In a similar vein, much like his younger brother, Richard, before his death in 1120, Robert was heavily engaged in military service on his father's behalf especially in quelling the sporadic outbreaks of rebellion in Normandy throughout the early 1120s; the monk Symeon of Durham makes specific comment on the king's great trust in the earl in regard to military matters.<sup>106</sup> Another example of the closeness and trust shared by Henry I and his eldest son occurred in 1126 when Henry I's most important and potentially dangerous prisoner, his older brother Robert Curthose, the former Duke of Normandy was transferred into the earl's care who placed him first in Bristol and then Cardiff castle where he eventually died in

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<sup>104</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, Vol. I, p. 249.

<sup>105</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, Vol. I, p. 249.

<sup>106</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester (b. before 1100, d. 1147)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2006)  
<<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/article/23716/?back=.12948>>[accessed January 2018].

1134.<sup>107</sup> Writing the re-edited second version of his *Gesta regum Anglorum* in 1127, William of Malmesbury goes into great detail when lavishly characterising Robert's knightly and personal virtues, he couches the description in terms of his closeness with and service to the king,

As for your energy in knightly deeds who can question it, seeing that your most famous father regards it as something to admire in you? For when news is brought of any disturbance in Normandy, he sends you on before him, that your valour may crush what is disloyal and your wisdom restore peace: when he returns to his kingdom, he brings you back with him that you may be his defence abroad, his happiness at home, his glory everywhere<sup>108</sup>.

Since Robert was the intended recipient of this dedication, William of Malmesbury clearly intended it to appeal to him and while possible that it overstates and exaggerates Robert's role in the Anglo-Norman realm and affinity to his father, to this end that William thought he would find the presence of such details pleasing, suggest that at this point in his career, Robert, at least to some extent, conceptualised his success as being part of and contingent upon his immersion in a family identity and affinity.

In accordance with the wishes of his father and likely given his eventual extended support for and loyalty towards her, encouraged by a sense of familial loyalty and personal affinity, Robert took the oath imposed upon the Anglo-Norman magnates to recognise his half-sister, Henry's legitimate daughter, Empress Matilda (d. 1167), as the rightful heir in 1128.<sup>109</sup> Given Robert's pre-eminence with the court throughout the latter half of his father's reign, including the undertaking of such responsibilities as the reorganisation of the Treasury in 1129 alongside Brian Fitz Count (d. 1150). According to William of Malmesbury he was also one of the few intimates that the king consulted with on the matter of Matilda's second marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou. He was therefore likely to have been well acquainted with the Empress who returned to their father's court following the death of her husband, Henry V of the Holy Roman Empire (d. 1125).<sup>110</sup> John of Worcester, in recounting the taking of the oath, states that Robert spent the proceedings seated next to the king on his left hand side and was expected

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<sup>107</sup> Aird, *Robert Curthose*, p. 245.

<sup>108</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 799.

<sup>109</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, Vol. III, p. 179.

<sup>110</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester'.

by those present to be the first to swear the oath which would suggest a well-known and strong affinity between the earl and his father as well as attesting to the high status this inclusion within family identity afforded him amongst the wider networks of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy.<sup>111</sup> John of Worcester can be seen to display a slight preference for Stephen and his allies over the Angevin affinity; in the chronicle, Robert yields up his primacy offering it to his cousin, Count Stephen who was sitting on the king's right hand.<sup>112</sup> The inclusion of this episode therefore is probably a fabrication or embellishment meant to prefigure the cousin's later rivalry during the dynastic struggles that followed Henry's death in a chronicle only completed in 1140.

Following the death of Henry I and amongst the confusion surrounding the general renunciation of the oath of Matilda and Stephen of Boulogne's alternative claim, according to the *Gesta Stephani*, several unidentified magnates reportedly encouraged by his great ability and wisdom, offered Earl Robert the crown which would if true attest to an acceptance of Robert's royal identity.<sup>113</sup> Robert reportedly refused on the basis that the kingship by rights belonged to his sister's son, the infant Henry which is presented as the correct and honourable decision.<sup>114</sup> Henry of Huntingdon's account is written with the benefit of considerable hindsight only concluding in 1154 and Robert's refutation of the crown in favour of his nephew, which is recorded nowhere else, is likely written in the light of his later dedication to his sister's cause and the eventual triumph of her son, Henry II. Robert, following the absolution of the magnates oaths to place Matilda on the throne, with the connivance of one of Stephen's brothers, Bishop Henry of Winchester (d. 1171), initially failed to support his sister's claim; at the time of Stephen's coronation, Robert and several other magnates were according to Robert of Torigni negotiating with Stephen's eldest brother, Theobald of Blois (d. 1152) and fellow grandchild of the Conqueror as a prospective candidate for the throne.<sup>115</sup> Robert can then be found in attendance at Stephen's Easter court around which time he

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<sup>111</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 179.

<sup>112</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 179.

<sup>113</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p.12.

<sup>114</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 702.

<sup>115</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

surrendered his custody of the royal castle at Falaise, demonstrating that he and the new king had come to a temporary understanding.<sup>116</sup>

Robert's willingness to disregard his father's wishes and his initial reluctance to support his half-sister's claim can be seen to represent the limitations of their shared affinity in which Robert was unwilling to align his interests with those of his sister in the face of a general lack of support. King Stephen was, however, their cousin, being the son of Stephen of Blois (d. 1102) and the Conqueror's daughter Adlezia (d. 1137), making it possible that rather than disentangling himself from his familial and royal identity, Robert was merely prioritising elements within this wider identity as pragmatism dictated. Indeed, Henry of Huntingdon states that in exchange for giving homage to his cousin, he was granted all he demanded, suggesting a reciprocal and negotiated agreement between the two.<sup>117</sup> The next two years, however, saw a depletion of Robert's influence and political capital within the realm, possibly because his familial connection with King Stephen, who within the reign of Henry I had been construed as a rival of sorts to the earl, was anchored in a considerably weaker personal affinity and affection than that which Robert appears to have shared with his father. This led Robert into an alliance with his half-sister, Matilda, and her husband Geoffrey of Anjou in 1138 and after some initial military setbacks on the part of vassals within England, arrived in England in 1139, taking shelter at Arundel castle with their step-mother, Henry I's widowed second wife.<sup>118</sup>

Interestingly, the earl left Empress Matilda at Arundel, content to leave it under siege by Stephen, while he departed to gather his own forces, an act which alongside his handling of the Angevin war effort within England over the succeeding years, concentrating mainly on the defence of his territories in the west country, suggests that while Robert adopted the Empress' cause, effectively blending his political interests and fortunes with those of his half-sister, he was willing and perhaps even desired to act unilaterally from her in the pursuit of their shared goal.<sup>119</sup> Throughout the remainder of his life, Robert was, as his sister's

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<sup>116</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester'.

<sup>117</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 702.

<sup>118</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p.722.

<sup>119</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p.722.

primary supporter and military mainstay, extremely willing to exercise the trappings of royal power. Robert even experimented with the minting of coinage made to his own specifications and which bore his own image, a clear and bold assumption of the royal prerogatives and identity.<sup>120</sup>

It remains unclear if he received permission for this self-aggrandising project from his sister which suggests either an extremely close affinity and partnership between the siblings or that Empress Matilda, who on occasion had trouble controlling the Anglo-Norman magnates she was appealing to for support, was unable to intervene. In 1140, Matilda and Robert raised his younger half-brother, Reginald de Dunstanville, to the earldom of Cornwall to which he had ties through his maternal family, brokering his brother a marriage to a local heiress whose wider family networks supported the Angevin cause in a clear imitation of his father's policy for the beneficial utilisation and deployment of his illegitimate sons.<sup>121</sup> Creating an earl who possessed not only the exalted status near the peak of the Anglo-Norman hierarchy but also a raft of legal and fiscal privileges within the confines of his earldom is another example of Robert's assumption of royal power. The fact that he chose to empower his half-brother, a relatively obscure youth with only limited connections to the wider networks of aristocratic authority and obligation, can be seen as an example on an ongoing commitment to familial identity and the creation of bonds of family affinity at the centre of the Angevin's war effort and Matilda's bid for their father's throne. The extent of Robert's long running contribution to the Angevin faction, as well as the lasting affinity he shared with his legitimate family members, can be demonstrated by his royal nephew, Henry II's continued donations, possibly into the late 1180s, to Saint James' abbey in Bristol where the earl was buried.<sup>122</sup>

#### **1.4 Reginald of Cornwall and Familial Identity**

Reginald's rise to political and economic prominence by the end of Stephen's reign and the dynastic struggle between rival factions of the Anglo-Norman royal house can be firmly sourced to his support for his half-sister, the

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<sup>120</sup> Archibald 'The Lion Coinage', p. 76.

<sup>121</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, Volume II, p. 562.

<sup>122</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, 1916), Book II, DCLXX, p. 284

Empress Matilda; a close political alignment predicated upon participation in a shared familial identity which was later transferred to her son, the future Henry II. Following the death of his father in 1135 and Stephen's seizure of the throne, Reginald quickly defected to his half-sister, departing Winchester sometime after Easter and emerging later that year as part of the Empress' household at Argentan.<sup>123</sup> Reginald's easy acceptance into Matilda's party may suggest that despite her long period abroad in Germany and his relative obscurity during their father's lifetime, there existed a feeling of mutual solidarity and shared familial identity between Henry I's legitimate and illegitimate children. Reginald quickly became involved in the Angevin's military efforts to destabilise Stephen's hold over Normandy and he can be found at the end of 1136 in the company of Stephen de Mandeville and his ally Baldwin de Redvers (d. 1155) raiding the Cotentin.<sup>124</sup> In addition to disrupting Stephen's attempts to establish control over Normandy, the three had a vested interest within the area since Baldwin's brother, William de Vernon, owned land centring on the castle of Nehou. As is the case with the *Gesta Stephani*, chronicler sources often prone to exaggerate the degree of devastation and disruption inherent in the war, describe their campaign as a spree of pillaging, suggesting that Reginald engaging with and supporting his royal identity was also capable of mobilising his familial connections and affinities for his personal enrichment.<sup>125</sup>

When in 1140, Reginald was created earl of Cornwall by his half-brother Robert of Gloucester and, his position anchored by his marriage to Beatrice, the daughter of William Fitz Richard of Cardan, a former supporter of Stephen, he was charged with securing the County.<sup>126</sup> Earl Reginald and his new father-in-law, William Fitz Richard, quickly began a campaign to consolidate their power on the peninsula. However, Reginald was soon excommunicated which was according to Robert of Torigni, the result of his attempt to impose a levy upon the Cornish churches.<sup>127</sup> Reginald was dealt a more serious blow later that year when King Stephen and his supporter, Alan of Richmond, moved to intervene in Cornwall

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<sup>123</sup> David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 49.

<sup>124</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, IV, p.182; VI, p. 510.

<sup>125</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 14.

<sup>126</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, Volume II, p. 562.

<sup>127</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, p. 64.

directly which drastically reversed all of Reginald's previous gains within the County, forcing him to take refuge in Launceston castle while Alan took over the earldom's administration.

Following Alan's capture by Ranulf of Chester (d. 1153) in 1141, Reginald was able to recover his position of prominence within Cornwall, aided by his friend Baldwin de Redvers, earl of Devon, definitively claiming the county for his sister.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, he was so successful in this that he could be found participating in the Empress Matilda's siege of Winchester and, alongside Brian Fitz Count, escorted her to safety following the ensuing royalist counter attack.<sup>129</sup> Reginald continued to be a leading member of the Empress' faction even when magnate apathy cooled the war into a stalemate, steadily losing momentum; his bastion in the South West was able to contribute to keeping his sister's claim alive even after her retreat to Normandy and the death of Robert of Gloucester.<sup>130</sup> In 1149, the Angevin cause saw a renewal as Matilda's son, Henry, arrived at Devizes and sheltered by Reginald's powerbase in Wiltshire, summoned to himself a number of powerful magnates including the earls of Cornwall, Gloucester and Hereford.<sup>131</sup> Reginald was highly influential during this period, which saw the renewing of ties and the cultivation of affinity between the new Angevin candidate and his mother's supporters, although interestingly in Prince Henry's witness lists, Reginald was placed behind Earl William of Gloucester which probably indicates a period of transition and reorientation within the Angevin affinity following the death of Earl Robert.<sup>132</sup>

While the meeting with his nephew did not result in any immediate shift in the balance of power, it did represent an extension of familial affinity with Reginald transferring his ambitions of an Angevin victory and the pre-eminence of his own family to a new generation and in 1152 he travelled to Normandy to persuade Duke Henry to invade England.<sup>133</sup> When Henry returned to England in 1153 in a bid to

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<sup>128</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 724.

<sup>129</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, Vol. III, p. 179.

<sup>130</sup> Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 240.

<sup>131</sup> *RRAN*, Volume III, no. 795, p. 666.

<sup>132</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, VI, p. 10

<sup>133</sup> *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett, Vol 4, (London, 1889), p. 64.

secure his grandfather's throne, Earl Reginald was already in his retinue and benefited from a strong personal and political affinity with the king. He witnessed a charter issued by Duke Henry who, thanks to his recent marriage could count Aquitaine as part of his growing powerbase, confirmed the English holdings of Troarn abbey. While Reginald is not explicitly identified by his familial relationship to Henry, the witness list affords him primacy over the earls of Gloucester, Hereford, Wiltshire and even the highly influential Earl Robert of Leicester (d. 1168), suggesting that he was increasingly held in a position of high esteem.<sup>134</sup> Earl Reginald was a frequent witness to charters issued by Henry II and alongside Robert of Leicester (d. 1168) and Richard de Lucy (d. 1179) formed an impressive inner circle for the first years of the new king's reign.<sup>135</sup> In 1164, Reginald acted as an intermediary at the Council of Northampton between Henry and his redoubtable archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, where he displayed a notable sympathy for the archbishop's plight.<sup>136</sup> During the uprising of 1173, Reginald continued to support Henry and was prominent in the struggle against the rebels in England while Henry and the majority of his forces prosecuted the war in Normandy. Together with Richard de Lucy, he directed the siege and eventual reduction of the rebel stronghold of Leicester which had come out in support of the Young King.<sup>137</sup> Even towards the end of his life and in a relatively advanced stage of the reign, King Henry still placed a great deal of weight upon the advice of his uncle; Gervase of Canterbury stating that Reginald and Richard de Lucy were the only two whose advice the king solicited on the appointment of Richard of Dover (d. 1184) as archbishop.<sup>138</sup> While perhaps an exaggeration, depicting a suspiciously streamlined process for the appointment of an archbishop, especially when still not far removed from Becket's murder and the investiture dispute, Gervase's characterisation of events nonetheless points to Reginald continued prestige and

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<sup>134</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, LXV, p. 72

<sup>135</sup> Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera Historica*, 2 vols, ed. William Stubbs, Vol 1 (London, 1879), pp. 151-171.

<sup>136</sup> *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, ed. James Craigie Robertson, 7 vols Vol. II (London, 1885), p. 389.

<sup>137</sup> David Crouch, 'Reginald, Earl of Cornwall (d. 1175)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

< <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/article/23319?docPos=7> > [accessed January 2017].

<sup>138</sup> Gervase of Canterbury, *Opera Historica*, Vol I, pp. 151-171.



influence which were ultimately derived from his acknowledged status as the senior participant within a royal family identity and ongoing personal affinity with Henry II.

### **1.5 Hamelin de Warenne and Royal Familial Identity**

Something of an anomaly amongst the illegitimate earls of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, Hamelin of Anjou was not a king's son or grandson; rather he was the son of Count Geoffrey of Anjou (d. 1151). His link to the Anglo-Norman dynasty and royal patronage stemmed from his position as the half-brother of Henry II, the legitimate son of Geoffrey and his wife, Empress Matilda. The identity of Hamelin's mother as well as the details of his early life and upbringing remain unknown although it can be presumed from the commencement of his career in 1164, relatively far into his brother's reign, that he was born sometime in the late 1130s or 1140s during which time his father was successfully prosecuting a series of campaigns to subdue Normandy in support of his wife's claims to the Anglo-Norman realm and his own family's long standing dynastic objectives.<sup>139</sup> While the details of Hamelin's early life remain unknown, his father's early death in 1151, more than a decade prior to Hamelin's emergence in earnest upon the political scene, makes it possible that he was either supported within the household of one of his royal half-brothers or otherwise operated within the same circles as them socially. The extent of Hamelin's engagement with royal familial identity and the degree of his personal association and affinity with his royal half-brother remain difficult to gauge. Instead, while we are unable to entirely discount the notion that the two half-brothers shared a strong personal affinity it seems that their political cooperation and Hamelin's elevation within the aristocracy were primarily motivated by political and contextual concerns. The sudden death of his younger legitimate brother, William, at a time of considerable political upheaval generated by Henry's feud with Archbishop Becket led the king to induct Hamelin more fully into royal family identity, increasing his motivation and means to defend and advance royal dynastic and political interests.

As a reward for his support at the Council of Northampton and to further consolidate and stabilise his position amongst the aristocracy, the king brokered a

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<sup>139</sup> David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 161.

marriage between Hamelin and his late brother's intended, Isabel de Warenne (d. 1203), the countess of Surrey and heiress to substantial concentrations of lands in the north of England.<sup>140</sup> By the time she was presented to Hamelin, Isabel was already a widow having previously been married to William of Blois (d. 1159), the youngest son of King Stephen, their marriage having been one of Stephen's principal pillars of support in the latter days of his reign. Hamelin's marriage to Isabel made him a man of considerable wealth and power with estates on both sides of the Channel and a strong strategic position in Normandy based around the castles of Mortemer and Bellencombre, no doubt one of the reasons Henry II had been so eager to place his proxies in a position of control over de Warenne lands.<sup>141</sup> Despite Hamelin's frequent cooperation with the king and engagement in service on behalf of their shared dynastic and political interests, he can only be found in the witness lists of ten royal charters, suggesting that despite their familial links, he was not a member of the king's most intimate circles and was only infrequently at Court; rather Hamelin spent much of his time managing his wife's estates in Yorkshire including rebuilding Conisbrough castle.<sup>142</sup> In a similar manner to Reginald, the other illegitimate royal earl active during the reign of Henry II, Hamelin's familial connection to the king is neither named or alluded to within royal charters but as can be seen in several charters issued by the king sometime around the late 1160s, Hamelin was afforded a position of primacy in the witness lists over earls who lacked familial ties to the royal family.<sup>143</sup> In the king's confirmation of the Norman possessions and donations of the abbey of Saint-Père-en-Vallée, Hamelin is even listed first amongst the secular witnesses ahead of close royal advisor, Earl Robert of Leicester.<sup>144</sup>

Following Henry II's death, Hamelin retained his position as an active member of a royal familial identity forming a close political and personal association with his nephew, Richard I. This close affinity and alignment can be seen in Hamelin's frequent accompaniment of the king at the beginning of his reign

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<sup>140</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol 4, p. 221.

<sup>141</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters: Volume 8*, p. 15.

<sup>142</sup> 'Calendar of Royal Documents: Henry II (nos. 122-39)', in *Westminster Abbey Charters, 1066 - c.1214*, ed. Emma Mason, *London Record Society*, 25 (1988), pp. 68-75.

<sup>143</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, CCCCXXVI, p. 556

<sup>144</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, CCCCXXVII, p. 557

and extensive engagement with the royal court, attesting to at least thirteen charters within a matter of months as the king and his advisors sought to put the Angevin realm in order.<sup>145</sup> The earl continued this royal alignment following the king's departure on crusade and attempted to preserve royal interests and authority within England, aligning with the king's chosen deputy, Chancellor William de Longchamp, against Bishop Hugh de Puiset (d. 1195) of Durham and Prince John's attempts to expand their authority.<sup>146</sup> Hamelin's preference for cleaving to royal authority at the expense of alignment with other family members can be seen both through his attempts to thwart John's bid for power and his arrest of another of his nephews, the illegitimate, Archbishop Geoffrey of York, who had attempted to gain entry into England despite being exiled, although the uproar following the archbishop's arrest swiftly persuaded the administration to release him. Hamelin's prestige within the aristocracy and his personal and political affinity with his royal nephew can be seen when alongside the earl of Arundel, William d'Aubigny (d. 1221), he was placed in charge of the collection and protection of the vast sums of money being raised to ransom King Richard from Duke Leopold of Austria (d. 1194).<sup>147</sup> Following Richard's liberation and return to England, he remained close with his illegitimate uncle who continued to play a prominent role in the theatre of government serving as a sword bearer during the king's second coronation in 1194, alongside King William of Scotland (d. 1214).<sup>148</sup> Hamelin was also present at the Council of Nottingham in which those who had supported John's ambitions or otherwise sought to take advantage of the king's absence were punished.

Hamelin remained an acknowledged but, in many ways, distant presence within the context of a wider Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal identity, instead of immersing himself in royal familial identity he cultivated a strong affinity and reciprocal relationship with his most direct legitimate patrons and family members, most notably Henry II and Richard I. The erosion of Hamelin's prominence within the aristocratic networks of the Angevin hegemony and participation within a shared royal dynastic enterprise following the death of Richard I was the direct

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<sup>145</sup> *The Itinerary of King Richard I: With Studies on Certain Matters of Interest Connected with His Reign*, ed. Lionel Landon, (Pipe Roll Society, 1935).

<sup>146</sup> Ralph de Diceto, *Opera Historica*, ed. William Stubbs, 2 vols, Volume 2, (Rolls Series, 1876), p. 171.

<sup>147</sup> *The Itinerary of King Richard I*.

<sup>148</sup> *The Itinerary of King Richard I*.

result of this preference and a lack of personal affinity with John with whose ambitions he had previously clashed. While alienated from the king's inner circle and a reconfigured familial identity, the earl can still be found amongst the witness list of his nephew's treaty with William of Scotland in 1200, probably as a result of his engagement through marriage with the aristocratic networks of northern England.<sup>149</sup>

## 1.6 William Longespée and Familial Affinity

Arguably Henry II's most successful illegitimate child, William Longespée was born sometime around 1167 to the aristocratic Ida de Tosny, the daughter of Roger de Tosny (d. 1162). Ida went on to marry the second earl of Norfolk, Roger Bigod (d. 1221), providing a secondary family association for William to operate in which he would retain deep into his political career.<sup>150</sup> William's shared his name with his deceased uncle, the son of Geoffrey of Anjou and the Empress Matilda whose unfortunate death paved the way for the elevation of his illegitimate uncle Hamelin de Warenne, which made frequent appearances within the traditional naming stock of the Norman Dukes. Indeed, his epithet of Longespée, which was widely known and used by his contemporaries and eventually passed onto his son, is identical to that borne by his namesake, the second duke of Normandy; its adoption likely representing an assertion of his Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal heritage.<sup>151</sup> Interestingly his coat of arms, the adoption of which was a practice gaining increasing traction amongst the European nobility, were identical to the one pioneered by his grandfather Geoffrey of Anjou, rather than one derived from the Anglo-Norman royal house instead emphasising his descent from the counts of Anjou. William's half royal parentage was readily acknowledged, likely aided by his broader aristocratic affinities, and in 1188 it was again formally recognised when he was granted the lordship of Appleby in Lincolnshire.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Howden, *Chronica magistri*, Volume 8, p. 87.

<sup>150</sup> M. Morris, *The Bigod Earls of Norfolk in the Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2005); P. C. Reed, 'Countess Ida, Mother of William Longespée, Illegitimate Son of Henry II', *American Genealogist*, 77 (2002), pp. 137–49.

<sup>151</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, Vol. I, p. 47.

<sup>152</sup> Robert William Eyton, *Court, Household, and Itinerary of King Henry II: Instancing also the Chief Agents and Adversaries of the King in his Government, Diplomacy, and Strategy* (London, 1815-1881).

Upon the death of his father, the young bastard successfully made the transition to his half-brother Richard's reign who in a strong display of familial affinity and trust made him the third earl of Salisbury, having furnished him with a marriage to the wealthy heiress, Ela of Salisbury in 1198.<sup>153</sup> While Richard's promotion and provision for his illegitimate half-brother, perhaps with the aim of supporting a regime shaken by the king's long absence acknowledges their shared family identity and likely represents an attempt to cultivate affinity between the two, William reached the heights of his political career under the reign of his younger-half brother, John, with whom he was extremely close. The pipe rolls of John's reign reveal the frequent payment back and forth of gambling debts incurred between the brothers, suggesting a strong friendship and affinity between the two half-brothers. The pipe rolls also reveal that William received not only considerable loans of cash from the king but was also the frequent recipient of gifts of small cash payments and wine.<sup>154</sup>

William's strong affinity with John was reflected in their political relationship and William's role as one of the king's principal enforcers. William was given custodianship of the honour of Eye in 1205 as well as serving as castellan for Salisbury and Dover castles, the latter of which was extremely important given the hostility of a resurgent France and when John was struggling with the Church in the immediate build up to the interdiction, it was William who he chose to act as custodian of the vacant dioceses of Ely and Canterbury. William also served his brother in a number of diplomatic and military functions including leading expeditions attempting to stabilise the rapidly disintegrating situation in Normandy as well as acting on his brother's behalf in negotiations with several European Princes such as Sancho VII of Navarre and William of Scotland. The political manifestation of their strong affinity and familial bond had its limits though, William was frequently granted the sheriffdom of Wiltshire but John continually resisted his half-brother's claim to hold it in hereditary right, preferring to keep the office within his own gift. This demonstrates the potential for tension and conflict

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<sup>153</sup> Matthew Strickland, 'Longespée, William Third Earl of Salisbury (b. in or before 1167, d.1126)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/view/article/23319?docPos=7> > [accessed January 2018].

<sup>154</sup> B. W. Holden, 'The Balance of Patronage: King John and the Earl of Salisbury', *Haskins Society Journal*, 8 (1996), pp. 79–89.

between royal interests and those of the local affinities and families that royal bastards often found themselves operating within.

A more radical and decisive example within William's career of the limitations of affinity between the Angevin royal family and its illegitimate relatives was his defection following the French invasion of 1216 after long years of dedicated service in the face of rebellion. At this point within his reign, John's position within England may have seemed all but irretrievable and William in order to protect his own landed interests acted decisively to disentangle himself from the familial affinity and connection from which those interests were derived.

William Longespée was acknowledged and generously provisioned by his royal father Henry II, however, his rise to prominence and its corresponding integration and alignment with royal fortunes was only achieved under the auspices of his brothers who inducted him to varying extents within their administrations. Yet even when anchored by strong ties of personal affinity and familial identity such relationships were characterised by a reciprocal and mutually beneficial nature and while royal bastards may have been defined primarily by their royal affinities in the event that such links ebbed or were stripped of their utility, as magnates and aristocrats of varying rank they were capable of acting within their own interests autonomously from a wider familial identity.

Familial identity then was of central importance to twelfth century nobles, rather than solely representing a social or political unit. The family's role in the transmission and shared custodianship of inheritance and landed interests served to orientate individuals and their interests within wider aristocratic networks. An individual's sense of familial affinity and political alignment while not prescriptive was formed by or in reaction to the opportunities and connections afforded to them by their familial identity. However, acknowledgement and inclusion within a shared familial identity was highly conditional for illegitimate royal family members who were dependent upon the patronage and permission of their legitimate family members to invest them in a shared dynastic enterprise. Throughout the twelfth century Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs formed close relationships and significant ties of affinity with illegitimate members of their family, many of whom functioned as fully or partially integrated participants within

a collective familial identity. This was true to an extent of all English monarchs in the twelfth century but particularly notable during the reign of Henry I who by integrating many of his illegitimate children into the royal court and regional aristocratic networks cultivated a shared sense of familial affinity and cooperation between family members. Family affinity is to an extent perceived as distinct from royal identity and while royal illegitimate children engaged in service on behalf of their family members, acting in support of a shared dynastic interests in which capacity they occasionally functioned as representative or conduits of royal authority they largely, with a few notable exceptions, allude to royal prestige and identity through their close affinity and political association with legitimate family members rather than actively participating themselves. Familial affinity was not universally extended to royal bastards during this period and there was a great deal of variance in the extent to which illegitimate royal family members were provided an investment in or permitted to participate within royal family identity.

## Chapter Two

### Marriage and Dynastic Strategy

The definition and prohibition of illicit unions formed an important thread in the process of the intellectual renewal and doctrinal reform of the Church from the mid-eleventh century onwards. The remarkable success of these impulses to define and prohibit was built upon demographic and social change, in the context of a coordinated and supra-regional Church reform movement and the emergence of the papacy as an active and expanding institution. The piecemeal progress of the codification and reconciliation of potentially disparate canon law was rooted, to a considerable extent, in an interpretation of the apostolic traditions and writings of the Church fathers, whose views upon the correct definition of marriage, and indeed the practice's ultimate compatibility with a Christian life, encompassed a wide spectrum, engendering a great deal of debate both between themselves and their successors.

All the Church fathers displayed a keen wariness, informed in part perhaps by older Greco-Roman customs, of the inherent spiritual danger and ritual pollution of sexual desire and actively lauded asceticism. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395) went so far as to maintain that sexual activity or engagement of any kind was contradictory to salvation and an anathema to a Christian lifestyle; it was to be renounced or at least avoided and resisted whenever possible.<sup>155</sup> The most widely influential and formative of these Church fathers in the process of the western Church's definition of and the eventual facilitation and oversight of the institution of marriage was Augustine of Hippo (d. 430).<sup>156</sup> Augustine's teachings on the subject of marriage, which were to an extent shaped by the early Church's perceived need to mount a theological defence against potentially heretical sects such as the Manichaeans, the Abelonians and the Priscillians, was that the institution of marriage was indeed compatible with salvation and held the potential to foster virtuous behaviour, foremost amongst them being procreation.<sup>157</sup> Although Augustine and, more

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<sup>155</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, 17, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, ed. and trans. Anna M. Silvas, (Leiden, 2007), p. 115.

<sup>156</sup> Brundage, Law, *Sex and Christian Society*, p. 84.

<sup>157</sup> St Augustine, *On Marriage and Sexuality*, trans. Elizabeth Clark (Washington D.C., 1997), p. 14.



stringently, his contemporary Jerome both maintained that married people could obtain salvation, that salvation was contingent on the self-imposition of stringent restrictions on themselves during their marriage.<sup>158</sup> Ultimately, the institution was viewed as a concession to those unable to overcome temptation and entirely forsake worldly comforts.<sup>159</sup>

While this line of reasoning and critical caveat was to form the foundation of the Church's position on marriage as it grew and developed, it is important to note that while undoubtedly proscriptive, these exploratory and formative debates were largely concerned with the spiritual ramifications rather than the legal boundaries of marriage. The latter, it was agreed, fell firmly under the auspices of secular law. Later readers, during the reform movement of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, may have viewed this distinction as strangely artificial or even counterproductive in light of the culture norms of their time and advancing theological innovations. This acceptance of marriage as a valid component within a Christian lifestyle shifted the focus of the ongoing internal formulation and conceptualisation of marriage towards its mutability and the necessary prerequisites that bestowed validity.

Parallel to and abetting this process was the role ecclesiastical figures occupied in the review and arbitration of the validity of specific marriages. This process was not, however, systematic, occurring either at the request of the individuals in question or if there existed some perception of irregularity in the union of a person of note; much like the scrutiny that would later be visited upon Philip I of France (d. 1108) and his marriage to Bertrade de Montfort (d. 1117).<sup>160</sup> At this point, however, there had been no compilation and reconciliation of such judgements so as to collect precedents into a unified and readily accessible body of canon law.<sup>161</sup> Judgements on matrimonial disputes were often delivered on an ad hoc basis, commonly informed by regional and incidental factors, and with only

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<sup>158</sup> Jerome, *Epistolae* 22,19, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris,1841-65), vol 22 col. 406.

<sup>159</sup> Laura Wertheimer, *The Ecclesiastical Construction of Illegitimacy in the Middle Ages* (Santa Barbara, 2000), p. 40.

<sup>160</sup> Suger of Saint Denis, *The deeds of Louis the Fat*, trans. Richard Cusimano and John Moorland (Washington D.C. 1992), p. 40.

<sup>161</sup> Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 140.

limited thought given – or recourse available – to the standardisation of the Church’s position on such matters.<sup>162</sup>

## 2.1 Illegitimacy and Church Reform in the Eleventh and Twelfth Century

The flourishing of the pre-existing reform movement in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, grounded in or heavily influenced by the monastic tradition, and coalesced around the papal court, consciously emphasised a renewal of canon law and its repositioning to the centre of the governance of Christian life and society.<sup>163</sup> The reformers sought to establish a functioning and ideally standardised system of Church courts and expand the jurisdiction and authority of such courts to include the settlement of disputes pertaining to Church institutions and spiritual matters. This pronounced focus on legalism crystalized an already growing consensus within the Church as to the parameters and prerequisites of marriage. Furthermore, it successfully synergised with the reform movement’s drive to increase the quality and availability of pastoral care throughout Christendom<sup>164</sup>. Far from marking the end of either ecclesiastical or secular debate upon the legal and spiritual limitations of marriage, these reforms, building upon the Church’s growing involvement in and jurisdiction over marriage, led to its colonisation by the Church and its adoption and recognition as one of the sacraments. Demographic changes throughout Western Europe at this time probably abetted the permeation and widespread acceptance of the Church’s increasingly standardised conceptions of marriage throughout lay society.<sup>165</sup> Slowly, this acceptance extended to the aristocracy which previously had frequently engaged in informal and dissolvable – but often political active and engaged unions – that the Church defined as a state of concubinage. It

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<sup>162</sup> Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 140.

<sup>163</sup> Steven Vanderputten, *Imagining Religious Leadership In the Middle Ages: Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Politics of Reform*, (Ithaca, 2005); John Howe, *Church Reform and Social Change In Eleventh-Century Italy*, (Philadelphia, 1997); Diane Reilly, ‘Reims, Liege, And Institutional Reform In the Central Middle Ages: Flavius Josephus As A Father of The Church,’ in Steven Vanderputten, Tjamke Snijder, and Jay Diehl, eds., *Medieval Liege at the Crossroads of Europe: Monastic Society and Culture 1000-1300* (Turnhout,2017), p. 109; Gerd Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from Tenth to the early Twelfth Century*, trans. Timothy Reuter, (Cambridge,1993), p. 91.

<sup>164</sup> Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 180.

<sup>165</sup> N.J.G. Pounds, *A History of The English Parish: The Culture of Religion From Augustine to Victoria*, (Cambridge, 2000), p. 41.

was within those familial networks of power, as this Chapter shall explore, that marriage thus came to play a vital and formative role.<sup>166</sup>

A natural effect of a widely applied definition of marriage and the categorisation of the prerequisites and characteristics of a valid union, alongside the enforcement of this standard and the active persecution by the reforming movement of those who contravened these standards such as the sustained and varied campaign against married clerics, was the codification of illegitimacy.<sup>167</sup> Now defined as anyone born from an illicit or otherwise invalid union, illegitimacy moved from an extant but ill-defined and plastic social distinction to a legal status. However, the legal and spiritual implications for such individuals continued to be debated within the Church and any responsive actions were inconsistently applied. The intended aim of the reform movement was not the relegation of illegitimate children to the periphery but one of the principal results of the Church's reform and its assimilation of the institution of marriage was the exclusion of those children from rights of succession and inheritances as a side effect of the process of establishing a celibate priesthood and monogamous licit marriage.<sup>168</sup> Bishop Ivo of Chartres (d. 1115), a collector and compiler of canon law who was influenced by both Augustine and a fellow authority on canon law, Burchard of Worms (d. 1025), maintained that a father's sin could not be transmitted to his children.<sup>169</sup> Ivo supported the right of bastards and the offspring of priests to enter holy orders, emphasising the 'at risk' status of many illegitimate individuals and the Church's responsibility towards them.<sup>170</sup>

Nevertheless, as a by-product of the Church reform movement's attempts to raise the standard of pastoral care and the strongly ascetic influence of the

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<sup>166</sup> John Howe, 'The Nobility's Reform of the Medieval Church', *The American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), p. 317; Pauline Stafford, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender Religious Status and Reform in Tenth and Eleventh Century England,' in Pauline Stafford, ed., *Gender, Family and the Legitimation of Power: England from the Ninth to Early Twelfth Century* (Liverpool, 2006); Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bay, (Chicago, 1983).

<sup>167</sup> Jennifer D. Thibodeaux, 'The Defence of Clerical Marriage: Religious Identity and Masculinity in the Writing of Anglo-Norman Clerics', in P. H. Calum & Kathrine J. Lewis, eds., *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2013); Leidulf Melve, 'The Public Debate on Clerical Marriage in the Late Eleventh Century,' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61 (2010), p. 668.

<sup>168</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p.7.

<sup>169</sup> Christof Roker, *Canon Law and the Letters of Ivo of Chartres*, (Cambridge, 2007), p. 148.

<sup>170</sup> Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 219.

monastic ideal upon contemporary reformers, the eleventh century saw increased calls from prominent figures and factions within the Church to adopt practices which distanced and excluded illegitimate individuals. Gregory VII (d.1085) in 1074 forbade the ordination of not only the children of priests but anyone tainted by illegitimacy.<sup>171</sup> The Synod of Melfi (1089), called by Urban II, is associated with the edict that barred the sons of priests from approaching the altar and administering sacraments, with the notable exception of monks and canons regular.<sup>172</sup> These restrictions suggest that while bastards were considered tainted by their parentage, this flaw was not beyond remission and could be atoned for to a certain extent. However, the spiritual status of bastards was a controversial and divisive issue within the reform movement. Six years after Melfi, the more famous synod held at Clermont ruled that the sons of concubines were not only to be forbidden from carrying out the sacraments but were barred from entry into Holy Orders of any kind.<sup>173</sup> This persecution and alienation from holding offices within the Church was possibly meant to be viewed as part of a programme of normalisation and repetition of the reform movement's position, which was designed to bring about the end of clerical marriage and hereditary positions. The reform movement transmitted conceptions on the parameters of marriage as well as standards of clerical purity and pastoral care which faced significant resistance from the Church, particularly amongst the cathedral canons. This opposition and the sophisticated theologically rooted defence mobilised on behalf of the practice of clerical marriage may have convinced reformers of the need to pursue a broad and punitive strategy which legally and spiritually compromised not only married clerics but their children.

The effect on this programme of Church reform on illegitimate members of the Anglo-Norman royal family, outside of further delineating the already extant distinction between legitimate and illegitimate, was clearly limited. Like many aristocratic family networks, the counts and dukes of Normandy often sought to establish their illegitimate or otherwise surplus male relatives within the Church in order to gain access to the resources and patronage that those positions could

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<sup>171</sup> Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 219.

<sup>172</sup> Laura Wertheimer, *The Ecclesiastical Construction of Illegitimacy*, p. 92; S. Kuttner and R. Somerville, *People Urban II: Collectio Britannica and the Council of Melfi* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>173</sup> Kuttner and Somerville, *People Urban II: Collectio Britannica and the Council of Melfi*.

provide. Robert of Gloucester's own illegitimate son, Richard (d. 1142), was appointed to the bishopric of Bayeux in 1135, a post previously held by William the Conqueror's maternal half-brother Odo (d. 1097).<sup>174</sup> Henry II, later attempted, albeit with more controversy, to install his eldest illegitimate child, Geoffrey, as the bishop of Lincoln.<sup>175</sup> It is unclear, however, how much of this resistance Geoffrey's appointment from the cathedral's canon was based purely on the grounds of his illegitimacy or was motivated by his attempts to occupy the office and exercise its authority while refusing to be ordained. It is possible given the tumultuous state of Henry II's relationships with his legitimate heirs that Geoffrey, who shared a notable personal affinity with his father, did not wish to be further removed from a claim to the succession by formally accepting membership of the priesthood. He was, however, later successfully appointed as archbishop of York by his half-brother, the newly crowned Richard, after a period of intense negotiation.<sup>176</sup> This appointment was called into question on the grounds of Geoffrey's illegitimacy but only following a period of conflict with the king and also Geoffrey's intransigence in accepting the primacy of Canterbury. Another of Henry II's offspring to be placed in high clerical office was Morgan, who was likely born late in his father's reign, given the date of his appointment to the provostship of Beverley in 1201 and the timing thereafter of his attempted elevation to bishop.<sup>177</sup> In 1213, King John appointed Morgan to the bishopric of Durham; his acceptance of the post and the acquisition of the necessary papal dispensation were complicated, however, by the Papal interdict of England and his royal brother's and patron's belligerent stance towards Pope Innocent III (d. 1216).<sup>178</sup>

The Church's gradual colonisation of marriage gave both legitimacy and illegitimacy form and definition, imposing upon those individuals, in the case of royal and aristocrat bastards, a degree of separation from the familial affinities and networks of power they lived in. The central manifestation of this otherness was the removal of illegitimate members of the family from inheritance; that pool of

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<sup>174</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 126.

<sup>175</sup> Diceto, *Opera Historica*, p. 171.

<sup>176</sup> Diceto, *Opera Historica*, p. 386.

<sup>177</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 130.

<sup>178</sup> Marie Lovatt, 'Archbishop Geoffrey of York: A Problem in Anglo-French Maternity', in Nicholas Vincent, ed., *Records Administration and Aristocratic Society in the Anglo-Norman Realm*, ed. (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 91-124 at p. 95.

wealth and resources which formed a focal point of vested interests around which family groups could cooperate to expand, maintain, and control their networks. Papal and clerical enforcement of the exclusion of illegitimate children was to an extent tidal, particularly in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries when such alienation was either already an established cultural principle or simply removed from the earlier swell of reforming fervour. The precepts against bastards were mitigated and moderated at times by political factors and the variable influence of various secular authorities. If the efforts of the reform movement had redefined the precepts of marriage and more strongly delineated between legitimate and illegitimate, it was the permeation of these ideas through the secular and aristocratic elite which enshrined within both lay and legal culture the meaning of such a status and the corresponding removal from inheritance rights or the expectation of succession.<sup>179</sup>

## **2.2 Legitimacy, Marriage and Royal Familial Identity**

The adoption of the nebulous agenda of the reform movement by engaged elements within the laity and its resultant transmutation into secular law and custom was a gradual one, occurring unevenly across medieval Europe and reflected to an extent the diversity of thought on the issue. For instance, it is readily acknowledged, most candidly by later sources influenced by this growing cultural norm, that William the Conqueror was illegitimate; born outside of a licit and Church sanctioned union. He was acknowledged as his father's heir and considered eligible for inheritance by his feudal overlord, the King of France, and, more importantly, within the networks of Norman aristocratic affinities, through which ducal authority and consensus had to be consolidated and transmitted. Indeed, the Duke's campaign in England was explicitly endorsed by Pope Alexander II (d. 1073) and there exists no contemporary indication of clerical or secular unease with William claiming the throne of England and the mantle of sacral kingship, despite the theological nature and connotations of the anointment.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, perhaps the Church's most stringent censure and opposition towards William was in regards to

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<sup>179</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, p. 120.

<sup>180</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 116.

his consanguineous marriage to Matilda of Flanders (d. 1083) rather than the circumstances of his birth.<sup>181</sup>

The king's most intimate biographers, both personally and chronologically, William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers, eschew the subject of his legitimacy entirely while Orderic Vitalis engages far more with the issue, commenting on its supposed role in William's early career.<sup>182</sup> Writing in the twelfth century, Orderic Vitalis formulated his chronicle in the reigns of Henry I and Stephen, a time in which prejudice against bastardy and the Church's control over marriage were gaining increasing traction. The extent then to which Orderic, who may himself have been considered illegitimate as the son of a Norman priest, characterised aristocratic resistance to William's primacy and the exercise of his ducal prerogatives as a direct result of his illegitimacy, rather than a result of the political and dynastic concerns of 'autonomy seeking factions' within the Norman nobility could well be an exaggeration.<sup>183</sup> It is interesting to note though when considering Anglo-Norman conceptions of illegitimacy and familial structure, that when describing such opposition, Orderic couches aristocratic discontent – such as at the siege of Alençon, or opposition, represented by the claim of his uncle William of Arques, who was supported by another paternal relative, Mauger (d. 1055), the archbishop of Rouen – specifically in terms of the low social standing of William's mother Herleva (d. 1050) rather than focusing only on the informal, illicit nature of her relationship with Duke Robert.<sup>184</sup>

While the reform movement's definition of the necessary prerequisites for, and binary definition of, marriage infused and defined secular definitions of marriage over the course of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, it also coincided with the already paramount importance within the aristocratic world for a potential partner to possess a high status, wealth, and familial connections which would enrich and enhance the prestige of her adopted family and any children she

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<sup>181</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 116.

<sup>182</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*; William of Jumièges, *GND*, Vol. I; William of Poitiers, *The Gesta Guillelmi*, eds. and trans. Elisabeth van Hout and R.H.C. Davis (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>183</sup> Elisabeth Van Houts, 'Orderic and his Father, Odelerius' in Charles C. Rozier, Daniel roach, Giles E.M. Gasper, Elisabeth Van Houts, eds., *Orderic Vitalis: Life, Works and Interpretations*, (Woodbridge,20016), p. 17; Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis*, p. 1.

<sup>184</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol I, p. 382.

had. Increasingly during this period, a clerical model of marriage was accepted by the aristocracy, formalising and regulating a pre-existing pattern of inheritance which selected heirs based on the material and political advantages that could be derived from their maternal lineage; a trend with strong roots in the tradition of the Carolingian court. The importance of those connections and access to expanded landed interests afforded by potential heirs, not only for members of the aristocracy but also Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs, can be seen in Henry I's nomination of his daughter, Matilda, as his successor following the death of his son, William, in the White Ship Disaster.<sup>185</sup> It is usually assumed, with some justification, that Henry chose Matilda solely on the grounds that she was his only surviving legitimate child. Yet Henry, who was clearly, and it transpired rightly, wary of the difficulties surrounding the possibility of widespread acceptance of a female heir, expended considerable energy and influence in extracting a Church-sponsored oath of loyalty to Matilda from the Anglo-Norman magnates and other potential heirs. Most notably, these included the sons of his sister Adela, the eldest of, William (d. 1150), was excluded from the Anglo-Norman succession and indeed the majority of his own inheritance possibly on the grounds of a perceived mental disability. Political authority and the family's aspirations were instead invested in her younger sons, Count Theobald of Blois and Matilda's greatest rival to the English throne and, as it would transpire, Henry's anointed successor, Stephen. The latter had received strong preferment from his royal uncle and possessed important links within the Anglo-Norman court, not least of which was from his remaining brother, Henry the bishop of Winchester.<sup>186</sup>

Another of Henry's potential successors was his eldest illegitimate son, Earl Robert of Gloucester, an active member within the familial affinity who had received considerable patronage from his father and who was deeply imbedded within the wider networks of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy.<sup>187</sup> The viability of Robert's candidacy, as an illegitimate son at a time where the social and theological bias towards bastards and notions of legal exclusion had still not fully come together is unclear and open to interpretation. Certainly, in the preceding decades,

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<sup>185</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol IV p. 19.

<sup>186</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 124.

<sup>187</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 124.



illegitimate children had inherited in tumultuous political circumstances with the backing of a prominent patron. For instance, Eustace of Bréteuil, the husband of Juliane, another of Henry I's bastards, was himself illegitimate but had inherited his father's lands over the claims of two legitimate cousins through his stronger personal connections and military presence at his father's castles.<sup>188</sup>

Only one chronicle, the *Gesta Stephani*, mentions any contemporary discussion of Robert's claim to the throne. It records that Robert was urged to place himself forward as a candidate by unidentified persons within the Anglo-Norman aristocratic community but that he demurred, instead favouring the claim of Matilda's infant son.<sup>189</sup> The authorship of this generally pro-royalist chronicle probably originates from a cathedral rather than a participant in a monastic tradition. Interestingly, it depicts Robert declining his candidacy out of a sense of loyalty to his half-sister. William of Malmesbury, writing under Robert's patronage, emphasises Robert's royal descent but makes no mention of any dissuasion of his candidacy for the throne. Perhaps it was excluded as a potentially embarrassing or divisive factor given that having vacillated in the early months of the succession crisis, Robert had soon emerged a formidable ally of his half-sister's claim, becoming the military figure head of the Angevin faction within England.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, the *Gesta Stephani*'s conspicuous mention of Robert's support of, and affinity with, his nephew the future Henry II, even at the inception of the succession crisis could, depending upon the date of its compilation which is unclear, be an example of revisionism given Henry's later prominence and Earl Robert's transfer of loyalty and dynastic ambition from mother to son. However, despite Robert's apparent protection and supervision of the young Henry within his own household during his earliest foray to England, this excursion was closely supervised and Henry was not an active participant in the Angevin cause.<sup>191</sup> Robert's reluctance to engage with and aid Henry during his subsequent military invasion of England in 1147 strongly suggests reservations about embracing a new Angevin claimant and

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<sup>188</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

<sup>189</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 12.

<sup>190</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, I, p. 438.

<sup>191</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 215.

figure head. Instead it appears that earl was heavily committed to enforcing the dynastic rights of his half-sister and long-term confederate, the Empress Matilda.

Matilda's original acceptance and recognition by the Anglo-Norman magnates during her father's lifetime demonstrates that she was viewed, at least by the majority, as a valid, if not necessarily desirable, heir. Nevertheless the validity of her parents' marriage and her own legitimacy, at least as defined by the exact letter of ecclesiastic law, was not free from ambiguity.<sup>192</sup> Her mother, Matilda of Scotland (d. 1118), had spent much of her life in a nunnery and it appears that there existed some degree of uncertainty amongst contemporaries about whether she had taken vows, or otherwise qualified as a nun, prior to Henry's proposal to her shortly after the death of William Rufus. Henry secured Matilda and the legitimacy inherent in her valuable lineage, in much the same way he moved to secure the royal treasury as an asset that would enhance his position in the transition of power and authority.

Indeed, during the protracted warfare and inheritance dispute that gradually took hold following Stephen's succession to the English throne and the Duchy of Normandy, the king's faction seized upon the potential ambiguity of the Empress' mother's status as a nun for propaganda purposes. Stephen's royalist faction and its strong ecclesiastical contingent made intermittent attempts to have the Papacy declare Matilda illegitimate as the daughter of a probable nun. However, the Curia equivocated on the matter possibly recognising the dangers of becoming entangled in such a fundamentally politically and divisive issue with only limited means of enforcement.<sup>193</sup> Rather than share the perceived notions of inviolable and clearly delineated conception of legitimacy and succession for Henry I and other Anglo-Norman magnates, it is likely that for her father, besides the strong likelihood of native and personal affection on his part, Matilda's strongest attribute as heir was the wealth of dynastic connections she brought to the throne. Besides residual connections to Germany and the Holy Roman Empire resulting from her first marriage to the Emperor, Matilda was married to Geoffrey le Bel, the heir of the county of Anjou, the waxing and aggressive neighbour of Normandy in 1128.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Gesta Stephani, p. 215.

<sup>193</sup> Gesta Stephani, p. 215.

<sup>194</sup> David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 49.

The marriage which was arranged by Henry after the death of his son, William, was likely intended not only to preclude further Angevin aggression towards Normandy but provide it with a strong continental ally in the ongoing friction between the Anglo-Norman magnates and their nominal overlord, the King of France. However, the imposition of Geoffrey so close to the throne and into the heart of the Anglo-Norman aristocratic network proved unpopular with many magnates and may have contributed to their later support of Stephen.

The most crucial and perhaps politically useful of these affinities and dynastic connections, however, was Matilda's maternal lineage through her mother, Matilda of Scotland. Matilda, her husband, and their children not only gained a close familial association with the Scottish royal house but also a connection to the ancient royal dynasty of Wessex and England which the Norman dukes themselves had displaced but from whom Matilda's maternal grandmother, the later-canonised Margaret, was descended.<sup>195</sup> The appearance of legitimate continuity with the old Anglo-Saxon regime within the administration and running of England was of particular interest to Henry I. This may have stemmed from the not inconsiderable Anglo-Norman opposition to his succession and the series of uprisings launched by his cross-Channel magnates in favour of his elder brother, Robert.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, upon his coronation, Henry released a declaration strongly emphasising a commitment to rule according to the laws and customs of his predecessor, Edward the Confessor. In doing so, he supposedly renounced many of the newly developed or Norman-derived regal and ducal rights, though he later made great use of these throughout his reign, both rewarding and exerting his authority over the magnates through the use of royal prerogatives.<sup>197</sup> In addition then to Matilda's status as Henry's last living legitimate child, her viability as an heir was significantly enhanced by her importance as her royal heritage and status as only remaining issue from his union with Matilda of Scotland and the dynasty of Wessex.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, p. 7.

<sup>196</sup> Aird, *Robert Curthose*, p. 191.

<sup>197</sup> Aird, *Robert Curthose*, p. 73.

<sup>198</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English*, (Oxford, 1991), p. 5.

Familial identity and affinity were crucial factors in the establishment of an aristocrat's social and political contexts, defining to a significant extent their place and interactions within the networks of power in which they existed. These factors derived from the family's role as a receptacle of wealth. While personal disputes were far from uncommon, this sense of identity and inclusivity in a shared dynastic enterprise necessarily required, and was incentivised by, a stake within the collective fortunes and inheritance portfolio of that family.<sup>199</sup> Marriage was not only the principal mechanism through which these family networks could maintain themselves but also the means through which they could cultivate and grow other connections and so expand their political and landed interests within wider networks of aristocratic power through a process of consolidation and synthesis. The perpetuation and relative inclusivity of the eleventh and twelfth century aristocratic family, which was composed of an overlapping mesh of landed interests and marriage ties, greatly benefited from the adoption of regulated and legally recognised lines of inheritance formed in reaction to Church reforms and the colonisation of the institution of marriage, which promoted the importance of maternal lineage as a point of connectivity within aristocratic familial networks.

Consanguinity, which is to say marriage between relatives, was one of the primary grounds upon which the Church asserted a marriage could be ruled as illicit and was a continuous thread in the Church's ongoing examination of the institution of marriage. The conceptual framework for the unlawful nature of consanguineous marriages was present throughout the Church and while the prohibition was enforced throughout Europe prior to the eleventh century, it was done largely on an ad hoc basis, as cases presented themselves. As a result, the Church's position on the degree to which consanguinity compromised the legality of marriage or the circumstances in which a dispensation could be offered, lacked standardisation and verdicts proffered by regional ecclesiastical courts were often informed by social and political biases.<sup>200</sup>

The prohibition on consanguinity was one of the less controversial and internally contested aspects of the Church's conceptions of marriage and its

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<sup>199</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, p. 234.

<sup>200</sup> Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester, 2005), p. 55.

spiritual and legal ramifications. Indeed, during the ninth century the consensus within the Church, perhaps emboldened by the increasing enmeshment within the apparatus of Carolingian governance on a regional level, significantly expanded the number of prohibited degrees of relations. As part of the Church's recognition of marriage as a sacrament under the reform movement and the increasing permeation of these ideas through secular life, this broad consensus was catalysed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, compounding into a near-universally recognised and unified system of ecclesiastical courts. These were based upon a common understanding and interpretation of the body of canon law and intended to provide a systematic enforcement of this prohibition. Most importantly, for the propagation of aristocratic family and social networks, the granting of dispensations when applicable and prevailed upon by sufficient secular concerns, came about at the same time.<sup>201</sup>

Despite what the term suggests, consanguinity was envisaged by the reform movement as grounds for prohibiting not only the marriage of direct blood relatives but also those individuals connected through ties of affinity. These networks of affinity were often expansive and invasive; those networks connected through marriage, for example, the relatives of in-laws or the family of former spouses, and those individuals connected through strong spiritual ties, such as those between godparents and children, extended out beyond immediate family members.<sup>202</sup> While certainly obstructive to the growth and proliferation of aristocratic family affinities during this time – they would often have to endure the expense of applying for a dispensation or leave open to questioning the validity of their marriage and the rights of any children born to it – the Church's recognition of the broad spectrums of familial ties and affinity underlines how pervasive such affinities were and their crucial role in the maintenance and operation of twelfth century aristocratic networks of power. The exploitation and interaction with these extended networks of affinity, principally through the medium of marriage and as part of a coherent and expansive dynastic strategy, was just as crucial for the

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<sup>201</sup> Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 180.

<sup>202</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 64.

success of a twelfth century Anglo-Norman or Angevin monarch as it was for the echelons of the lesser aristocracy comprised of their counterparts and subjects.

The monarch's pre-eminence amongst his fellow magnates and the successful application of temporal power and authority was based in large part upon the creation of a shared consensus amongst the aristocracy and the broad alignment of their interests with his own; an entanglement of fortunes that could be readily facilitated through intermarriage. This principal of political solidarity through the establishment of personal accords was made both necessary and more challenging by the hegemonic and politically fragmented nature of the growing Anglo-Norman realm and, to an even more pronounced extent, that realm's expanded continuation, the Angevin Empire. Both entities were conglomerations created through an overlordship predicated upon a portfolio of diverse personal dynastic ties and obligations rather than a singular cultural nucleus or unified legal framework.<sup>203</sup> As a result the cultivation of a dynastic strategy as well as the construction of familial and political affinities was of particular importance to Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs. Their landed interests were so diverse and numerous and the personal consensus they needed to fashion amongst the magnates and aristocracy were so broad as to preclude the pursuit of or alignment with any one aristocratic affinity or familial interest at the expense of the maintenance of a relationship with another.

Henry I, his grandson Henry II, and, to a lesser extent, Stephen attempted to increase their territories' internal coherence not only through the cultivation of personal affinities and the pursuit of a dynastic strategy but also through an attempted expansion of royal prestige using the king's anointed status to emphasise connotations of sacral kingship. Furthermore, increasingly throughout the twelfth century, they tried to foster a greater and more pervasive legal structure, systemically linked to and stemming from the royal administration.<sup>204</sup> Such reforms of territorial overlordship in this transitory stage – the gradual and ongoing evolution of kingship – were important mechanisms in the growth and dissemination of royal authority, though the foundations of such authority remained rooted in the monarch's acceptance by, and participation in, aristocratic networks

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<sup>203</sup> John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire*, (Bloomsbury,2002), p. 4.

<sup>204</sup> Ralph V. Turner, *Judges, Administrators and Common Law*, (London,1994), p. 103.

of affinity. As active participants within a familial affinity and as beneficiaries of familial identity, Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards and other illegitimate family members were a valuable resource in the development of royal dynastic strategies and the creation of mutually supportive familial connections and political alignments between the king's family and the aristocracy. Henry I and Henry II utilised their illegitimate children in very different ways. The differing dynastic strategies they employed reflecting their respective political and familial circumstances. Across these two reigns and those of their legitimate children, that Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards were married into virtually every strata of the aristocracy, expanding and securing familial connections and interests both within and without the bounds of their effective and traditional control.

In the early twelfth century, while several members of the aristocracy such as the second earl of Surrey, William de Warenne (d. 1138) and Hugh Lord of Châteauneuf-en-Thymerais mobilised the growing stigma regarding illegitimacy and the reduced status of such individuals as grounds for the rejection of proposed matches to royal bastards, both of these refutations of affinity with the royal household and the bride's father were founded upon political concerns and other mitigating factors.<sup>205</sup> To the majority of aristocratic affinities in the twelfth century, the inclusion of a member of the royal family and thus a link to the status and power of the throne was highly valued regardless of the legitimacy of the royal family member in question. Thymerais had long been a point of contention and significant border friction between Normandy and the Île-de-France with both claiming they were owed vassalage by the locality. It is possible, therefore, that Hugh rejected the proposed alignment with Anglo-Norman royal and ducal interests as antithetical to his own interests and sympathies. Further, the proposed marriage was roundly condemned on the grounds of consanguinity by the canon law steeped Bishop Ivo of Chartres who claimed that Hugh and his prospective bride were related in the sixth degree.<sup>206</sup> Likewise, William de Warenne had participated in an Anglo-Norman aristocratic revolt against Henry's reign in England in favour of his elder brother Robert, then Duke of Normandy.<sup>207</sup> While he would eventually prove

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<sup>205</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 144.

<sup>206</sup> Ivo of Chartres, *Epistola cclix*, in *Receuil des Historiens des Gaule et de la France*, new edit. Leopold Delisle, vol. XV (Paris, 1878), pp. 167-8 at p. 167.

<sup>207</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 71.

himself as a military commander in Henry's service and re-emerge as one of the Anglo-Norman court's principal figures, the imposition of a bride upon him to guarantee his loyalty may have been viewed as too much a capitulation and dynastically limiting factor. Additionally, Anselm (d. 1109), the archbishop of Canterbury challenged the validity of the proposed marriage upon the grounds of their close degree of consanguinity.<sup>208</sup>

For neighbouring and independent magnates, such as Duke Conan of Brittany (d. 1148), and to a lesser extent King Alexander of Scotland (d. 1124), the acceptance of an Anglo-Norman illegitimate royal daughter as a bride was in some ways tantamount to acknowledging the supremacy and overlordship of the royal legitimate family member who brokered the marriage; in the above cases, the drawing of Henry I's sons-in-law deeper into the political and familial interests of the Anglo-Norman realm.<sup>209</sup> Although either because of their status as a foreigner or else because of the perceived reduced status and stigma created by their illegitimacy, these illegitimate daughters found that their husband's female relatives often still retained a place of prominence and political activity within the court, unusual for the dependents of married men. In the case of Duke Conan of Brittany, his mother, Ermengarde, herself a daughter of the formidable Fulk Rechin of Anjou, appeared in the witness lists of the duke's charters more frequently and more prominently than his illegitimate Anglo-Norman wife.<sup>210</sup> Another of Henry I's illegitimate daughters, Matilda, the wife of the Norman Count Rotrou of Perche, is referenced to in the majority of his charters simply as the count's wife, whereas the count's mother, Beatrix, continued to be referred to as the countess.<sup>211</sup> William of Malmesbury indicates that despite Alexander I's evident affection for his wife, Sybil, she was prone to coarse and uncourteous behaviour, likely as a result of her illegitimate heritage.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Sancti Anselmi Canuariensis Archiepiscopi, Opera Omnia*, ed. F.S. Schmitt (Edinburgh, 1946-51) epistle 424.

*Letters of St Anselm of Canterbury*, trans Walter Fohlich, (Kalamazoo, 1991), p. 424.

<sup>209</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 134.

<sup>210</sup> Matilda: François Comte, *L'Abbaye Toussaint d'Angers des origines à 1330: étude historique et cartulaire* (Angers, 1985), no. 61.

<sup>211</sup> *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de la Sainte-Trinité de Tiron*, ed. Lucien Merlet, LXXIV, LXXXVIII; (Chartres, 1883), no. CVI.

<sup>212</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 484.



It was a relatively simple matter to incorporate illegitimate royal daughters and half-sisters into a dynastic strategy, through marriage to either vassals or neighbouring independent aristocrats. Illegitimate male family members, however, required more finesse and the exertion of influence, royal prerogatives and legal powers were often utilised in employing those family members in the pursuit of dynastic security and greater political cohesion. The king's rights and duty of protection over widows and heiresses included a supervisory role over any possible future marriages.<sup>213</sup> A potent political and dynastic tool for managing or even orchestrating the transmission of land and wealth through the realm's aristocratic networks of power, the exercise of these prerogatives, particularly in the case of widows who were often imbedded within their own networks and affinities, was often a process of negotiation. Henry I had specifically included in his coronation oath that widows of magnates and his chief vassals would be allowed to retain their dowries and would not be compelled to remarry or enter a nunnery on the condition that those widows with children yet to attain their majority remain chaste.<sup>214</sup> In effect though, retention of independence and freedom was a privilege that had to be paid for; for example, following the death of her third husband, Earl Ranulf of Chester in 1129, Lucy Bolingbroke, a probable descendant of the Anglo-Saxon nobility of Mercia, paid £500 in order to remain unmarried and retain her family lands in Lincolnshire.<sup>215</sup> Likewise, during the reign of Henry II, when the husband of Matilda de Percy, William de Beaumont, the third earl of Warwick, died on crusade in 1184, William was succeeded to the earldom by his brother Waleran. Matilda, however, was able to pay the sum of 700 marks in small, yearly instalments in order to retain ownership of her dowry and remain unmarried.<sup>216</sup>

In his chronicle, the *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, William of Newburgh wrote, more than a decade after the death of King Henry II, that throughout his reign he had displayed a great care and consideration for widows.<sup>217</sup> This statement

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<sup>213</sup> Scott. L. Waugh, *The Lordship of England: Royal Wardships and Marriages in English Society and Politics*, (New Jersey, 1988).

<sup>214</sup> Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Realm*, (Manchester, 2003), p. 53.

<sup>215</sup> *Magnum Rotulum Scaccarii vel Magnum Rotulum Pipae, de anno tricesimo primo Regni Henrici primi*, ed. J. Hunter (Record Commission, 1833), p. 110.

<sup>216</sup> RaGena C. DeAragon, 'Dowager Countesses 1069-1230', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, XVII (1998), p. 96.

<sup>217</sup> William of Newburgh, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett. Rolls Series no. 82. (London, 1884) Vol I, p. 203.

is lent credence by the fact that several of the widows of leading magnates during Henry II reign neither remarried after their husband's death or were expected or compelled to purchase license for this independence, including Bertrade de Évreux, the widow of Hugh of Chester, the grandson of Lucy Bolingbroke, as well as Countess Margaret of Richmond and Countess Juliana of Norfolk.<sup>218</sup> However, this generosity is likely to be at least partially politically motivated and by allowing widows to remain unmarried after their husbands died, Henry II avoided destabilising or creating disputes and friction within aristocratic networks of power.

Far from dispensing with these rights, the royal administration undertook a survey in 1179 of women under the king's protection and whose hand in marriage and lands were effectively within his purview which was followed in 1185 by a far more systematic county by county investigation. This investigation resulted in the creation of the *Rtuli de Dominabus et Puelliss et Pueris* whose contents included information on orphaned heirs and a breakdown of their assets.<sup>219</sup> By arranging for their illegitimate male offspring to marry heiresses under their protection – who, given the nature of the dowry system, were almost always more lucrative prospects than widows and were more likely to lack dynastic complications to inheritance such as extant children or alternative heirs – not only could Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs bring these lands and local affinities into a close alignment with their own interests, they imbued members of their family with the resources necessary to form formidable bulwarks of political and military support.

### **2.3 Illegitimate Royal Family Members and the Dynastic Strategy of Henry I**

Henry I was, despite siring legitimate children, a king of noted extramarital fecundity and has been attributed by historians as many as twenty-three recognised bastards. This unusually high number of illegitimate children, even when compared to his contemporaries within the Anglo-Norman aristocracy and his royal descendants, can perhaps be explained to an extent by his early limited political and economic prospects. As a third son with a complex and often confrontational

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<sup>218</sup> DeAragon, 'Dowager Countesses 1069-1230', p. 97.

<sup>219</sup> *Widows, Heirs, and Heiresses in the Late Twelfth Century: The Rotuli de Dominabus Et Pueris Et Puellis*, ed. John Walmsley (Binghamton, 2006).

relationship with his two landed brothers, Henry was compelled through a lack of resources and prospects to eschew marriage until later life, adopting a transitory life style through the Anglo-Norman aristocratic networks, often in the service of one or the other of his competing siblings. The marriages of his illegitimate daughters Matilda, Juliana, and Sybil in the early years of his reign clearly indicate that they were born during Henry's extended stay in the political wilderness, while both Robert, the future earl of Gloucester, who is specifically identified as the king's eldest illegitimate child, and Richard of Lincoln were both born prior to the king's accession.<sup>220</sup> This not only fits into the general pattern of Anglo-Norman society in which propriety and codes of behaviour, as it pertained to the propagation of dynastic strategy, were often more flexible when applied to younger sons or those with only limited inheritance prospects, but also prefigured the behaviour of his great grandson, King John, another younger son with little chance of succession who also had a number of illegitimate children who had reached early adulthood by the time of his succession.<sup>221</sup>

It remains clear, however, that Henry I continued his extramarital relations and continued to father illegitimate children long after his coronation and subsequent marriage to the Anglo-Scottish royal descendent, Matilda of Scotland. Robert of Torigni describes three of Henry's illegitimate children, Reginald de Dunstanville, the future earl of Cornwall, Robert the future Lord of Oakhampton, and Gilbert as being youths in the 1130s, yet to reach their majority and too young to hold territory of their own, indicating that they were born in the 1110s or 1120s, during their father's reign.<sup>222</sup> Likewise, one of Henry's illegitimate daughters, Constance, the wife of Roscelin de Beaumont, lived into the 1170s, being present at the marriage of her granddaughter, suggesting that she was born relatively late in her father's life.<sup>223</sup> Henry's continued philandering could be in part be explained by William of Malmesbury's statement that Henry and Matilda deliberately limited the number of legitimate children they had, either as a measure to avoid the internecine struggles and tribulations of Henry's own early adulthood and

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<sup>220</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 249.

<sup>221</sup> Paul Webster, *King John and Religion*, (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 96.

<sup>222</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 249.

<sup>223</sup> Kathleen Thompson, 'Dowry and Inheritance Patterns: Some Examples from the Descendants of King Henry I of England', *Medieval Prosopography*, 17 (1996), p. 49.

ultimately, ironically, as a precaution of avoiding possible dispute over the succession. Indeed, Matilda, while an active partner in royal identity and administration seems to have, after the initial years of their marriage, operated primarily within English royal centres rather than sharing Henry's itinerant lifestyle.<sup>224</sup>

Even while taking into account these personal circumstances and societal factors, it is likely that many contemporary and modern observers of Henry's behaviour would struggle to refute the claim made by Orderic Vitalis, who on occasion throughout his *Ecclesiastical Histories* expounded upon the transitory and insubstantial nature of temporal glory and power such as his portrayal of the forlorn and harrowing circumstances of the Conqueror's funeral, and declared that throughout his life Henry had remained a slave to his lusts and passions.<sup>225</sup> William of Malmesbury's insistence that Henry I was in no way susceptible to lust but rather motivated throughout his extramarital liaisons by the prudent desire to generate issue, has then raised a great deal of curiosity and even some mild consternation within the historiography.<sup>226</sup> Elsewhere in his chronicle, William's praise of the chastity and marital fidelity of the Scottish royal house in the twelfth century, contrary to social and aristocrat norms, is couched in language and rhetoric markedly different from that used to describe Henry, although William himself declines to draw the comparison.<sup>227</sup>

It is interesting then that William's defence of Henry, or at least his attempted mitigation of his sins, is formulated in a manner representative of the Church's conceptions of marriage; specifically the doctrines of the Church fathers, brought to the fore of ecclesiastical thought and debate by the efforts of the reform movement that propagation and the creation of children is one of the primary purposes and the principal good of marriage, while sexual intercourse for the purposes of pleasure remains reprehensible.<sup>228</sup> William's characterisation of Henry I's illegitimate children as potential heirs is unusual since at the time of his chronicles composition and revision in 1127, the societal prejudice and legal

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<sup>224</sup> Lois L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland*, p. 73.

<sup>225</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, VI, p. 98.

<sup>226</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, Vol I, p. 744.

<sup>227</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, Vol I, p. 726.

<sup>228</sup> Laura Wertheimer, *The Ecclesiastical Construction of Illegitimacy in the Middle Ages*, p. 92.

alienation of bastards was beginning to saturate lay society. Of course, William was writing under the patronage of Henry's eldest illegitimate child, Robert of Gloucester; not only would Robert be unlikely to have appreciated any recriminations regarding his birth, prior to his father's death in 1135, he may well have retained some hopes for the succession. Further, and more pertinently, William of Malmesbury's dedication to his patron in the revised edition of the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* seeks to depict Robert as a worthy participant in the familial identity of the Norman ducal house and the inheritor of their legacy in a spiritual and figurative rather than legal sense by identifying and imbuing him with the qualities of his ancestors.<sup>229</sup> William, in characterising Henry's large number of illegitimate children as a result of the king's political nous and foresight, may be deliberately mitigating his transgression or misrepresenting and exaggerating his motivations. The chronicler's testimony represents a definitive contemporary acknowledgment of the great political utility of illegitimate children and significant role which they could play in the furtherance of royal dynastic and political strategies.

### **2.3.1 The Role of Illegitimate Royal Sons in the Dynastic Strategy of Henry I**

Prior to the White Ship disaster and the derailing of his original plans for succession, Henry I had already brokered advantageous marriages with Anglo-Norman heiresses for two of his illegitimate sons, Robert and Richard, both of whom had spent time under the tutelage of Robert Bloet, the bishop of Lincoln and one of the king's most trusted councillors.<sup>230</sup> As the eldest of Henry's illegitimate sons, Robert and Richard had both engaged in military service to protect their father's interests and were already established and acknowledged presences within Anglo-Norman aristocratic society. This meant that they were advantageously placed to both draw further territory into the royal affinity through their marriages and capitalise upon the wealth and power with which they were invested. The latter served to support both their father and legitimate half-brother, William Aetheling, with whom they both shared a broad familial and personal affinity as participants

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<sup>229</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, Vol I, p. 799.

<sup>230</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 595.

in the expanding youthful clique of the Anglo-Norman court. After a relatively extensive betrothal, Robert was married in 1119 to Mabel Fitzhamon, the daughter of Robert Fitzhamon and Sybil de Montgomery.<sup>231</sup> Sybil herself was the daughter of one of the Conqueror's most powerful and trusted lieutenants, Roger de Montgomery, while Robert Fitzhamon was one of the principal Anglo-Norman lords of the Welsh marches and one of the foremost and active participants in the Norman expansion into Wales. The son of the highly placed Haimo Dapifer, who served as both the sheriff of Kent and as a royal steward to both the Conqueror and William Rufus, Robert held estates in Essex, Kent, Torginy, and Manche. He rose to prominence through his service to William Rufus during the 1088 rebellion.<sup>232</sup>

As a reward for his support Robert was gifted with substantial lands in Gloucestershire, derived in part from the king's inheritance from his mother, Queen Matilda of Flanders. Over the subsequent decades, he expanded these territories through his participation in the ongoing and piecemeal Norman expansion into Wales, establishing the lordship of Glamorgan and a number of strongholds, most notably Cardiff castle, throughout the south.<sup>233</sup> Robert died in 1107, when his heir and eldest child Mabel, likely born sometime around 1100, was still far from her majority, precipitating a long period of royal wardship for his daughter. Unsurprisingly, given the ample opportunity to assert his royal prerogatives and Mabel's status as one of the wealthiest heiresses in the Anglo-Norman realm, whose inheritance further held significant political and strategic importance, it appears that Henry I had long term plans to utilise Mabel and draw her lands into his own familial affinity. All three of Mabel's younger sisters were placed in convents so as not to dilute their father's lucrative inheritance with competing claims.

Therefore, when he gained access to and control over his new wife's lands after their marriage in 1119, Robert emerged as one of the Anglo-Norman realms most powerful and wealthy magnates situated in a place of pre-eminence amongst the Anglo-Norman Marcher Lords. His position amongst those lords was assured

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<sup>231</sup>David Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester (b. before 1100, d. 1147)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>232</sup>Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 6.

<sup>233</sup>Lynn H. Nelson, *The Normans in South Wales, 1070–1171* (Austin, 2012), p. 98.

by his union with Mabel, whose considerable aristocratic lineage intimately anchored Robert and their children within aristocratic networks of power. With lands straddling the politically and culturally permeable Welsh border, Robert was in a strong position to protect the interests of his legitimate family within these localities, acting as both a figurehead and de facto leader amongst the often independently-minded Marcher Lords, able to intervene directly in the plastic and often turbulent arena of Anglo-Welsh politics.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, in 1122, Henry I further enhanced the prestige and authority of his eldest son by titling him the first earl of Gloucester, imbedding him further into the aristocratic affinities of the Anglo-Norman Welsh border.<sup>235</sup> Robert of Torigni, the Bec-educated abbot of Mount St Michaels in Normandy, emphasised the importance and wealth of Robert's Norman holdings – also acquired through his wife's inheritance. These holdings included the town of Torigni, whose location on the border of the Cotentin not only attracted a number of merchants but also compelled Robert to undertake an extensive programme of building and fortification around the town in order to secure his newly acquired holdings and Anglo-Norman military interests.<sup>236</sup>

Henry I's illegitimate son Richard, who Orderic Vitalis tells us was heavily involved in the fighting throughout Normandy against King Louis VI in 1119 and was present at the siege of Évreux and the Battle of Brémule, was betrothed to another wealthy Anglo-Norman heiress, Amice, daughter of Ralph de Gael and his unknown wife.<sup>237</sup> Raoul, Lord of Gael and Montfort in Brittany, was the second son of Earl Ralph de Gael of Norfolk, a participant in the conquest who subsequently lost the majority of his lands due to his role in the revolt of 1075, and Emma de Bréteuil, the daughter of another of the Conqueror's peers, Earl William FitzOsbern of Hereford. As well as inheriting his father's substantial lordships in Brittany, following the death of his elder brother William de Gael in 1103, Raoul also inherited, through his mother, a claim on the lordship of Bréteuil in Normandy which by 1119 he had managed to secure following the rebellion of his illegitimate

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<sup>234</sup> C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I*, (New Haven, 2003), p. 209.

<sup>235</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol 2, p. 249.

<sup>236</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol 2, p. 249.

<sup>237</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, VI, p. 294.

cousin Eustace de Bréteuil, the husband of Henry I's illegitimate daughter, Juliana.<sup>238</sup>

Richard died in 1120, during the sinking of the White Ship, before the marriage to Amice could take place, but it is notable that Richard's marriage would have re-established royal control and influence upon Bréteuil.<sup>239</sup> A lordship of vital strategic importance in the continued Anglo-Norman disputes with the kings of France, which Henry had previously tied to himself through the marriage of his daughter Juliana but which had, following the couple's rebellion, been allowed to devolve outside of the immediate royal political and familial circle and into the hands of a magnate from the culturally distinct and largely politically autonomous Brittany. By granting Richard the lordship of Bréteuil through his marriage to Amice, Henry was once more bringing the vital territory into secure alignment with his own interests, placing it in the hands of a proxy of established, if limited, military experience who could be relied upon to loyally defend both the lordship and wider royal interests within the volatile region. Following Richard's death in 1120, Henry retooled this strategy, marrying Amice to Earl Robert de Beaumont of Leicester in 1122, one of the rising stars of the Anglo-Norman realm who had been raised alongside his twin brother Waleran within the royal court as part of the same collective of aspiring young Anglo-Norman aristocrats as the Aetheling and his illegitimate half-brothers. While his machinations were disrupted to a certain extent by the White Ship disaster, as were all of Henry's pre-1120 plans, it seems clear that Henry I intended to utilise his two eldest illegitimate sons in the furtherance of the family's political interests and dynastic strategy by establishing them both through strategic marriages as powerful magnates in volatile localities so that they could function as bulwarks of royal power within these regions and act as deputies for their legitimate family members in administrative and military capacities.

Henry Fitzroy (d. 1158) was the son of Henry I and Nest, the daughter of King Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth (d. 1093).<sup>240</sup> While acknowledged by Henry and described within the charters of his own tightly woven Marcher affinities as the son of the king, there exists some contemporary speculation that Henry was in fact

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<sup>238</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, III, p. 345.

<sup>239</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, Vol. III, p. 146.

<sup>240</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 134.



the son of Nest's husband Gerald de Windsor and was presented by the family as a product of Nest's liaison with Henry I as a ploy to gain further favour.<sup>241</sup> Born sometime after his father's coronation in the early 1100s, Henry was appointed by his father to the stewardships of Pebidiog and Narberth which had been granted by the king to Bishop Bernard of St David (d. 1148).<sup>242</sup> The identity of Henry Fitzroy's wife is unknown; that Henry's son Melier (d.1220), the future justiciar of Ireland, had evidently reached his majority by 1158 and succeeded to his father's landed interests upon his death in battle suggest that the marriage took place sometime before the mid-1130s.<sup>243</sup> Raised within the household of his stepfather, Gerald de Windsor, Henry seems to have played only a limited role in Anglo-Norman royal affinities and dynastic strategies. Instead, he appears to have operated principally within the social and familial networks formed by the marcher lords and Cambro-Normans within which he and his half-brothers formed a formidable bloc of aligned landed and administrative interests.<sup>244</sup> It is therefore likely that his wife was drawn from a similar background; chosen for the furtherance of regional political affinities rather than as a function of a wider Anglo-Norman royal dynastic strategy.

William de Tracy is identified by Robert of Torigni as one of Henry I's six bastard sons.<sup>245</sup> The abbot says little of William, save for the fact that he died shortly after his father.<sup>246</sup> William has long been presented within the historiography as the grandfather and namesake of one of Archbishop Thomas Becket's murderers, William de Tracy. The lordship of Bradninch in Devon supposedly passed from the elder William to his grandson by means of his only daughter Grace. However, not only is the name, family and possible dynastic links of William's wife missing from this traditional narrative. Nicholas Vincent has argued convincingly that it is the result of overly enthusiastic genealogical reconstruction, which has been left unexamined by historians.<sup>247</sup> Instead, Vincent traces the heritage of Becket's murderer to Turgis de Tracy, the Norman seneschal

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<sup>241</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, p. 47.

<sup>242</sup> M.T. Flanagan, 'Meiler fitz Henry (d. 1220)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)

<sup>243</sup> Flanagan, 'Meiler fitz Henry'.

<sup>244</sup> I.W. Rowlands, 'The Making of the March: Aspects of the Norman Settlement in Dyfed', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 3 (1980), pp. 142–157.

<sup>245</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol 2, p. 249.

<sup>246</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol 2, p. 249.

<sup>247</sup> Nicholas Vincent, *Becket's Murderers*, (Canterbury, 2004), p. 14.

of Maine, a county in which he retained considerable estates, further suggesting that his acquisition of the lordship of Bradninch came to him from his familial relationship with the Tracy, lords of Barnstaple who had received the lordship from King Stephen.<sup>248</sup> This unfortunately leaves any possible role of Henry I's son, William de Tracy, in royal familial identity and dynastic strategy difficult to ascertain although it is possible that he is the William identified in two separate charters of King Alexander of Scotland as the brother of Queen Sybil.<sup>249</sup>

Gilbert, like his brother, William de Tracy, is known to us primarily through the testimony of Robert of Torigni, who states that he was a property-less youth at the time of his father's death in the mid-1130s.<sup>250</sup> Gilbert's seemingly minimal historic footprint suggests that he played no significant role in the expansion and maintenance of an Anglo-Norman royal dynastic strategy. Similarly elusive within the surviving historical record is Fulk, who is identified in the Abingdon cartulary as the son of King Henry and is listed as a witness to a charter pertaining to the distribution of land once donated to the abbey by William of Anskill and his wife Ansfride, a former mistress of Henry I in 1156.<sup>251</sup> White's speculation in the *Complete Peerage* that Fulk's presence at Abingdon suggests he may be a monk at the abbey has been widely accepted within the subsequent historiography and remains an intriguing possibility, given contemporary aristocratic practice regarding provisions for the souls of family members, despite a lack of further evidence.<sup>252</sup> Regardless of the question of his monastic status, which would certainly have removed him from participation within a coordinated family dynastic strategy, there exists no evidence of Fulk marrying into the aristocratic networks of power, much less of any suggestion that any potential marriages were instigated by or otherwise beneficiary to his legitimate family members. However, his participation and identification in the donation of Ansfride and her husband indicate that he did retain some connection to his familial identity.

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<sup>248</sup> Vincent, *Becket's Murderers*, p. 14.

<sup>249</sup> *Early Scottish Charters Prior to AD 1153*, ed. A. Lawrie (Glasgow, 1905), nos. XXXVI, XLIX.

<sup>250</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol 2, p. 249.

<sup>251</sup> *Historia Ecclesie Abendonensis: The History of the church of Abingdon, Volume II* ed. and trans by John Hudson, (Oxford, 2007), p. 53.

<sup>252</sup> White, *The Complete Peerage*.

Reginald de Dunstanville, the son of Henry I and Sybil Corbet, was at the time of his father's death in 1135 still a young man without property and it seems he had not been provided for or promoted by his father directly, perhaps being too young to hold an active military or administrative role. Reginald was, however, relatively well connected with the Anglo-Norman court and aristocratic networks of power through his maternal family and his mother's new husband, the king's chancellor Herbert, a union brokered by the king himself.<sup>253</sup> Reginald's rise to prominence came during the dynastic struggle fought between his half-sister, Empress Matilda, and their cousin King Stephen; quickly aligning his interests with those of the Empress, Reginald, alongside his friend Baldwin de Redvers, enthusiastically began prosecuting the Angevin war effort.<sup>254</sup> In 1140, Reginald was created earl of Cornwall and was charged with securing the County by his half-brother Robert of Gloucester, presumably with the support and blessing of the Empress Matilda in whose cause they were both willing and notable participants. Reginald anchored this position in the county by arranging his marriage to Beatrice, the daughter of William Fitz Richard of Cardian, a close relative of the powerful Clare family and one of the county's leading magnates who had previously served as King Stephen's principal lieutenant within the region.<sup>255</sup>

It is likely that in the closely contested and fractured dynastic conflict, William Fitz Richard's defection came not only from the perceived flagging of the royalist cause but from a recognition that the marriage of his heir into the Anglo-Norman royal family and the inner circle of the Angevin cause would represent a closer and therefore more materially and politically advantageous relationship for William than was provided by his former ties of allegiance and political affinity with Stephen. Earl Reginald quickly began a campaign to consolidate their power on the peninsula aided by his father-in-law and his extensive contacts and influence within the region's aristocratic networks of power. Despite several initial setbacks, including the direct military intervention of King Stephen, Reginald was eventually able to secure his control of Cornwall and it remained an Angevin stronghold throughout the remainder of the war, found at his half-sister's side at several crucial

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<sup>253</sup> *A Calendar*, ed. P.L. Hull, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, Vol. 30, (1987), p. 188; *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* ed. W. Stubbs, (London, 1867), Vol I, p. 172.

<sup>254</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, IV, p. 182; VI, p. 510.

<sup>255</sup> Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 115.

points throughout the conflict.<sup>256</sup> The elevation of Reginald to an earldom and his successful pacification of the region through this marriage into one of the most prominent local aristocrat familial affinities is a clear example of the Anglo-Norman royal family's utilisation and empowerment of illegitimate family members as part of a dynastic and political strategy in which participants in the family identity were imbedded within local aristocratic affinities as a way of constructing a political consensus and bringing those localities into alignment with wider family interests.

One of Henry I's eldest bastards, who shared his familial and ducally-sourced name with both legitimate and illegitimate family members, Robert Fitz Edith, was the son of the king and Edith Forne. He was born prior to the king's accession, sometime in the mid-1090s. Despite his maternal aristocratic, albeit Anglo-Danish, heritage and the provisions made for Edith by the king, such as a marriage to the sheriff of Oxford, Robert d'Oilly, and the gift of the Manor of Cleydon in Buckinghamshire, Robert appears to have subsisted primarily within these maternal and adopted networks of power enjoying only limited support and preferment from his Father.<sup>257</sup> However, during the reign of King Stephen, with its ongoing dynastic conflict, Robert became one of his half-sister Empress Matilda's leading supporters, re-orienting himself in a similar manner to a number of his half-brothers to align his interests with that of the Angevin cause. Through this solidarity with his siblings he was rewarded with a marriage to Matilda d'Avranches, the daughter and heir of Robert d'Avranches, who brought with her the lordships of Avranches, Meulles, and Oakhampton in Devon; in 1166, these totalled ninety knights' fees between them.<sup>258</sup> Robert's marriage to Matilda, and indeed the displacement of Matilda's cousin Ralph Avenells from the lordship of Oakhampton, was possibly brokered by Earl Reginald of Cornwall who had significant landed interests and political ties in Devon through his son-in-law Earl Richard de Redvers.<sup>259</sup> Robert's marriage to Matilda made him one of the richest

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<sup>256</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 740; Gesta Stephani, pp. 126-34.

<sup>257</sup> Pipe Roll 31 Henry I, ed. J. Hunter (London, 1833), p. 155.

<sup>258</sup> Judith Green, 'Family Matters: Family and the Formation of the Empress' Party in South-West England', in Katharine Keats-Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*, (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 147.

<sup>259</sup> Green, 'Family Matters', p. 147.

men in Devon and intimately connected him with the county's familial and political networks. It can therefore be seen as an example of the mutually beneficial utilisation and cooperation of Anglo-Norman illegitimate family members in securing and expanding dynastic interests. Admittedly, the primary beneficiary, outside of Robert himself, of this secular empowerment and dynastic engineering was another illegitimate member of the Anglo-Norman royal family rather than the monarch, although surely Henry II would have benefited from familial consolidation in Cornwall and Devon, but this is certainly a testament to the importance and connectivity of the familial affinity felt by twelfth century Anglo-Norman royal bastards.

### **2.3.2 The Role of Illegitimate Royal Daughters in the Dynastic Strategy of Henry I**

In 1103, the early years of his reign marked by internecine warfare and accompanying aristocratic revolts and discontent, Henry I arranged the marriages of several of his eldest illegitimate daughters to Anglo-Norman magnates whose support and resulting alignment with his own interests aided him in consolidating his power in the then-disputed Duchy of Normandy, securing the Norman border with France. The first of these was between Juliana, one of the king's daughters, and Eustace de Pacy, the illegitimate son of William of Bréteuil who had, due to immediate military presence and strong association within local political affinities, secured his father's lands despite William's preference to be succeeded by his legitimate Breton nephews William and Ralph de Gael.<sup>260</sup> Henry's support for Eustace's claim was sealed and unequivocally displayed by the creation of a close familial link between the two and gave the young bastard the legitimacy and authority he needed to secure his lordship while Henry seized upon the opportunity to install his own garrison in several of Eustace's key castles, so securing his grip on the strategically important region through both direct military presence and the fostering of strong familial ties. This mutually beneficial alignment of interests lasted until 1119 when the king and his son-in-law, who was abetted and supported by Juliana, came into conflict over the ownership of the border castle of Ivry which

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<sup>260</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. III, p. 345.

Henry was reluctant to part with, as well as Eustace's feuding with the king's castellan.<sup>261</sup>

The second of these highly strategic dynastic marriages for his illegitimate daughters was that between the eldest Matilda (of whom there were of course several) and Count Rotrou of Perche. Not only was the loyalty and support of Rotrou a valuable resource for the control of the strategically important county of Perche located on Normandy border but Rotrou was also a rival of one of the principal architects of the Anglo-Norman aristocratic resistance to Henry's claims in England and Normandy, Robert of Bellême. Rotrou was in fact a relative of Robert's who challenged Robert's claim to elements of the family's shared portfolio of landed interests, namely the lordships of Domfort and Bellême.<sup>262</sup> By supporting Rotrou's claim to these lands and creating a familial link between them through marriage to his daughter, Henry was alienating territory and resources from a rival while growing his own political consensus amongst the Anglo-Norman aristocracy. Matilda brought to her marriage two valuable manors in Wiltshire, Aldbourne and Wanborough; the wealth this land represented both a further incentive to her husband to form an alignment with Henry while also providing the count with domains in England to ensure that he, like Henry, had a vested interest in maintaining the integrity of the union between England and Normandy.<sup>263</sup>

Similarly to Matilda's marriage to Count Rotrou, Henry also arranged the marriage, sometime around the early 1110s, of one of his illegitimate daughters, Mabel, to another of Robert of Bellême's enemies located within Normandy, William Gouet III of Montmirail.<sup>264</sup> Robert was at this time fomenting rebellion in southern Normandy aided by the ambitious and expansionist Count Fulk of Anjou; an alliance with a powerful and well connected lord within that region, whose family were perennial rivals of Robert's family was a natural and sensible advancement of Henry I's dynastic strategy to retain and expand his authority on the peripheries of the Anglo-Norman hegemony.

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<sup>261</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. III, p. 466.

<sup>262</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 68.

<sup>263</sup> Kathleen Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France: The County of Perche*, (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 56.

<sup>264</sup> Thompson, *Power and Border Lordship in Medieval France*, p. 38.

As discussed previously, Henry I also brokered dynastic marriages between his illegitimate children and independent or semi-autonomous foreign rulers; familial relationships which served to secure the borders of the Anglo-Norman hegemony through the creation of a shared affinity and the expansion of family identity. To a varying extent those relationships also helped Henry exert overlordship or cultivate a concept of personal and political pre-eminence. The most prestigious of these unions was between the king's daughter, Sybil, and King Alexander of Scotland.<sup>265</sup> Given the application of a shared family name, Sybil is often identified as the daughter of Sybil Corbert, Reginald of Cornwall's mother. There is some dispute over the exact date of the marriage – which may have occurred as early as 1107 when Alexander first came to the throne or as late as 1114 resulting either from or in Alexander's personal participation in Henry I's campaign in Wales that year.<sup>266</sup> Interestingly, Henry and Alexander were already connected dynastically through Henry's marriage to Alexander's somewhat estranged sister Matilda of Scotland, with Henry acting as an active and well-connected participant within the royal Scottish familial affinity, intervening in internal Scottish and family affairs to promote the interests and claims of Alexander's younger brother, the culturally Anglo-Norman-aligned David.<sup>267</sup> Alexander's marriage to Sybil could have been intended by Henry to strengthen the already active and politically transmissive ties between the two monarchs with perhaps the transmutation from brother-in-law to father-in-law meant to emphasise Henry's seniority and role as arbitrator in the matter of the parameters of the monarchs' relationship.

Sometime before 1113, another daughter, also Matilda, was married to Duke Conan III of Brittany, a union which forced King Louis VI to give formal, if begrudging, recognition of the long sought after Anglo-Norman dominance and hegemony over Brittany.<sup>268</sup> The marriage of one of Henry's illegitimate daughters to the Duke was likely intended by Henry to reinforce this influence over the duchy whose aristocratic networks of power and family identity had long been entangled across the two duchy's blurred and permeable borders as well as to draw Conan into participating in the Anglo-Norman royal family affinity and aristocratic

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<sup>265</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 144

<sup>266</sup> Judith Green, 'David I and Henry I', p. 14.

<sup>267</sup> Judith Green, 'David I and Henry I', p. 19'.

<sup>268</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, II, p. 352, VI, p. 180.

networks. Although the imposition of these family ties and the presence of one of Henry's illegitimate daughters within the Breton ducal court appears to have had a limited impact upon the absorption of Brittany into the Anglo-Norman hegemony as Duke Conan seems to have been anxious to minimise this influence and perpetuate his own autonomy within Brittany itself.

To further support his strategy of defending the Norman periphery and growing his influence and system of political and familial alliances in the surrounding territories, Henry I married his illegitimate daughter, Constance, to Roscelin de Beaumont, the viscount of Beaumont-sur-Sarthe who had a strong hereditary claim to the Angevin dominated county of Maine and was valuable asset in curtailing the impact of Angevin aggression until Henry I's own rapprochement with Fulk in 1125, achieved through the marriage of Henry's heir and sole surviving legitimate child, Matilda to Fulks' eldest son Geoffrey le Bel.<sup>269</sup> Yet another of Henry's illegitimate daughters to marry outside of the Anglo-Norman hegemony was Aline, whose date of birth and the identity of her mother are unknown, although her marriage to Matthew of Montmorency in 1126 suggests perhaps that she was born after her father's coronation sometime in the latter half of the 1100s opening decade. Her husband Matthew was a powerful magnate in the Île-de-France; deeply attached to his local and national aristocratic networks, holding land in Montmorency, Marly, Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, and Attichy, and later going on to be appointed the Constable of France under Louis VII.<sup>270</sup> While a powerful and influential aristocrat, Henry's goal in this marriage, other than to expand his influence and ability to lobby beyond the Norman border, is unclear. The timing of the wedding suggests that it may have been undertaken to further stabilise the region and capitalise on the extended period of relative peace between Henry I and Louis VI. Although, since the identity of Aline's mother is unknown, the possibility exists that the match was a result of or informed by the interests of his daughter's maternal networks.

Roger of Howden explicitly describes Uhtred (d.1174), Lord of Galloway before his death at the hands of his traitorous half-brother, as a cousin of Henry II,

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<sup>269</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, VI, p. 444; Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 70.

<sup>270</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 144.



opening the possibility that Uhtred's mother was another illegitimate daughter of Henry I.<sup>271</sup> Henry, as we have already seen, was well connected and active within Scottish aristocratic networks and was engaged in the monitoring and consolidation of the Anglo-Scottish affinities being constructed and expanded by his Scottish royal relatives. Galloway was a semi-autonomous region increasingly exposed to Norman cultural and political influence and was, at least until the reign of King David, largely beyond the Scottish crown's ability to project its authority within.<sup>272</sup> It seems plausible then that Fergus of Galloway, who was notably proactive in the extension of his authority through Galloway and later in the resistance and negotiation with encroaching royal authority was married to one of Henry I's many illegitimate daughters; the political climate within Galloway and Uhtred's age suggests this marriage occurred sometime around the late 1110s or early 1120s, possibly following the early death of the king's daughter, Queen Sybil of Scotland.

#### **2.4 Illegitimate Royal Family Members and the Dynastic Strategy of Henry II**

Unlike his Anglo-Norman grandfather, Henry II, at least initially, was well provisioned with potential heirs and legitimate children. Indeed, it could be argued that their frequent competition both with one another and their father for access to the resources of the hegemonic entity, referred to as the Angevin Empire, and the cultivation of support and pre-eminence within its aristocratic networks of power had a destabilising effect upon the family's landed interests and ability to project power across their patchwork domains. Henry II imbedded his legitimate sons in positions of regional power and authority while initially promoting, in theory and symbolically at least, his eldest surviving son, Henry, as his co-ruler, attempting to preserve a core of central royal authority around which his other sons and family members operated as partners in a shared dynastic enterprise.<sup>273</sup> Although, of course, friction over the exact terms and nature of this dynastic cooperation, such as an individual son's level of autonomy or Henry's energetic style of rulership and

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<sup>271</sup> R.D. Oram, 'A family business? Colonisation and Settlement in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Galloway, *Scottish Historical Review*, 72 (1993), p. 115.

<sup>272</sup> Oram, 'A family business?', p. 115.

<sup>273</sup> Strickland, *The Young King*, p. 69.

reluctance to share power during his own life time resulted in significant familial tension and no small number of actual wars.<sup>274</sup>

Henry II's three legitimate daughters were Matilda (d. 1189), Eleanor (d. 1214) and Joan (d. 1199), all of whom made highly prestigious matches with foreign rulers; respectively, the Duke of Saxony, the King of Castile, and the King of Sicily.<sup>275</sup> While the social and legal stigma of illegitimacy had gained considerable traction by the latter half of the twelfth century, the high status of marriages brokered by Henry II for his legitimate daughters does not, however, necessarily imply a comparative lack of status or participation in familial identity on the part of Henry I's illegitimate daughters. Sybil after all like her great nieces Eleanor and Joan was married to an anointed king and although Henry I's legitimate daughter Matilda was initially married to the Holy Roman Emperor, arguably western Christendom's most prestigious and powerful monarch, following the death of her husband, Henry V, she was married to the heir of the county of Anjou. The union with Anjou, meant to help protect the southern border of Normandy and restore peaceful relations between her father and one his most powerful and proactive neighbours, fits into the pattern established by Henry I of forging familial connections with neighbouring princes and powerful regional affinities through the marriages of his illegitimate daughters.

This suggests that the main difference between Henry I and Henry II's dynastic strategies and the deployment of their daughters was informed not only by the legitimacy of their daughters but by the differing political contexts they inhabited. While Henry I deployed his daughters to the major regional buffer zones around his territories to exert Anglo-Norman influence and overlordship over them, Henry II's material and political situation was greatly altered not only by his possession of his paternal inheritance, Anjou, but also by the acquisition of the Duchy of Aquitaine through marriage. While far from unthreatened, the subsequent reorientation of royal governance and the domination of much of the Norman peripheries such as Britany possibly led to the adoption of a dynastic strategy designed to further enhance the prestige and standing of the Angevin hegemony

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<sup>274</sup> Strickland, *The Young King*, p. 69.

<sup>275</sup> Sean Duffy, 'Henry II and England's Insular Neighbours,' *Henry II: New Interpretations*, Nicholas Vincent, Christopher Harper-Bill, eds., (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 1.

throughout Europe through marriages to high ranking princes or monarchs. In addition to the high status of such unions within Europe's shared aristocratic culture, it is possible to view the marriages of all of Henry II's legitimate daughters as possessing potential strategic and dynastic ramifications, further suggesting they were fundamentally deployed and utilised in a way similar to Henry I's bastard daughters within an enlarged political context.

The union between Eleanor and King Alfonso VII and the creation of an affinity and reliance between the Angevin royal family and the Spanish kingdom of Castile would potentially deter aggression from the neighbouring kingdoms of Aragon and Navara, both of whom shared borders with the politically and culturally fractured southern Aquitaine. Likewise establishing the influence of the Angevin royal family within German politics created the possibility of canvassing support against France, a dynastic move which would later pay further dividends with the accession, albeit contested, of Henry II's grandson Otto IV (d. 1218) as first King of the Romans before being confirmed in 1209 as the Holy Roman Emperor. Henry II's youngest legitimate daughter, Joan, married King William II of Sicily (d. 1189) in 1176 and was escorted to her new home by her illegitimate paternal uncle Hamelin de Warenne. The kings of Sicily were distantly connected to the Norman ducal house and while perhaps one of medieval Europe's smallest kingdoms, its position on the Mediterranean at a traditional economic and cultural confluence meant that it possessed both significant strategic importance and a vibrantly complex courtly culture.

It is possible that this symbolic reunification of two Norman derived cultures, perhaps accompanied with the tacit assertion and recognition of the seniority of the Norman ducal house and its descendants, appealed to Henry II and his dynastic aspirations. Additionally, Henry had since the murder of Archbishop Becket in 1170 been committed, at least in theory, to undertaking a crusade to the holy land as a form of penance. Sicily's location and participation in Mediterranean trade made it an appealing staging post for any large-scale military excursion to the Holy Lands, indeed Henry's son Richard and Philip II used Sicily for that very purpose in 1190, coming to a mutual understanding with the illegitimate King Tancred who had seized the throne following the death of Joan's husband. Henry II was also a relative of the kings of Jerusalem and the establishment of cordial

relations with Sicily would have been an important precursor to any potential attempts to project power and expand Angevin royal interests within the region.

Perhaps in part, due to marrying Eleanor of Aquitaine at a relatively young age, Henry II had far fewer illegitimate children than his grandfather and was well-stocked with perhaps an overabundance of legitimate children to provide for and further family dynastic strategies. Thus, he utilised alternative strategies for many of his illegitimate children in the furtherance of family interests. While Henry's eldest illegitimate child was the king's constant companion, even taking a role in Henry's coronation and serving his father in a number of administrative and military capacities throughout his reign, Henry demurred from procuring a marriage to a prospective heiress and accompanying landed interests for his son. Rather, Henry sort to provide Geoffrey a career in the Church, appointing him to the archdeaconship of Lincoln in 1171 and then two years later, in 1173, to the bishopric itself, although despite his journey to Rome and acquiring of a papal dispensation, his assumption of the office was complicated by his youth and continued refusal to be ordained.<sup>276</sup> Despite such complications and the resistance that they generated from the cathedral canons of Lincoln, Henry persisted, and in addition to the chancellorship, Geoffrey collected a number of ecclesiastical offices and archdeaconships which he held in perpetuity. Henry's promotion of Geoffrey within the Church not only served to provide for and enrich his illegitimate son but also alienated Geoffrey further from the prospect of inheriting the throne or competing with his legitimate half-brothers. It also provided Geoffrey with the means of supporting his legitimate family members and their shared dynastic interests through the highly connective and pervasive ecclesiastical sphere. A concern which may have been particularly relevant for Henry II, given his experience of the Becket affair and its lingering after-effects. While Geoffrey resisted becoming ordained, a necessary step in being formally invested in the position, he took over the management and income of the dioceses. In a royal charter confirming the gift of the church at Bonnington to Savigny abbey, which was issued sometimes in the 1170s before his formal repudiation of the position,

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<sup>276</sup> Marie Lovatt, 'Archbishop Geoffrey of York', p. 95.

Geoffrey can be found at the head of the witness list identified as the bishop elect of Lincoln.<sup>277</sup>

This career pattern would later be followed by another one of his illegitimate children, Morgan, who under his half-brother, King John, was promoted to become the provost of Beverly in 1201 and then put forward as a candidate for the bishopric of Durham in 1213, although it appears that Morgan was born relatively late in Henry's life and he would likely have had little opportunity to make provisions for a career for his extremely young son.<sup>278</sup>

Henry II's illegitimate daughter, Matilda, was appointed the abbess of the wealthy and influential Barking abbey sometime after 1173, an appointment perhaps made more significant by the fact that her predecessor was Mary Becket, the sister of the slain archbishop, who had been offered the position by way of recompense for her brother's death.<sup>279</sup> Monastic networks functioned across the breadth of Europe, often through robust communications systems and mother and daughter houses, and contained within them significant wealth and access to large political and aristocratic networks. The promotion of Matilda to abbess then provided the wider family with a member engaged with their wellbeing within the spiritual sphere but also brought to their affinity limited access to the wealth and prestige of one of the nation's great nunneries, while allowing Henry II to further co-opt and shape another element of the growing cult around Becket. Indeed, when Matilda died in 1202, she was succeeded as abbess by her niece, Matilda, an illegitimate daughter of King John.<sup>280</sup> Peter, a brother of Archbishop Geoffrey, became the deacon of Lincoln; though his relative obscurity and his patronage by Geoffrey and Bishop Hugh of Lincoln rather than by either Henry or Henry's legitimate successors suggests that he was Geoffrey's maternal half-brother rather than a royal bastard.<sup>281</sup>

Despite his seeming reluctance to empower his illegitimate children through marriage and integrate them fully within aristocratic methods of power, as his

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<sup>277</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, 1916), Book II, DLVII, p. 138

<sup>278</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 70.

<sup>279</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, p. 437.

<sup>280</sup> Paul Webster, *King John and Religion*, p. 95.

<sup>281</sup> Lovatt, 'Archbishop Geoffrey of York', p. 100.

grandfather had, Henry II did utilise this method in the elevation of his half-brother, Hamelin, at a time when his legitimate sons were still too young to be politically engaged on behalf of the defence of a shared dynastic interest. The son of Henry's father, Count Geoffrey le Bel of Anjou and an unknown mistress, it can be presumed from the date of the commencement of his career in 1164, relatively late in his brother's reign, that he was born sometime in the late 1130s or 1140s during which time his father was successfully prosecuting a series of campaigns to subdue Normandy in support of his wife's claims to the Anglo-Norman realm and his own family's long standing dynastic objectives. Hamelin's sudden elevation into the upper strata of Anglo-Norman politics was informed by the death of his legitimate half-brother, William, which coincided with the height of the investiture crisis and Henry II's struggles with Becket.<sup>282</sup> The loss of William, an ally in whom he had invested considerable resources, at a time of political and constitutional friction, was a serious blow to Henry who quickly moved to stabilise his support through the deployment and elevation of Hamelin.

In order to encourage and facilitate the political support of his royal legitimate half-brother and as a means of bringing regional aristocratic affinities and wealth into a broad cohesion with royal interests, Hamelin was married to his late brother, William's betrothed, Isabel de Warenne, the countess of Surrey.<sup>283</sup> The daughter and sole heir of Earl William de Warenne, Isabel was deeply subsumed by the principal aristocratic networks of the Anglo-Norman realm and its contemporary evolution, the Angevin Empire, being related to a large number of the wealthiest and most established magnate affinities. She had acquired, through this shared aristocratic portfolio, diverse landed interests throughout England with a particular concentration in the north. By the time she was presented to Hamelin, Isabel was already a widow; she had previously been married to William of Blois, the youngest son of King Stephen, their marriage having been one of Stephen's principal pillars of support in the latter days of his reign. Hamelin's marriage to Isabel made him one of the wealthiest men in the Anglo-Norman realm with estates on both sides of the Channel and a strong strategic position in Normandy based

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<sup>282</sup> *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, ed. James Craigie Robertson, (London, 1876) Vol. II, p. 389.

<sup>283</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Volume 4, p. 221.

around the castles of Mortemer and Bellencombe, no doubt one of the reasons Henry II had been so eager to place his proxies in a position of control over de Warenne lands.<sup>284</sup>

Interestingly, and perhaps unusually, in 1188, Henry granted the Lordship of Appleby in Lincoln to his most aristocratic and high-born illegitimate child, William Longespée. William's mother, Ida de Tosny, who was a granddaughter of Robert Beaumont (d. 1118), the earl of Leicester, married Earl Roger Bigod of Norfolk (d. 1221) in 1181.<sup>285</sup> It seems likely then that the extensive and powerful maternal and adopted aristocratic networks within which William operated, played an important role in Henry II's recognition of William and his establishment firmly within a secular aristocratic sphere rather than being relegated to a career in the Church as was the case for the far less well-connected Geoffrey; the latter's fortunes flowed from and rested solely upon the continued affections of his father. Although perhaps cognizant of the difficulty of providing a suitable inheritance for John and concerned not to further destabilise the tense political and familial atmosphere, Henry elected to grant William the relatively modest lordship of Appleby, rather than empower him through a marriage to a wealthy aristocratic heiress.<sup>286</sup> Upon the death of his father, the young bastard successfully made the transition to his half-brother Richard's reign, who, by arranging a marriage to the wealthy heiress, Ela of Salisbury, in 1198, elevated him to the earldom of Salisbury and the upper echelons of the aristocracy. Ela was the daughter of the sheriff of Wiltshire, Earl Fitzpatrick of Salisbury, whose own father, Patrick, had gained the earldom through a well-placed defection to the Empress Matilda during her struggle for the throne against King Stephen.<sup>287</sup> Richard's promotion and generous provision for his illegitimate half-brother, relatively deep into his reign, could have been undertaken as a measure to support a regime shaken by the king's long absence and the erosion of his personal authority and political consensus following the conflict between his deputies and other magnates. This was approached in much the same manner as Henry I's creation of Robert as earl of Gloucester following

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<sup>284</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters* Volume 8, p. 15.

<sup>285</sup> Reed, 'Countess Ida, Mother of William Longespée, Illegitimate Son of Henry II', p. 137.

<sup>286</sup> Robert William Eyton, *Court, Household, and Itinerary of King Henry II: Instancing also the Chief Agents and Adversaries of the King in his Government, Diplomacy, and Strategy* (London, 1815-1881).

<sup>287</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, Vol I, p. 47.

the fragmentation of authority and power caused by the disruption of the succession.

## 2.5 Royal Mistresses

Marriage as defined and conceived of by the twelfth century Church reform movement remained the primary means of connecting familial affinities, due to its role as the principal mechanism through which either by the production of legitimate children or a union with an heir, property was transmitted through aristocratic networks of power. However, power, social, political, and even familial affinities, if such distinctions can be said to be meaningful to the twelfth century northern European aristocracy, were created and fostered through a variety of means. Not least among them was the familial connection created between Anglo-Norman monarchs and the families of their mistresses. The known royal mistresses were drawn from a variety of social strata, although many of them seem to have originated within the lower aristocracy or so called 'new men' whose family's prosperity were to one extent or another derived from royal service and office holding. The relationship between an Anglo-Norman or Angevin monarch and one of his mistresses drew her family further into an alignment with royal interests, particularly in those cases where the relationship resulted in the birth of an illegitimate royal child and therefore a familial link. Such familial ties to the Anglo-Norman royal family and the opportunity they presented for material and political advancement benefited not only the families of royal mistresses but often also carried onto their husbands and new family affinities, binding the three groups into a loose alignment of shared interests. Indeed, several such marriages by mothers of royal illegitimate children were brokered and arranged by the king who would often provide a dowry on behalf of his former mistress; a number of Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards, such as Reginald de Dunstanville and William Longespée, displayed a persistent and close relationship to their adopted families as well as maternal affinities. The role of royal mistresses in the careers of their children as well as the extent to which they participated in and mediated access to their familial affinities is unfortunately difficult to determine as a result of their elusiveness within the primary sources. The identities of many of the mothers of even prominent royal bastards remains unknown or disputed and it remains unclear if these women were, for whatever reason, unable or not permitted to engage in this



model of post-liaison and mutually-beneficial political activities and dynastic strategies.

### 2.5.1 The Mistresses of Henry I

Despite his own comparable contemporary prominence, the identity of Robert of Gloucester's mother has been the subject of some historiographical debate. David Crouch has strongly and cogently argued that Robert's mother was a member of the Gai family from Oxford.<sup>288</sup> John of Worcester, in describing the royalist encirclement of Bristol in 1138, during the fevered height of the unrest that defined so much of King Stephen's reign, states that one of the most prominent of the Angevin defenders was Philip Gai, a cousin of the earl.<sup>289</sup> Robert had in the spring of 1137 gone to Normandy to prosecute the Angevin cause there, alongside his half-sister's husband Count Geoffrey of Anjou; it seems then that Philip Gai was part of the earl's military household and along with Robert's eldest son, William, charged with the defence of Bristol castle in his absence. Identified by John of Worcester as a close relative of the earl, it seems plausible that it was this strong affinity and shared identity which led Philip to be trusted by the earl, alongside other councillors, with the protection of his heir and primary stronghold. Crouch's contention on the origins and the identity of Robert's mother as the unknown sister of Philip's father and uncles Stephen and Robert Gai, is further supported by Earl Robert naming one of his sons Philip, a name unknown in the ducal naming stock or in that of his wife Mabel but featured prominently within the Gai family, suggesting the possibility of a familial link. Further, in building and maintaining his consensus of support within contemporary aristocratic networks of power, Robert was forced to mediate a dispute between the rival but Angevin-aligned magnates, namely Earl Patrick of Salisbury and John Marshal (d. 1165). In reconciling the two factions and minimising any disruption to the Angevin war effort and political solidarity, John Marshal divorced his wife in order to marry a sister of Earl Patrick, while his former wife Adelina was remarried to, the then presumably single, Stephen Gai.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', p. 323.

<sup>289</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 248.

<sup>290</sup> Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', p. 339.

If Stephen was indeed Robert's uncle, the marriage of Adelina Marshal to so close a relative of the earl could have been intended to further defuse the internal tensions within the Angevin camp and prevent her own familial connections from taking offence. However, the word used in John of Worcester's account 'cognatus' does not necessarily refer to first cousins and there are a number of familial relationships which could have linked the two men and preserved this distinction, such as if Philip's father, Stephen, had been married to a sister of Robert's mother. Further, Robert seems to have spent a considerable time in Normandy during his own youth, fathering an illegitimate child of his own, the Norman-born Richard (d.1142), who in 1134 was old enough to assume the bishopric of Bayeux; he would have had to be born in 1104 at the latest.<sup>291</sup> Robert's name also suggests a Norman background for his mother and his own early upbringing and suggest that Henry named his first son after his elder brother rather than after himself or his father, during a brief period of peace and cooperation between the two in the mid to late 1080s. William of Malmesbury himself, while expounding upon Robert's inherited virtues and family background, refers to Robert's Norman, Flemish, and French ancestry while making no reference to any Anglo-Saxon or regionally-English heritage, leaving uncertain the case for an Oxfordshire identity for Robert's mother.<sup>292</sup>

Ansfride, who was possibly the king's second mistress and is one of the better documented mothers of illegitimate royal family members, has been attributed several illegitimate children by Henry I including Richard, Julian, and Fulk.<sup>293</sup> However, Richard is the only one specifically identified as her child within the Cartulary of Abingdon. Historical supposition that she was the mother of Julian comes from Richard's intervention with Henry I on his sister's behalf following her participation in her husband's rebellion, although given the strong family affinity and close cooperation demonstrated by Anglo-Norman illegitimate family members, it does not necessarily follow that they were full siblings.<sup>294</sup> Likewise, speculation by White that Fulk was a son of Juliana, while not to be entirely

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<sup>291</sup> S.E. Gleason, *An Ecclesiastical Barony of the Middle*, p. 25.

<sup>292</sup> Malmesbury, I, p. 799.

<sup>293</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 149.

<sup>294</sup> *Historia Ecclesia Abendonensis: The History of the church of Abingdon, Volume II* ed. and trans by John Hudson, (Oxford, 2007), p. 180.

discounted, seems to have originated from his presence in the witness list of one of her charters in Abingdon abbey. Ansfride was the wife of Anskil, a relatively middling aristocrat who held land in Oxfordshire and Berkshire before coming into conflict with King William Rufus.<sup>295</sup> A situation in which the then largely landless Henry intervened by taking Ansfride into his own transitory household and securing the return of her dowry lands which had previously been seized by the king alongside her husband's other holdings. He also brokered an advantageous marriage for her legitimate son.

Another of Henry's mistresses was Sibyl Corbet, often cited as the mother of five royal bastards which suggests a liaison of considerable length and passion with the king. In addition to Reginald, those royal illegitimate children traditionally attributed to her were William, Rohese, Gundra de Dunstanville and Queen Sibyl of Scotland. However, a number of issues exist which may cast doubt on their relationship to Reginald. William appears to have attached himself to Reginald's household and can be found in the witness list to a number of the earl's charters in the 1170s, including one in which Reginald granted a manor in Roseworthy to his then widowed sister Rohese.<sup>296</sup> Throughout these charters, William is consistently described as 'William frate meus', this identification as Reginald's brother and the foregoing of any descriptions as the son of the king, the style preferred by Reginald himself and the majority of royal bastards, suggests that William was, like the more positively identified Herbert fitz Herbert, Reginald's half-brother through Sibyl's subsequent marriage.<sup>297</sup> This familial identification with Reginald but not the other members of the Anglo-Norman royal family also occurs in the case of Rohese, who remained firmly within Reginald's sphere of influence within the south west region and marrying Henry de la Pomerai, a fellow advocate of the Plantagenet cause during the Anarchy who held substantial lands in Cornwall and later rose to become a member of the king's household. Gundra de Dunstanville is recorded in the Pipe Rolls of 1130 as holding property in Wiltshire granted to her by her brother Reginald de Dunstanville.<sup>298</sup> However, given Reginald's relative youth at this time

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<sup>295</sup> Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', p. 329.

<sup>296</sup> Redvers Charter, pp. 184, 187–188; *Cartulary of Launceston Priory* (Lambeth Palace MS. 719).

<sup>297</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, II, p. 249.

<sup>298</sup> Pipe Roll 31 *Henry I*, p. 22.

and chronicle evidence of his landless state, it is likely that Gundra and her brother Reginald belong to a previous generation of the Dunstanville family with whom the earl enjoyed a close, possibly familial, association.

Queen Sibyl on the other hand is undoubtedly a daughter of Henry I, her father arranging her marriage to Alexander of Scotland as part of his imperialistic ambitions by 1114; rather, it is her maternity that is in question. The supposition that Sibyl Corbet is the Queen's mother originates largely from their shared name; however, the date of her marriage, especially when compared to Reginald's presumed date of birth (sometime in the 1110s) would make Sibyl Corbet's tenure as a royal mistress an unusually long one. It is possible but unlikely that Queen Sibyl was her daughter. In order to not only further provide for his children with Sybil – however many they were – and as a means of consolidating and expanding his network of power, Henry arranged for Sybil to marry the son of his chamberlain, Herbert, which further drew both Herbert and Sybil's extended families more tightly into a royal affinity.

Nest, the mother of Henry Fitzroy, was a Welsh princess and daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr whose death in battle in 1093 coincided with and in part facilitated the Norman push for dominance within southern Wales.<sup>299</sup> After the death of her father and capture, Nest appears to have spent some time in the Anglo-Norman court although it is unclear if her liaison with Henry began during this period or only following Henry's coronation. Nest was married to Gilbert de Windsor, the castellan of Pembroke castle and a younger son of Walter FitzOther, the castellan of Windsor castle and one of William the Conqueror's primary functionaries who held lands throughout the south of England. This meant that despite being from a well-connected and powerful affinity, as a younger son, Gilbert had only limited prospects of inheriting the nucleus of the family's landed wealth and power. Instead, he attempted to construct a power base through office holding and his enmeshment into wider aristocratic affinities as seen in his service to and support of Arnulf de Montgomery, a younger son of the powerful Roger Montgomery.<sup>300</sup> Nest's marriage to Gilbert seems likely to have occurred during the reign of

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<sup>299</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 146.

<sup>300</sup> Given-Wilson and Curteis, *The Royal Bastards*, p. 72.

William Rufus, who may have intended that the presence of a Welsh princess in one of the principal Norman powerbases within Wales ease the transition to and expansion of Norman lordship; Henry I temporarily stripped Gilbert of his office shortly after coming to the throne due to his connections with the rebellious Montgomery family.

Edith Forne, another of the king's mistresses and mother to Robert FitzEdith, the eventual Lord of Oakhampton in Devon, was the daughter of Anglo-Danish Thegin Forn of Greystoke in Cumberland, and represents, alongside Nest, another royal mistress drawn from the regional and native aristocracy.<sup>301</sup> It is possible that the mother of Countess Matilda of Perche, also named Edith, could be included in this list given the topographic connections of her typically English name. In 1120, Henry married Edith to Roger d'Oily, the sheriff of Oxfordshire and the castellan of Oxford castle.<sup>302</sup> Henry's decision to relocate Edith Forne, who appears to have been one of his most enduring extramarital relationships, to Oxford and through marriage place her within the centre of its local aristocratic affinities may represent the result of Henry's particular fondness for the county; indeed, he spent a great deal of time at the royal residence and parks at Woodstock, eclipsed only as a favoured residence by the English royal administrative centres of Westminster and Winchester.<sup>303</sup>

It is clear, then, that Henry I drew many of his mistresses from lower and regional aristocratic networks; indeed, several of them were of partial or complete native descent. By pursuing liaisons with members of regional and often partially non-Norman familial networks Henry was, in a limited sense, extending his own influence into these localities by drawing such families into alignment with his own interests away from the often unreliable and fractious top tier of Anglo-Norman magnates. He further utilised and expanded his affinity by marrying his mistresses into Anglo-Norman families engaged in royal service and office holding, in order to both support his illegitimate children and further build his influence and personal affinities within the lower aristocracy. However, one of Henry I's mistresses, Isabel de Beaumont, was drawn from the very highest echelons of the aristocracy. The

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<sup>301</sup> *Eynsham Cartulary*, I, ed. H.E. Salter (Oxford, 1907), no 65.

<sup>302</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, p. 251.

<sup>303</sup> Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire'.

daughter of Robert de Beaumont, a relative and companion of the William the Conqueror and sister of two of the Anglo-Norman courts rising stars, Count Waleran of Meulan (d. 1161) and Earl Robert of Leicester, Isabel was exceptionally well-connected within the extended aristocratic networks of power and highly placed within the court.<sup>304</sup> The Beaumont family, while extremely powerful, was already strongly personally associated with Henry I and engaged in royal service and it is likely, similarly to her elder brothers, that Isabel was raised at least partially within the court's sphere. After her relationship with Henry, which produced a daughter, Isabel, of whom little is known, Isabel was married to Gilbert de Clare (d. 1230), the earl of Chester, although it appears to have been a marriage undertaken principally for the benefit and further advancement of her family and new husband rather than the perpetuation of aristocratic solidarity for Henry I.<sup>305</sup>

### 2.5.2 The Mistresses of Henry II

Perhaps Henry II's most well-known mistress whose life sparked considerable interest amongst later literary traditions was Rosamund de Clifford (d. 1176). Rosamund was the daughter of marcher lord Walter de Clifford and his wife Margaret, herself a member of the powerful and extremely well established Tosny family. Walter was an aristocrat of middling power and importance holding the lordship of Clifford and other lands within Herefordshire in addition to considerable land elsewhere in the Welsh marches, most notably around Bronllys and while the circumstances surrounding the family's acquisition of Clifford are somewhat unclear it's possible that the claim was derived from his marriage into the Tosny family who were traditionally associated with the lordship.<sup>306</sup> Walter was well established within the political community and local affinities of the marchers and was a maternal nephew of Earl Miles of Hereford and patronised a number of monasteries including Godstow, Dore and Haughmond abbey.<sup>307</sup> He was also extremely proactive in his engagement in royal service through the maintenance of the marcher's integrity and the projection of Angevin power within

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<sup>304</sup> David Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins: The Roots and Branches of Power in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 6.

<sup>305</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 133.

<sup>306</sup> 'Charters of the Earldom of Hereford, 1095-1201', *Camden Miscellany*, XXII, ed. D. Walker (Cambridge, 1964), p. 45.

<sup>307</sup> Sanders, *English Baronies*.

Wales being heavily involved in the suppression and subjugation of a number of attempts by the native Welsh nobility to resist Angevin control.<sup>308</sup> Unlike many of Henry I's mistresses, following the conclusion of her relationship with the king, sometime around 1174, Rosamund was not provided with either a suitable marriage within the royal periphery or it seems afforded lands or a pension. Rosamund instead entered the nunnery at Godstow, the circumstances surrounding the culmination of her relationship with the king or his involvement in Rosamund's retreat from secular life remain unclear and are complicated by her early death and the layer of romance and fiction later grafted onto her life.<sup>309</sup> The Clifford family's long association and patronage of Godstow abbey, however, imply a continued adherence to and participation within her familial identity and affinities that had not been greatly re-contextualised or altered by her royal associations.

Rosamund has sometimes, within the broader historiography and literary tradition, been associated with Henry's eldest illegitimate child Geoffrey, possibly as a result of perceptions regarding the supposedly high level of affection with which Henry regarded them both. While the exact dates of birth for either Geoffrey or Rosamund remain elusive it seems that they were close enough in age to make it improbable that they were mother and son. Gerald of Wales, the royal chaplain and court intimate who served as a clerk during Geoffrey's tenure as Chancellor, comments that the highly favoured royal bastard was barely twenty at the time of his nomination to the bishopric of Lincoln in 1173.<sup>310</sup> A factor which alongside Geoffrey's illegitimacy and his long absence from the bishopric as he studied abroad may have stoked the Cathedral canons' apparent enmity towards him. When discussing Rosamund and her relationship with the king, Gerald not only demurs to draw a connection familial or otherwise between Rosamund and Geoffrey but also describes her as still being a girl in 1174.<sup>311</sup> Rosamund's apparent youth during this period then suggests that Geoffrey was the product of a royal liaison undertaken prior to the start of her relationship with Henry.

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<sup>308</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, p. 48.

<sup>309</sup> *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery*, Early English Text Society, ed. A. Clark (London, 1911), p. 129.

<sup>310</sup> Joshua Bryon Smith, *Walter Map and the Matter of Britain* (Pennsylvania, 2017), p. 4.

<sup>311</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*.

Walter Map (d. 1210) in his work the *De Nugis Curialium* identifies Geoffrey's mother as a prostitute called Ykenai and that she took advantage of the king's credulity in order to get him to recognise Geoffrey as his son, implying a dubious paternity.<sup>312</sup> Walter was a cleric and intimate of the court of Henry II, engaging diplomatic service at a high level on behalf of the king most notably acting as a royal envoy to King Louis VII of France and Pope Alexander III. Walter was therefore well informed on the composition and interpersonal dynamics of both the court and royal family, being personally acquainted with both the king, an assessment of whose character he devotes a large segment of the *De Nugis Curialium*'s fifth book to, and Geoffrey who he briefly served under in the diocese of Lincoln. However, in his account of the royal court Walter openly professes to harbour a great deal of personal antagonism towards Geoffrey whose presence he occasionally makes use of as a shorthand for the corruption and iniquities of Henry II's reign. Additionally, Walter's works contains strong satirical elements throughout, beginning *De Nugis Curialium* with a comparison between the royal court and hell in which he recasts the royal family and members of their affinities.<sup>313</sup> Walter's exaggerated somewhat irreverent style and content then, when taken into consideration with his apparent personal dislike of the future archbishop suggests that his account of Geoffrey's maternity is probably a rhetorical advice meant to antagonize the royal bastard and parody contemporary perceptions of the louche morals and strictures of the Angevin royal court.

In a seemingly strange parallel between grandfather and grandson, Henry II also had a relationship with a woman named Nest (d. 1224). Like Henry I's mistress this Nest was also descended from the native welsh nobility and married into an influential Cambro-Norman dynasty. The daughter of Iorwerth ab Owain, a welsh noble operating within Norman dominated Gwent and his wife Angharad whose father Uthred had been bishop of Llandaff (d. 1148).<sup>314</sup> A member of a Welsh dynasty engaged in a policy of broad cooperation with the Norman marcher lords some time prior to the commencement of her affair with King Henry II, Nest was married to Ralph Bloet (d. 1199) probably in order to protect her family's interest

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<sup>312</sup> Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, p. 479.

<sup>313</sup> Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, p. XXXIII.

<sup>314</sup> John Reuben Davies, *The Book of Llandaff and the Norman Church in Wales* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 53.



through a strengthening of their ties with the rapacious Normans. Ralph was one of Iorwerth ab Owain's neighbours and the most prominent aristocrat within Striguil, a position which his family had achieved through a close association with the earls of Pembroke, the de Clare's. Ralph participated in Richard de Clare's highly successful expedition to Ireland which culminated in the conquest of Leinster and upon the earl's death in 1176 was appointed guardian of the lordship of Striguil and castellan of Chepstow castle on behalf of the Richard's young son Gilbert.<sup>315</sup> In 1175, the king travelled to Gloucester in order to reassert authority over the Welsh Marches in the aftermath of his legitimate sons' rebellion. As part of the king's efforts to manage and mediate with the aristocratic networks of the Welsh Marches, Nest's father was restored to the lordship of Caerleon and it is likely that her affair with Henry began during this royal tour although Iorwerth and the king had previously met in 1172 during a royal expedition to Wales and it's possible that Nest may have accompanied her father.<sup>316</sup> Henry's son with Nest, Morgan, subsisted primarily within his maternal network and was raised within Ralph's household alongside the couple's legitimate children prior to assumption of the position of provost of Beverley sometime prior to 1212.

The relationship between Henry II and Nest does not seem to have had any immediate political utility or consequence for either party aside, of course, from Morgan's birth suggesting the affair did not create a permanent association between the king and the Bloet family. However, King John who was to an extent associated with the region through his marriage to his cousin, Countess Isabella of Gloucester, actively cultivated an affinity with Morgan and his legitimate maternal family. John attempted to promote his half-brother's career in the Church leading his appointment as provost of Beverley and then in 1213 nominated him to the bishopric of Durham, although Morgan's candidacy was complicated and ultimately rejected by Innocent III as a result of his illegitimacy.<sup>317</sup> Morgan's legitimate half-brothers Thomas, Roland and William were all accepted as prominent members of the king's household. Nest herself, widowed in 1199,

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<sup>315</sup> David Crouch, *William Marshal: Court, Career and Chivalry in the Angevin Empire: 1147-1219* (Harlow, 1990), p. 139.

<sup>316</sup> David Crouch, 'Bloet, Nest (d. 1224/5)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>317</sup> *Durham Annals and Documents of the Thirteenth century*, ed. F. Barlow, (Durham, 1945), p. 155.

enjoyed substantial royal support and favour during her successful legal challenges to claim land from both her brother Hywel ab Iorwerth and brother-in-law Robert Bloet. John's continued association with his half-brother Morgan and the extension of that connection to Morgan's maternal familial network suggests a strong perception of the continuity of royal familial identity and personal affinity on the part of the king.

Ida de Tosny was another of Henry II's mistresses and the mother of his son William Longespée, who would through the patronage of his royal half-brothers ascend to considerable political prominence and the earldom of Salisbury.<sup>318</sup> It is interesting to note that following Rosamund Clifford, Ida was the second member of the extended de Tosny family that the king pursued a relationship with, perhaps suggesting the existence of an established and long running affinity between the king and this aristocratic bloc. Ida was the daughter of Ralph de Tosny, a powerful cross-channel magnate who retained a diverse collection of landed interests within eastern Normandy and a nucleus of English lands centred primarily upon Herefordshire.<sup>319</sup> Her mother Margaret, was the youngest daughter of Earl Robert de Beaumont of Leicester who had despite his extensive participation in King Stephen's party during his political and dynastic struggles with the Angevin party successfully transferred his allegiance to Henry II, serving as England's chief justiciar until his death in 1168. Ida then was intimately linked with several prominent aristocratic familial and political affinities amongst the aristocracy of the Angevin hegemony.

Similar to her great aunt and Henry I's most aristocratic and well-connected mistress, Isabel de Beaumont, Ida was a royal ward raised within or in close proximity to the royal court. The allegation, which Gerald of Wales characterises as being widely believed and repeated by contemporaries, that Henry II also engaged in a relationship with his ward and his son Richard's intended, Princess Alys of France, would if true also fit within this pattern.<sup>320</sup> The predilection of Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs for pursuing sexual relationships with aristocratic heiresses placed under their protection by royal prerogatives, in

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<sup>318</sup> Reed, 'Countess Ida, Mother of William Longespée, Illegitimate son of Henry II, p. 279.

<sup>319</sup> Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 117.

<sup>320</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, I, p. 130.

addition to the relatives of those engaged in royal service, perhaps further suggests that the determining factor in the royal selection of mistresses were to an extent personal and heavily informed by opportunity and proximity rather than the premediated pursuit of political advantage and connections. However, that is not to say that the connections and affinities between kings and their mistresses once formed were not subsequently utilised in the advancement of the king's interests. In 1181, Henry arranged for Ida, still in royal wardship, to marry Earl Roger Bigod of Norfolk whose father, Hugh, had supported the rebellion of Henry the Young King in 1173 alongside his new wife's maternal uncle. As part of the marriage Henry gifted Roger with three manors at Acle, Halvergate and Walsham all of which had previously been confiscated from his family in the aftermath of the failed rebellion.<sup>321</sup> Ida's royally brokered marriage to Roger then can be seen not only as a means for King Henry to discharge his duty to make suitable provisions for the maintenance of his ward and his child with her but also an attempt to reconcile an aristocratic family to the royal centre by the exploitation and renewal of an existing association.

Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings did not pursue a deliberate or coherent political or dynastic strategy when it came to their extramarital relationships. While many mistresses were drawn from the peripheries of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies it seems that the most important factor in their selection was proximity and personal attraction. The majority of royal mistresses were sourced from lower aristocratic families engaged in royal service or office holding although both Henry I and Henry II had illegitimate children with prominent members of families within the upper echelons of the aristocracy. While not necessarily part of a predetermined strategy, Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings often capitalised upon the auxiliary family groupings of their mistresses and illegitimate children by arranging marriages between them and royal functionaries which further consolidated royal support and drew them and their wider familial networks deeper into alignment with the kings' own interests. Illegitimate royal children played an important role in Anglo-Norman and Angevin dynastic strategies and were a useful

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<sup>321</sup> Marc Morris, *The Bigod Earls of Norfolk in the Thirteenth Century*, (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 3.

resource for the cultivation and consolidation of support both within and without the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies.

During Henry I's reign, the king's numerous illegitimate daughters were utilised in a dynastic strategy through the formation of strategic marriages in the same fashion as legitimate royal daughter and female members of the aristocracies. This was less pronounced in the reign of Henry II, likely because of his greater number of legitimate children and relative paucity of illegitimate ones and doesn't necessarily imply that they weren't being deployed in a similar way as part of royal dynastic strategy; the brokering of marriages and subsequent intermingling of familial interests being one of the most effective ways to establish or reinforce political affinities. Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate sons were often developed in conjunction with the use or exploitation of the king's prerogatives as a guardian of widows or heiresses in their minority to capitalise upon their resources through marriage. This practice not only furnished illegitimate royal family members with the means to more effectively support their legitimate family members and further their mutual family interests but also enmeshed the political networks of their newly adopted families with the royal bastards' own drawing the localities and regional powers further into affinity with the king.

## Chapter Three

### The Households of Royal Illegitimate Family Members and their Networks of Power

By the early twelfth century, the re-conception of sacraments by both members of the laity and reforming factions within the Church, seeking in part to reemphasise pastoral care, led to an increasing accepting of the permanence and indissoluble nature of matrimonial bonds throughout secular society.<sup>322</sup> As discussed in Chapter two individuals born outside of the increasingly strict criteria for licit marriage were judged to be illegitimate in the resultant binary categorisation. This increased codification was informed and influenced by other emergent facets of twelfth century thinking such as the increasingly sophisticated and pervasive nature of the legal system. This was particularly an issue within England as this legal focus developed, the relegation of illegitimate children from inheriting was firmly upheld within the nascent common law.<sup>323</sup>

The same drive for clarity and cohesion in matters of inheritance and family identity within the aristocracy, which had originally necessitated the legal demarcation and exclusion of bastards following the ecclesiastical reform of the institution of marriage, also meant that secular courts within the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies had a strong bias towards assuming and upholding an individual's legitimacy.<sup>324</sup> The overlapping system of courts and precedence, both secular and ecclesiastical, were increasingly accepted as the principal method of recourse for conflict resolution and inheritance disputes across a broad spectrum of the social hierarchy.<sup>325</sup> Largely as a result of these factors, the closing decades of the century saw a marked increase in the number of legal cases which alleged the illegitimacy of an individual and their inability to legally inherit property or other mediums of wealth. The majority of such claims were brought forward by co-heirs

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<sup>322</sup> Hugh of Saint Victor, *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis)* trans. Roy. J. Deferrair, (Eugene, 1951); Paul Rorem, *Hugh of Saint Victor* (Oxford, 2009), p. 15.

<sup>323</sup> Hunt Janin, *Medieval Justice: Cases and Laws in France, England and German 500-1500* (Jefferson, 2004), p. 84; John Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England From King Alfred to Magna Carta* (London, 2014), p. 86.

<sup>324</sup> R. H. Helmholz, 'Bastard Litigation in Medieval England' in *The American Journal of Legal History*, 13 (1969), p. 371.

<sup>325</sup> R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 375.

and family members; the dense and interconnected nature of the web of familial and landed interests in which members of the twelfth century aristocracy operated and the tendency within these networks towards inclusivity in the distribution and management of their shared resources, meant that there were often multiple claimants from separate affinities.<sup>326</sup>

In 1107, in the first decade of Henry I's reign, the lands of William de Bréteuil, who died without a legitimate heir, were contested by two of his nephews, the Breton based William de Gael and Reynold de Grancei from Burgundy.<sup>327</sup> Despite challenges made by William's displaced nephews, the majority of his inheritance passed to his illegitimate son, Eustace. Despite the considerable disadvantage of his illegitimate status at a time of increasing ecclesiastical and secular re-conceptualisation of marriage and inheritance practices, these impediments were outweighed by political factors and the greater utility his recognition as heir represented to Henry I. Eustace had, shortly after his father's death, seized and garrisoned many of his key castles and was also already strongly anchored within the local networks of power and affinity, having secured the support of many of the region's principal noblemen.<sup>328</sup> By recognising Eustace's claim regardless of his illegitimacy and by brokering a marriage to one of his own illegitimate children, Juliana, Henry I was drawing Eustace and the local aristocratic networks of affinity, that he was engaged with, into alignment with the king's own interests.

This can be contrasted with the death in 1175 of Earl Reginald of Cornwall, one of the most prosperous and successful of Henry I's illegitimate children, whose potential heirs were equally politically and geographically diverse. With his legitimate son, Nicholas, having seemingly predeceased him earlier that year, the main claimants upon Reginald's substantial inheritance were his grandsons, Earl Baldwin de Redvers of Devon (d. 1188) and Richard (d. 1193), as well as his daughters; two of whom were married into powerful aristocratic affinities within the Angevin hegemony. Maud married into the Norman branch of the formidable and expansive Beaumont family, forming one of the numerous political and

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<sup>326</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, p. 204.

<sup>327</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V & VI, p. 294.

<sup>328</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V & VI, p. 294.

dynastic points of connectivity between the Beaumont family and the Royal Household.<sup>329</sup> The earl's youngest daughter, Sarah, married Aimar of Limoges whose family formed a focal point of resistance against ducal government in eastern Aquitaine and who seemingly, as a result of extended negotiations with the royal centre, believed that his wife would receive the lion's share of Reginald's inheritance.<sup>330</sup> Henry II elected to retain the earldom after his uncle's death with the intention of passing it to his youngest son, John, and probably with a desire to recoup revenue from the earldom after the long period of financial autonomy enjoyed by Reginald. By 1175, the social and legal alienation of illegitimate children from rights of inheritance had become ingrained into secular society so that Reginald's illegitimate son, Henry FitzCount (d. 1222), was discounted as potential heir, not only by Henry II, who wished to convert the earldom into a royal demesne, but also by those chroniclers who recounted the king's acquisition of the earldom as the cause of Aimar of Limoges subsequent rebellion. Henry, who was likely named after his royal cousin, did benefit to some extent from this familial connection and shared affinity with the king and was granted three of his father's manors, Kernsell, Diptford and Liskeard.

Henry's prospects were bolstered significantly with the accession of John to the throne with whom he shared a strong personal and political affinity and who greatly expanded his illegitimate family member's landed interests, including granting him the baronies of Totnes and Bradninch in 1209 and in 1215, the lands of the rebellious William de Mandeville (d. 1227) and Bishop Giles de Braose of Hereford.<sup>331</sup> Henry was later appointed sheriff of Cornwall to farm the county for the crown, once in 1215 by John and again in 1217 by Henry III's regents, both appointments coinciding with moments of political instability and crisis.<sup>332</sup> A relationship of patronage and mutual self-interest which capitalised upon the extensive regional connections of an illegitimate royal family member to the benefit of their legitimate relative's wider interests. Throughout his career, Henry aspired

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<sup>329</sup> Keefe, *Pipe Roll Evidence*, p. 195.

<sup>330</sup> John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven, 2002), p. 53.

<sup>331</sup> S.D. Church, *The Household Knights of King John* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 41.

<sup>332</sup> David A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (Berkeley, 1990), p. 125.

to claim his father's title of earl of Cornwall despite his illegitimacy, and attempted to exert authority and influence within the county.

Despite the close alignment of their interests and participation in a shared family identity, John prevaricated upon the issue, promising to resolve it at the conclusion of the current political and military crisis. During the regency of the young Henry III, his claims were met by tacit approval or at least strategic wilful ignorance from the Royal centre. The limits of this affinity and the necessary perquisite of a shared pursuit of familial interests can be seen in the confiscating of much of the prospective earl's lands in 1220, after it became clear that he had been co-opting and distributing elements of the royal demesne within Cornwall to his followers within the region, in order to cultivate his own hegemony.<sup>333</sup> Henry's extensive promotion, as well as the royal response to his comital aspirations, displays how the legal standing and inheritance prospects of illegitimate children had degraded significantly over the course of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries but that there still existed great opportunity for those individuals intimately connected to the royal affinity through a shared family identity. This was particularly true at times of political instability and in those cases where the illegitimate royal family member was enmeshed in local aristocratic networks of power.

The developing theological and legal debate on the spiritual and material ramifications of illegitimacy throughout the twelfth century, as well as the structural changes brought about by its percolation through secular society, had only a limited effect on the social position and political prospects of Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards. Illegitimate royal family members and, to a lesser extent, illegitimate members of other prominent and well-connected aristocratic families, were a recognised and largely accepted presence within the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal courts. The court, constructed around the king and his household, formed the nucleus of royal government and authority.<sup>334</sup> Additionally, as the principal means of access to the king and the source of royal favour, often manifesting as the granting of offices or pardoning of tax, it was a focal point for

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<sup>333</sup> Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III*, p. 125.

<sup>334</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 28.



the networks of aristocratic families and interests who could derive significant political and material advantage from a conscious and conspicuous alignment with the king. Noble families could flourish and construct formidable powerbases from engagement in royal service and office holding, one of the foremost examples being the Mandeville's and their traditional custodianship of the Tower of London.<sup>335</sup> The court was itinerant, travelling widely between the various royal centres or in response to developing political situations, partly as a means of preventing the exhaustion of local resources by the court and partly as a means of more effectively projecting and disseminating royal authority throughout the often-disparate localities of the Anglo-Norman or Angevin hegemonies.<sup>336</sup> The migratory nature of the court meant that its membership, outside of the royal household, fluctuated as members of the overlapping and intertwined ecclesiastical and aristocratic networks sought access to the king as well as the increasingly sophisticated administrative system built around him for the confirmation and resolution of business and disputes.

The presence of many illegitimate royal family members at court followed this itinerant pattern, travelling to the court in order to renew and strengthen personal and political ties as well as furthering their shared familial interests through a participation in royal service. This was particularly true of those royal bastards who had, either through marriage or more rarely in the case of illegitimate sons through the direct gift of land and honours, been anchored within regional aristocratic affinities and existing familial and political identities. Henry I used his illegitimate sons and daughters extensively within the pursuit of his dynastic strategy, brokering marriages with prominent aristocrats, both within and without the Anglo-Norman hegemony, as a means of forging personal and political connections for protection of territorial interests and the stabilisation of his rule.<sup>337</sup> Additionally, several of his illegitimate sons, whose marriages to Anglo-Norman heiresses brought significant territory closer into royal affinity, also served the king as administrative and military lieutenants; roles which necessitated close contact

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<sup>335</sup> Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, p. 117.

<sup>336</sup> Kenji Yoshitake, *The Place of Government in Transition: Winchester, Westminster and London in the Mid-Twelfth Century* (Ashgate, 2016); *Rulership and Rebellion in the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216*, eds. Paul Dalton, David Luscombe (Farnham, 2015), p. 61.

<sup>337</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State* p. 129

with the king and the mechanisms of royal governance and administration. Royal illegitimate children then, were a regular fixture at Henry I's first court and an important point of connectivity between the king, his supporters and the wider aristocracy.

Two of the king's illegitimate children, Richard and Countess Matilda of Perche were present at the White Ship disaster, displaying that they were accepted members of the elite clique of young and aspiring Anglo-Norman aristocrats gathered around the Aetheling.<sup>338</sup> The death of Richard, the king's nephew and the illegitimate son of the then imprisoned Duke of Normandy, in a hunting accident at court is recorded by Orderic Vitalis in his *Ecclesiastical History* who refers to Richard as a much-admired young man.<sup>339</sup> While Orderic, from his position at the well-connected monastery of Saint-Evroult, was well informed of contemporary events, he was largely separated from the everyday functions of the royal court, perhaps suggesting Richard was a prominent participant within the court. In his permutation of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, originally formulated by the eleventh century Norman monk William of Jumièges, before being expanded upon by first Orderic Vitalis and then Robert Torigni himself, the abbot of Mont St Michel, names and briefly outlines the lives of the king's acknowledged and contemporarily identified illegitimate children.<sup>340</sup>

The abbot's decision to incorporate this list, which made mention of seven daughters and six sons, in his expansion of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* to encompass the reign and life of Henry, suggests that he and his contemporaries viewed the king's host of illegitimate children as acknowledged participants in a royal family identity and to a greater or lesser extent fellow participants in aristocratic courtly culture. Indeed, that Robert who was an intimate of Henry II, acting as godfather to one of his legitimate daughters, and whose account makes heavy use of the first-hand knowledge of Henry of Huntingdon, recounts details on the lives of the king's illegitimate children which seems to suggest that they were to an extent active and known quantities within the royal courts and aristocratic networks of power. Abbot Robert's account identifies two illegitimate royal sons,

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<sup>338</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX and X, p., X, p. 314.

<sup>339</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX and X, p., X, p. 282.

<sup>340</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

Gilbert and William de Tracy who are unknown to us in any other sources and further notes that the king's young three illegitimate children are still men without property.<sup>341</sup> Robert of Torigni's account of Henry I's reign was based upon that of Henry of Huntingdon who grew up with the king's bastard son, Richard, in the lavish and well-connected household of Bishop Robert Bloet.<sup>342</sup> It seems likely then that even the young and relatively obscure illegitimate children were known to some extent by contemporary participants connected to and engaged with the royal court.

There is the suggestion, based primarily upon their initial obscurity and complaints levelled against Queen Sybil of Scotland, that Henry I's illegitimate daughters were left primarily within their maternal networks and were only introduced and amalgamated into the political and courtly spheres when they were required for the to the furtherance of their father's interests. In contrast to this, several royal illegitimate sons, were educated either within the court or closely connected spheres such as Henry I's sons, Richard, who was raised in the household of Robert Bloet, bishop of Lincoln and former royal chancellor, and the seemingly well-educated and classically inclined Robert of Gloucester whose father made substantial provisions for his education.<sup>343</sup> Henry II's son, Geoffrey, who was present as a child at his father's coronation was, unlike his legitimate half-brothers, with the notable exception of the youngest, John, raised and educated at court within the royal household.<sup>344</sup> During Henry II's lifetime, Geoffrey's political career was primarily conducted through the medium of the court despite his father's attempt to promote him within the Church, with Geoffrey serving his father as a military lieutenant and castellan before being appointed to the Chancellorship in 1181.<sup>345</sup> After this point, as can be seen in a royal charter confirming certain rights of travel and safe passage to Cluny abbey issued sometime after 1181, Geoffrey is divested of his ecclesiastical title and is instead referred to as the son of the king.<sup>346</sup> As Chapter One explored, those illegitimate children with the strongest and most

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<sup>341</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

<sup>342</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. xxix.

<sup>343</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. iii.

<sup>344</sup> Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, V, p. 478.

<sup>345</sup> D.L. Douie, *Archbishop Geoffrey Plantagenet and the Chapter of York* (York, 1960).

<sup>346</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle Book II, DCXXII p. 288

established connections to the royal court were their respective father's eldest or second eldest sons. Born prior to their fathers' respective accessions to the throne and significantly older than their legitimate half-siblings, or those illegitimate children born in the purple, they possessed substantial political utility. Potentially being capable of engaging in royal service and the advancement of their shared family enterprise relatively early into their fathers' reigns. Additionally, it is possible that their greater age and natural personal affinity meant that they were more capable of engaging with their patrons and legitimate family members in the traditionally male dominated aspects of courtly culture and lifestyle.

Similarly, Angevin monarchs elevated and inducted illegitimate half-brothers who were of an age to effectively contribute to the furtherance of their shared familial interests into both the royal court and aristocratic society, to bolster and stabilise their rule at times of internal tension. Following the death of his brother, William, in the midst of the Becket controversy, Henry II married his illegitimate half-brother, Hamelin, to the countess of Surrey, Isabel de Warenne, a match which furnished him with considerable resources and the title of earl.<sup>347</sup> Richard I upon becoming king, as part of his programme to cultivate support amongst the aristocracy and his father's former supporters, elevated William Longespée, to an earldom through his marriage to the heiress Ela of Salisbury (d. 1261).<sup>348</sup> William was further embedded within the royal court by this close personal affinity with John who brought him and their cousin, William de Warenne (d. 1240), the son of Hamelin, into his inner circle; the exchequer and the records of the royal household record a number of gifts made to the king's two relatives.<sup>349</sup> In the case of William Longespée, these included not only new clothes, the granting of which to members of the royal household and court inner circle was a traditional and semi-regular occurrence, but also the frequent exchange of wine and, usually, relatively small amounts of money which demonstrates that the two were often in each other's company.<sup>350</sup> This suggests that the half-brothers not only shared a strong political collaboration but also experienced a personal bond which within

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<sup>347</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters* Vol. 8, p. 18.

<sup>348</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, p. 176

<sup>349</sup> B. W. Holden, 'The Balance of Patronage: King John and the Earl of Salisbury', *Haskins Society Journal*, 8 (1996), p. 79.

<sup>350</sup> *Rotuli Litterarum clausarum*, ed, T.D. Hardy (London, 1834), Vol 2, p. 71.

the structure of the court presented itself in the shared engagement in gambling, drinking and the other classic pastimes of the aristocracy.

While royal bastards were well integrated and engaged into courtly life, illegitimacy as a categorisation in wider aristocratic courtly culture which continued to hold significant negative social and personal conations. These were formed as the natural result of the increasingly defined legal and ecclesiastical delineation between legitimate and illegitimate. For acknowledged participants in a royal family identity though, particularly those with a strong reciprocal affinity with the king, this categorisation was more descriptive then functionary beyond its most basic meaning, the alienation from prospects of direct inheritance. The personal connection shared between Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings and their illegitimate family members facilitated their integration into the royal court and beneficially for both legitimate and illegitimate branches of the family, the wider aristocratic familial networks. This affinity and association on the part of aristocratic networks with participants in a shared royal dynastic enterprise then worked to orientate their interests closer to those of the king and his family. In the most successful examples of this dynastic strategy in action, it positioned royal bastards with strong ties of political and personal affinities to the monarch as the focal point of powerful regional and familial aristocratic networks.

The degree to which this affinity was experienced by royal bastards as well as the extent to which they were integrated into a royal family identity was, as has been seen, highly variable and dependent upon a range of personal and circumstantial factors which could change over time. While the presence and participation of royal illegitimate children, many of whom were raised to positions of authority and well connected within wider aristocratic society, was an accepted and acknowledged aspect of courtly life throughout the twelfth century, many illegitimate royal children subsisted primarily within their maternal networks.<sup>351</sup> Although, of course, these maternal connections where also often mobilised and exploited as part of the monarch's attempts to consolidate authority and construct a consensus amongst the aristocracy through the inclusion of former royal

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<sup>351</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 144.

mistresses and their families into an ad hoc dynastic strategy.<sup>352</sup> This concern could also present itself through the subsequent elevation and inclusion of an illegitimate royal family member in order to gain access to their regional and familial connections, often in response to politically fluid situations, as was the case with Robert and Matilda's investment of Reginald with the earldom of Cornwall with instructions to secure it for the Angevin cause.<sup>353</sup>

It was, circuitously, this heavy reliance upon the good will and affection of their legitimate family members for political advancement which made illegitimate Anglo-Norman and Angevin male royal bastards such a useful and reliable resource. The evolving legal and social prejudices of the twelfth century and the increasingly unequivocal alienation of bastards from any prospects of inheritance meant that royal bastards with ambitions outside of the scope which could be provided for by their varying maternal networks, depended upon the patronage of their legitimate family members. This dependence cultivated a strong affinity, and cooperation, in addition to that created by their shared family identity, since, in contrast to legitimate family members, the royal bastards continued fortune and prospects relied upon their loyalty and service to their legitimate patron. This loyalty and personal affinity which was in part created as a result of their necessary investment in a shared and mutually beneficial dynastic enterprise, through which reward and further stake could be provided and dispensed was, alongside capability, one of the most useful and prized traits of an Anglo-Norman or Angevin royal bastard to their legitimate patron.

Royal bastards were deployed by the king to advance their political position and, as a result, that of their shared dynastic enterprise through direct military and administrative service as well as through inclusion into dynastic strategies, both of which necessitated operating within and interacting with aristocratic networks of power. Those illegitimate royal children, throughout the twelfth century who were most useful to the propagation of their legitimate relatives' power and authority, as a result of their circumstances and strong ties of affinity, were a product of this process of utilisation and empowerment through elevation in status imbedded

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<sup>352</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 126.

<sup>353</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 116.

within other regional and familial affinities in which they were required to participate.

The insertion of some favoured royal bastards as de facto heads of established households and affinities not only invested these individuals with an increased capacity to support and advance the royal family's own agenda but also furnished them with a pre-existing range of regional interests in which to operate. Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards were not necessarily mere servitors of their legitimate family members; their close cooperation with the monarch being rooted in the mutually beneficial shared interest generated by their participation in royal family identity. Illegitimate royal children were capable of aggressively pursuing their own political agendas for the furtherance of their own position and landed interests. This can be seen, to some extent, in Archbishop Geoffrey of York's continued resistance to his father's plans to secure him a position within the Church. Instead he preferred to keep his options open by remaining a layman and maintaining his position at his father's side as a fixture of the court.<sup>354</sup>

Royal bastards' independence of action and capacity for the pursuit of self-interest can be most prominently viewed in those individuals whose integration through marriage or affinity into familial and regional aristocratic networks presented them with the means and motivation to pursue their adopted interests. Perhaps the most extreme example of this can be found in 1119 when Henry I's illegitimate daughter, Juliane, the wife of Eustace of Bréteuil held one of her rebellious husband's castles against the king, going so far as to fire a crossbow bolt at her father during negotiations.<sup>355</sup> In a similar, although arguably more pragmatic act of self-interest undertaken for the perseverance of his own powerbase and aristocratic affinity, Earl William Longespée of Salisbury sided with the future Louis VIII (d. 1226) in 1215 following the French prince's invasion of southern England, launched, nominally at least, in support of the baronial rebels.<sup>356</sup> William had greatly benefited from his close affinity with his half-brother, King John, and had in return for the king's patronage served and supported him throughout the various political and military crisis that beset the reign, including the first year of

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<sup>354</sup> Howden, *Chronica magistri*, p. XL.

<sup>355</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, VI, p. 294.

<sup>356</sup> Holden, 'The Balance of Patronage: King John and Earl of Salisbury', p. 88.

the rebellion. Nonetheless, when the French invasion seemingly convinced the earl that the king's position was irretrievable, he took independent action to detach himself from the royal camp and secure his own interests.

The degree of this autonomy and separation from their legitimate royal family members and patrons, of course, fell on a continuum and did not necessarily, or even typically, imply a clash or cross purpose with royal interests. Both Robert of Gloucester and Reginald of Cornwall, who had obtained their powerbases through marriages brokered by their royal relatives, were active supporters of their half-sister, the Empress Matilda, upholding her claim during the dynastic disputes of Stephen's reign. They also both pursued aggressive policies of expansion and consolidation within southern Wales and the south west of England respectively through diplomatic, dynastic and military means.<sup>357</sup> While it can be argued that these two illegitimate earls were only able to obtain this level of autonomy because of the disruption brought about by the warfare and factionalism that marked the succession crisis, it can be seen that Reginald's position as the senior male member of the royal family and his role as a protector and advisor during the youth of his nephew, Henry II, allowed the earl to retain much of his independence and the regional hegemony, that he had constructed, until his death.<sup>358</sup>

Robert's policy of expansion and consolidation within Wales can be seen as a natural extension of his duties as an Anglo-Norman marcher lord, amongst whom he was the preeminent neighbour. At the same time, the earl was careful to present himself as a participant within royal family identity minting his own coinage while William of Malmesbury's in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* jointly emphasises both Robert's ancestry and status as a dutiful and capable son.<sup>359</sup> This suggests that Robert's understanding of his own dignity and temporal standing were heavily intertwined with and sourced from his familial identity; at once a spur towards and potential complication in the construction and mobilisation of affinity with other participants in this identity. Clashes between the pursuit of competing and combative interests within expanded family networks were not only a concern

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<sup>357</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 150.

<sup>358</sup> Keefe, 'The Pipe Roll Evidence', p. 195.

<sup>359</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*; Marion M. Archibald 'The Lion Coinage of Robert Earl of Gloucester and William Earl of Gloucester', *British Numismatics Society*, 71 (2000), p. 76.



for members of the royal family, illegitimate or otherwise, and was perhaps a natural and inevitable result of the dense and overlapping web of competing noble landed interests. However, the general bias towards familial solidarity within aristocratic culture and the connectivity and relative permanence of bonds generated by familial and political affinity meant that this system of interconnected dynastic and regional networks tended to facilitate the consolidation and synthesis of competing interests between dynastically connected regional and political parties.<sup>360</sup>

The interests of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal families and the households and networks that they imbedded and elevated illegitimate family members within can be seen as largely complimentary. As these often large and powerful regional affinities became connected to royal interests and policy, through their new lord's personal connection to the king, the stability of these networks and the power and authority of illegitimate royal children integrated within them was further enhanced through the distribution of the profits and prestige gained from royal largesse. In order to properly examine and explore the household and patronage networks established and operated in by Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal illegitimate children during the twelfth century, as well as the extent to which this process of integration diluted or modified these individual's engagement with royal family identity, it is appropriate to focus primarily upon those royal bastards who were raised to earldoms. The careers of the four illegitimate royal earls, all of whom owed their lands and titles to strategic marriages secured for them by the patronage of their legitimate royal family members, display this process of deliberate aristocratic synthesis and reorientation taking place in a systematic and prolific manner at a high level of political discourse, usually occurring within a previously defined and identified regional and political affinity. Raised to the highest echelons of the aristocracy and invested with an increased ability to protect and advance their shared familial interests, a result of their personal connection and loyalty to their legitimate patron, the illegitimate royal earls were placed at the centre of prominent pre-existing political affinities. This meant that they were, with the probable exception of Archbishop Geoffrey during his father's reign, the most

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<sup>360</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, p. 208.

contemporarily prominent and active illegitimate royal family members within the shifting royal court and wider nobility.

### **3.1 The Cultivation and Utilisation of Illegitimate Royal Family Members in Aristocratic Networks during the Reign of Henry I**

Connected to this conspicuousness, and of paramount importance, is the relatively prominence of the illegitimate earls within the surviving sources, particularly in the form of charter evidence as well as in financial and tax records which are necessary for the partial reconstruction of their households, wider networks of patronage and their continuity of royal affinity. Other illegitimate royal children were patronised by their royal family members and implanted within existing regional affinities, either through marriage or the granting of land, but on a much smaller scale which not only made their careers and the composition of their households extremely difficult to ascertain but also limited their scope for autonomy and the construction of a hegemony within their local networks of power. This can be seen in the case of one of the most prominent and successful of these royal bastards, Robert FitzEdith, likely of Anglo-Danish maternal descent.<sup>361</sup>

Robert was one of those illegitimate sons of Henry I who was identified by Robert of Torigni in the early 1140's as still being a youth, though such a classification from a chronicler steeped in Norman society aristocratic culture may have only been meant to indicate that Robert was unmarried and without land of his own rather than a description of his actual age.<sup>362</sup> Although the appearance of land in Devonshire, in the Pipe roll of 1130, held in trust for him suggests that Robert was born relatively late into his father's reign.<sup>363</sup> During the dynastic disputes and internecine warfare of Stephen's reign, Robert maintained a strong sense of family identity and affinity, supporting the claim of his half-sister, the Empress Matilda, alongside other royal illegitimate family members such as Robert of Gloucester and Reginald of Cornwall and he can be found attesting several charters alongside them.<sup>364</sup> It is this continued connection that likely led Reginald

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<sup>361</sup> Ann Williams, 'Henry I and the English', Donald F. Fleming, Janet M. Pope, eds., *Henry I and the Anglo-Norman World: Studies in Memory of C Warren Hollister*, (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 27-38. at p. 33.

<sup>362</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

<sup>363</sup> *PR*, p. 152.

<sup>364</sup> *RRAN*, Volume III, Nos. 43, 274, 275, 277, 393,400, 618,634, 699.

to intervene with their nephew Henry II on Robert's behalf, granting him the considerable lordship of Okehampton in Devonshire, which carried with it a value of ninety-four knights fees, through a marriage to Matilda, the widow of William of Courcy.<sup>365</sup> Despite his clear affinity with the other members of the royal family and the substantial wealth brought to him by his marriage, Robert seems to have maintained a low political profile after his involvement in pressing Empress Matilda's dynastic claims. Rather than engaging with courtly life or attempting to cultivate his own regional connections and networks, he instead functioned as a satellite of his half-brother, Reginald who had constructed a formidable powerbase in the south west of England, facilitated in part by this guardianship of his grandson Baldwin, the earl of Devon.<sup>366</sup>

The higher social status and contemporary prominence of the earls, as well as the extensive spread of their landed interests and connections meant that they not only issued more charters than their lesser contemporaries, they were also often called upon to witness and ratify the agreements and charters made by other aristocrats within their political networks and the geographic boundaries of their earldom. The influence and authority of the earls was exercised and strengthened within their affinities and the broader networks of aristocratic power through this process of committal oversight and their role as a guarantor made by their tenants and associates. This practice, particularly in those cases in which the agreement or deal somehow involved or touched upon monastic interests or grants and was therefore more likely to be retained, further contributed to the greater survival of charter sources issued by or pertaining to earls during this period. The position of earl, while undergoing a degree of revision and redefinition during the twelfth century, not only indicated an enhanced status and influence within social and political networks but could in some respects be, in a limited sense, considered an office within the evolving system of royal government.<sup>367</sup>

Indeed, it was the mechanism of this office as well as the implications of increased autonomy which informed the basis for much of its accompanying authority and prestige, potentially affording the holder certain legal and financial

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<sup>365</sup> Sanders, *English Baronies*, p. 69.

<sup>366</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, p. 9.

<sup>367</sup> R.H.C. Davis, *King Stephen 1135-1154* (London, 1990), pp. 125-8.

privileges such as the right to convene their own courts as well as entitling them to a portion of all fees and taxation levelled within the boundaries of their earldom. Occasionally, however, the title was used by some sources derived from England, particularly in early part of the twelfth century as a courtesy title bestowed upon particularly puissant or prestigious aristocrats in the Cross-Channel world of the Anglo-Norman and later Angevin hegemonies, in order to emphasize their power and status rather than to denote the holdings of a legal and administrative office.<sup>368</sup> This early fluidity of title probably originates from the Norman adoption of the Anglo-Saxon office and initial conflation with the continental title of Count in the immediate aftermath of the Conquest and came to be used interchangeably as many of the artefacts of the Anglo-Saxon administrative system were discarded or diluted. A generation or two removed from the Conquest, substantial administrative advancements, based at least partially upon the existing Shire and Hundred court system as well as the diffractation of landholdings and inheritance amongst the families of cross-channel magnates, created a situation in which there were a number of titled and enfeoffed members of the Anglo-Norman nobility whose title and nucleus of their territory were sourced in Normandy but who nevertheless maintained extensive landed and familial interests within the British Isles.<sup>369</sup>

In addition to the increased availability of sources, another compelling reason to focus upon the households of those illegitimate royal family members raised to earldoms was the variable engagement with, and access to, executive vice royal powers throughout the twelfth century. It was these powers and the wealth generated from them that in part reinforced and promoted the earls' roles as focal points and patrons in the web of family and regional aristocratic affinities. It was the earls' status, at least nominally, as the king's most powerful and influential secular subjects which made securing and retaining their support and the orientation of the political networks in which they operated a prominent royal concern. The necessity, or else extreme utility, of committal backing and the construction of an aristocratic consensus is, of course, one of the primary reasons that Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs elevated those illegitimate family members, with whom they shared a strong personal connection and mutually familiar interests, to the

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<sup>368</sup> Crouch, *English Aristocracy*, p. 41.

<sup>369</sup> Crouch, *English Aristocracy*, p. 43.

rank of earl, imbedding them within existing regional affinities. Royal authority over the earls and their cooperation was maintained and incentivised to a large degree through the utilisation of the increasingly sophisticated financial mechanisms of the royal government, particularly within England and its Exchequer, which provided kings with the means to systematically reward magnates based upon their degree of affinity and level of engagement with royal service.<sup>370</sup> Although, of course, the exact form and function of these gifts, as well as the manner and extent to in which executive power was invested and devolved varied throughout the twelfth century as a result of changing political circumstances and the development of the administrative and financial framework of governance.

At the time of Henry I's death, England supported seven earldoms, two of which, Leicester and Gloucestershire, were created by the king in 1107 and 1121 or 1122 respectively.<sup>371</sup> The earldom of Leicester was granted to Robert de Beaumont, count of Meulan and one of William the Conqueror's original companions.<sup>372</sup> The grant of the earldom, alongside a considerable grant of land within the Midlands was probably a reward for the venerable magnate who had supported Henry throughout his reign and the king's recent forcible assumption of his elder brother's position within the Duchy of Normandy.<sup>373</sup> This grant also served another political purpose besides demonstrating the king's largesse and ability to reward loyalty. By giving Robert and his family extensive landed interests in England, he was ensuring that it remained in the powerful Beaumont clan's best interests to maintain and promote the political connectivity and indivisibility of the two halves of the recently restored Anglo-Norman realm. The earldom of Gloucester was created for the king's eldest illegitimate son in the aftermath of the White Ship disaster and the death of the heir apparent in order to help support and stabilise the king's regime at a point of dynastic crisis.<sup>374</sup> Additionally, in positioning one of his most trusted and prominent family members, who he invested with considerable power and authority, in a position of pre-eminence in the Welsh Marches, Henry I was strengthening royal control or at least oversight of the still

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<sup>370</sup> Keefe, *Pipe Roll Evidence*, p. 193.

<sup>371</sup> Graeme J. White, 'Earls and Earldoms during King Stephen's Reign', in Diana E.S. Dunn, ed., *War and Society in Medieval and Early Modern Britain* (Liverpool, 2000), p. 78.

<sup>372</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 598.

<sup>373</sup> Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*; C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I*, (New Haven, 2003), p. 173.

<sup>374</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 294.

volatile locality as well as a measure of direction over the ongoing Norman expansion across the culturally and politically permeable border into Wales.<sup>375</sup>

By investing Robert with lands within Wales and on its border, Henry I was ensuring that not only would the other Marcher Lords and adventures look to an individual who possessed an exceptionally strong royal familial affinity for support and leadership but that his son's newly acquired political and territorial interests in maintaining the integrity of the border and advancing the piecemeal pacification of Wales aligned closely with his own.<sup>376</sup> In the creation of both of these earldoms, Henry I conferred significant lands and a portion of the royal demesne upon a political ally at a time of potential upheaval and instability in order to reinforce his political dominance and hegemony.

In the case of Robert de Beaumont, this grant was made to an established and powerful aristocratic faction in order to bring their interests into alignment with those of the king. This process is to an extent mirrored by the later creation of the earldom of Gloucester for his eldest illegitimate son, in that the region's aristocratic networks of power came under the auspices of an individual aligned with royal interests. Indeed, the degree of this political reorientation significantly greater because of the extent of Robert's engagement with royal identity and the personal affinity he shared with his father. By empowering his bastard son with additional grants of land to enhance the prestige and power of his earldom, the king enabled Robert to exercise a greater degree of authority and freedom of action within his earldom, as well as within the wider realm of politics than later illegitimate royal earls who held their earldoms as a result of royally sponsored marriages. To an extent then, Henry I's creation of the earldom of Gloucester in contrast to the further empowering of the Beaumont clan created a dynastically and politically entwined satellite affinity that straddled the potentially turbulent Welsh border.

Under Henry I the exact nature and scope of the executive powers and privileges afforded to the Anglo-Norman earls seems to have differed significantly between individuals. Rather than a clearly defined office with systematically

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<sup>375</sup> R.R. Davies, 'Kings, Lords and Liberties in the March of Wales 1066-1272', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 29 (1979), p. 79.

<sup>376</sup> R.R. Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063-1415* (Oxford, 1987), p. 41.

applied rights and responsibilities, comital status was a social and honorific rank which provided magnates with the scope and perhaps aspirations to pursue a suite of available and attainable privileges.<sup>377</sup> Access to these powers and privileges varied depending upon their political and territorial circumstances as well as their relationship with the king and the mechanisms of royal government. The 1130 Pipe Roll explicitly makes mention of Earl Robert of Gloucester's receipt of a portion of the income, what is known as the third penny, generated by the Shire court; although later evidence suggests that the same right may at least have been sporadically claimed and enforced by the earls of Leicester, Surrey and Warwick.<sup>378</sup> The earl of Northampton claimed entitlement to a share of the revenue of the boroughs in Bedford and Cambridge, while the earl of Surrey did the same in the towns of Guilford and Southwark.<sup>379</sup>

It seems that in the early twelfth century, while the households of earls and their cultivated and constructed dynastic and regional affinities were important reservoirs of political power, they played only a small role in the running and maintenance of the local system of shire administration and its connection with the wider royal government. While the king's writs and instructions to local government officials occasionally included the local earl, this practice was far from universally adhered to and a lack of standardisation in the form such addresses took makes it hard to gauge whether this was a mere courtesy sporadically applied or if an earl once referenced held some obligation or responsibility to see that the king's instructions were satisfactorily resolved.

Throughout Henry I's reign, the earls which consistently enjoyed and applied the greatest array of these legal and financial privileges were those of Chester, whose landholdings were remarkably consolidated and dense when compared to other Anglo-Norman earls and magnates whose lands were often scattered and fragmented as a result of a deliberate process of distribution undertaken by earlier Anglo-Norman kings in the aftermath of the Conquest.<sup>380</sup> The earls of Chester, with the exception of those lands that fell under the purview

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<sup>377</sup> White, 'Earls and Earldoms', p. 75.

<sup>378</sup> *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, p. 77.

<sup>379</sup> *Pipe Roll 31 Henry I*, p. vii.

<sup>380</sup> George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession and Tenure 1066-1166* (Oxford, 2007), p. 67.

of the Church and Monastic networks, controlled the entirety of the shire which gave them an unprecedented level of influence and control over the local apparatus of governance and administration, including access to revenue streams in the same manner of the third pennies and the right, or at least ability, to appoint their own sheriffs.<sup>381</sup>

The appointment and control of sheriffs is of particular importance given the status of sheriffs as royal officials and their role as a vital component in a financial system in which the burden of taxation tended to fall heaviest on the poorer and less well-connected sections of society. The royal administration, principally in the form of the developing Exchequer, issued sheriffs with quotas and audits they were expected to meet through the farming of taxation in their assigned shire.<sup>382</sup> A system which could be potentially extremely lucrative for office holders, drawn primarily from local aristocracy and functionaries, who were able to exercise a high degree of independence in the manner in which this money was raised, although those sheriffs who failed to meet their goals were habitually replaced. This discretion, which provided the means of creating and cultivating significant political capital and affinity, as well as their status as potential source of significant income meant that the devolution or perhaps usurpation of royal authority over an earldom's sheriff was a highly advantageous and desirable outcome for any earl, regardless of their potential connection to royal family identity.

Interaction with royal family identity and participation within the royal court provided other means of financial advancement beyond the attempted control of the sheriffs and cultivation of the vice regal privileges and powers which were intermittently granted to earls during Henry I's reign. Robert of Gloucester, alongside other members of the king's inner circle and the Anglo-Norman realm's leading prelates gained a more direct access to this layered system of financial obligations through their frequent participation in the Exchequer as overseers and

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<sup>381</sup> Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Charter of The Anglo-Norman Earls of Chester 1071-1237*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (Liverpool, 1988), p. 57.

<sup>382</sup> Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, p. 233; Judith A. Green, *The Government of England Under Henry I* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 38.



officials.<sup>383</sup> While exemptions from royally levied fees and taxes required approval from the king, the exact amount that was pardoned was decided by the court of the Exchequer and the earl of Gloucester can be found frequently grouped alongside his fellow officials, such as his cousin Count Stephen of Mortain, Earl Robert of Leicester and Roger of Salisbury in the otherwise seemingly haphazardly organised Danegeld exemptions.<sup>384</sup>

Exemptions from the Danegeld were dispensed for a variety of reasons, including perhaps functioning on occasion as a mechanism for the Exchequer to clear its books and erase uncollected debts, their frequent exploitation by a small number of royal favourites and their associates who held semi formalised and formulated positions on a rotating basis suggests that in a similar manner to the earls, the granting of privileges and the devolution of royal powers and authority primarily resulted from the existence of personal and political relationships rather than being strictly attached to particular offices or positions.<sup>385</sup> It was the potential strength of these relationships, based in part upon the permanent and exorable entanglement of interests which made their illegitimate royal family members such a useful resource to Anglo-Norman and later Angevin kings. A utility and reasonably assumed reliability which led to their investment with not only lands and earldoms but also a variety of military and administrative roles.

### **3.2 The Authority and Vice-Regal Privileges of Earls in the Reign of Stephen**

There has been significant and long running historiographical debate on how appropriate a descriptor ‘The Anarchy’ is for the period of dynastic conflict and warfare that existed within Stephen’s reign and the extent to which the dispute resulted in the disruption of the administration and the breakdown of royal authority. What can be seen, however, is that Stephen’s reign saw a marked increase in the number of magnates claiming and receiving royal recognition of comital status. While Stephen created two earldoms, those of Richmond and Northampton

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<sup>383</sup> Stephanie Mooers Christelow, ‘The Fiscal Management of England under Henry I’, in Donald F. Fleming and Janet M. Pope, eds., *Henry I and the Anglo-Norman World: Studies in Memory of C Warren Hollister* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp.158-182. at p. 170.

<sup>384</sup> Mooers Christelow, ‘The Fiscal Management of England under Henry I’, p. 166.

<sup>385</sup> Mooers Christelow, ‘The Fiscal Management of England under Henry I’, p. 168.

in 1136 shortly after his assumption of the Throne, the majority of these additions were created as a result of the civil war.<sup>386</sup> The earldom of Richmond was invested upon Alan the Black (d. 1146), a magnate of Breton extraction and a relative of the Norman Ducal house who already held the lordship of Richmond having inherited it from his father Count Stephen of Tréguier earlier that year.<sup>387</sup> It is possible then that Alan's elevation to the rank of earl was a recognition by Stephen of his prominence within the aristocratic networks of north Yorkshire and an existing engagement with the region's administration and military integrity. The greater social kudos of the honorific as well as its implied and possibly practically recognised independence from the Yorkshire sheriffs, not only served to strengthen Alan's sense of connection and loyalty towards the king but also entrenched the earl more thoroughly in the north of England, helping to secure the border with Scotland.

This joint agenda of cultivating affinity and support within England, alongside the securing of his border with Scotland also appears in Stephen's re-foundation of the earldom of Northampton. Stephen gifted the earldom to Simon de Sensis II (d. 1153) who possessed a hereditary claim to the earldom through his mother alongside one on the somewhat overlapping and conflated earldom of Huntingdon which was held by his half-brother, Prince Henry of Scotland (d. 1152).<sup>388</sup> By granting Simon, who was married to Isabel de Beaumont, the daughter of one of Stephen's principal supporters, Earl Robert of Leicester, the title of earl, Stephen was not only gaining the further gratitude and support of the Beaumont family and their associates but also imposing a limit upon Scottish influence within the Midlands by positioning a supporter with an alternative claim within the region. This was of a particular concern to Stephen since David I was Empress Matilda's maternal uncle and could reasonably be expected to support her claim to the throne.<sup>389</sup>

Both royalist and Angevin factions within England used the gifting and confirmation of earldoms in order to attract magnates to their cause and cultivate

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<sup>386</sup> White, 'Earls and Earldoms', p. 84.

<sup>387</sup> *RRAN*, Volume III, Nos. 204, 949.

<sup>388</sup> Crouch, *English Aristocracy*, p. 41.

<sup>389</sup> Richard Oram, *David I: The King Who Made Scotland* (Stroud, 2004), p. 121.

the allegiance and influence of their existing supporters; a practice capitalising upon, but was also complicated by, the fluidic loyalty and opportunism of many magnates during the conflict. Possibly the most egregious and commonly cited example of this trend of transitory and conditional loyalty is the career of Geoffrey de Mandeville (d. 1141) who received charters investing him with the earldom of Essex from both King Stephen and the Empress Matilda.<sup>390</sup> Through this strategy of negotiation, and by playing the rival royal claimants against each other, Geoffrey was able to temporarily secure and exercise an extraordinary number of privileges and powers awarded to him in two separate grants by the Empress' conferring upon him rights to the third penny from courts in Essex, the Justiciarship of the county, restoring to him his family's hereditary custodianship of the Tower as well as the shrievalty of Essex, London and Hertfordshire.<sup>391</sup>

Generally speaking, of the two royal claimants it was Matilda who was most willing to devolve executive power and authority to her supporters.<sup>392</sup> This strategy was perhaps informed by the relationship she shared with her confederate and illegitimate half-brother, Robert of Gloucester. While Robert supported her claim and was integral to the Angevin faction's military efforts, he also displayed a high degree of personal autonomy as well as an active engagement with the trappings of royal identity and authority. Indeed, the elevation of their half-brother Reginald to the earldom of Cornwall, following his assumption of the Angevin party's interests within the region, seems to have initially been implemented by Robert rather than Empress Matilda. Additionally, Matilda who was opposed by an anointed king already established in the realm for a number of years and with the political practicality of her claim complicated to an extent by her sex and Norman antagonism to her Angevin connections, perhaps felt the need to make greater concessions to attract supporters and stabilise her faction.<sup>393</sup> In 1141, the high water mark of her political and military success within England, in addition to recognising Geoffrey de Mandeville as earl of Essex, the Empress also raised a long term Angevin associate, Miles of Gloucester (d. 1143) the hereditary constable and

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<sup>390</sup> Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, p. 117.

<sup>391</sup> Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, p. 126.

<sup>392</sup> Graeme J. White, 'Earls and Earldoms', p. 85.

<sup>393</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, 'The Charters of the Empress Matilda', in George Garnett and John Hudson, eds., *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy: Essays in Honour of Sir James Holt*, (Cambridge, 1994) p. 276; Hanley, *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior*, p. 131.

sheriff to the earldom of Hereford.<sup>394</sup> Miles was granted the third penny in Hereford derived both from court pleas and borough incomes as well as lands from the royal demesne within the County, including Hereford castle itself. In both of these cases then, it seems clear that Matilda envisaged that the earls would function as military and administrative deputies within their earldoms, delegating to them duties and authority otherwise held by the royal government. In the same year, Matilda also recognised or granted the title of earl to Hugh Bigod, William de Mohun, Aubrey de Vere (d. 1194) and Baldwin de Redvers. Aubrey de Vere, the brother-in-law and close ally of Geoffrey de Mandeville was initially promised in his rather complicated and conditional charter from Empress Matilda, the third penny of the earldom of Cambridge which it states is the right of all earls, suggesting at this time that the majority of earls associated with the Angevin faction had some recognised right to these incomes, although evidence for actual implementation of this right is sparse.<sup>395</sup>

In contrast to the strategy adopted by Matilda, it seems clear that at least some of the earldoms that Stephen created and distributed were intended purely as an honorific courtesy title rather than implying a military and administrative function. In 1140 during negotiations with Earl Ranulf II of Chester and the powerful affinity he had constructed, Stephen awarded Ranulf's maternal half-brother William de Roumare with the title, earl of Lincoln.<sup>396</sup> Crucially, William did not receive control of Lincoln castle, either through custodianship or direct ownership which their party later seized from the king by force.<sup>397</sup> Given this retention of the region's military assets by Stephen, the political context of these negotiations and William's personal focus on defending his family lands within Normandy. It seems likely that William was gifted the comital title as part of royal strategy attempting to mollify Ranulf's affinity without meaningfully expanding their control over the region.

Interestingly, William d'Aubigny, one of Stephen's supporters, and the husband of Henry I's widow Queen Adeliza (d. 1151), also made intermittent use

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<sup>394</sup> *RRAN* Volume III, No. 393.

<sup>395</sup> *RRAN* Volume III, Nos. 274, 275, 393, 3.

<sup>396</sup> White, 'Earls and Earldoms', p. 84.

<sup>397</sup> White, 'Earls and Earldoms', p. 84.

of the style earl of Lincoln even though he seems to have had no clear landed interests in the county. William seems to have experimented with the exact configuration of his title styling himself variously as the earl of either Aubigny, Sussex, Chichester or Arundel.<sup>398</sup> While these were all areas in which he held land, either directly or through his wife, his vacillation on the formulation of this title suggests that he regarded the additional prestige of a comital title to be an asset rather than its potential to facilitate an integration with the apparatus of regional financial and military administration. This process of empowerment and investment of royal authority in earls and magnates as a means of constructing a power base and aristocratic consensus, which for Matilda's faction included a number of illegitimate royal family members, was variable in scope and in practice often only temporary. Following the reversal of the Empress Matilda's position in England, Geoffrey de Mandeville was, despite further attempts at political reorientation, left isolated without the cover of civil war and factionalism which resulted in the eventual loss of his lands and privileges. This suggests then that rather than breaking down, the administrative and legal apparatus of the kingdom largely continued to function during this period of civil war but was isolated in areas from a single royal centre, as a result of political and military factionalism, members of which continued to utilise established mechanisms of organisation and administration.<sup>399</sup> Central to this varying devolution and political exploitation of royal powers and authority within individual earldoms, and reflected in the various means through which illegitimate royal children were elevated to earldoms within the twelfth century, is the idea that beyond the overall aim for the cultivation of support, Anglo-Norman and Angevin rulers often had further more specific objective in mind when creating an earl.

A monarch's reasons for wishing to promote a magnate or family member were heavily influenced by the ongoing political context. While earldoms were sometimes dispensed merely as honorific, in order to increase a magnate's personal affinity and gratitude or else as a way of drawing regional affinities and familial groups into a closer alignment with royal interests, they were also deployed more

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<sup>398</sup> *Waltham Chronicle*, eds. L Watkiss and M. Chibnall (Oxford, 1994), p. 76.

<sup>399</sup> Nicholas Vincent, 'Did Henry II Have a Policy Toward the Earls?', in Chris Given-Wilson, Anna Kettle, and Len Scales, eds., *War, Government and Aristocracy within the British Isles: Essays in Honour of Michael Prestwich* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 2.

proactively. The Empress' charter to Aubrey de Vere in 1141 was potentially very generous although amorphous. In it she promised the magnate the earldom of Cambridge if it was not already held by her Scottish relatives. The charter also gave Aubrey the right to choose his potential earldom from either Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire or Dorset, despite the fact that he held few if any lands in any of them. The implication of this being that de Vere was being deputised and incentivised to undertake the maintenance and expansion of Angevin power in one of these counties.<sup>400</sup> Although in this case, Aubrey strategically selected Oxfordshire which was at the time of the grant an Angevin stronghold and the primary location of the Empress' court which must have made it appear to be a relatively safe option for the prospective retention of his comital title.

Stephen also followed this policy of incentivising magnates to military action through the granting of earldoms so that it would then be in their interests to establish political and military dominance of the area. One example of this can be seen in his empowerment of Hervey Brito (d. 1168) as the earl of Wiltshire and the grant of Devizes castle, a strategically placed stronghold from which he could theoretically disrupt Angevin control of the area. In at least two counties, Herefordshire and Cornwall, the rival royal claimants both appointed earls in direct opposition to one another.<sup>401</sup> In Herefordshire, Matilda invested Miles of Gloucester who already possessed extensive local connections with considerable privileges and lands from the royal demesne, presumably with the caveat that he first had to secure them.<sup>402</sup> Making Miles' task easier was his proximity to the powerbase of his long-term collaborator, Earl Robert of Gloucester with whom he shared several landed interests within the County.<sup>403</sup> King Stephen entrusted and incentivized the securement of the shire to one of his principal supporters, Earl Robert de Beaumont of Leicester, seemingly hoping that Robert and his formidable kinship group which included his twin brother Waleran, the count of Meulan, and

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<sup>400</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, 'The Charters of Empress Matilda,' in George Garnett and John Hudson, eds., *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy*, pp.276-299 at p. 282.

<sup>401</sup> Graeme J. White, 'Earls and Earldoms', pp. 84 and 87.

<sup>402</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, 'The Charters of Empress Matilda', p. 283.

<sup>403</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, p. 96.

earl of Worcester would invest a portion of their resources in the pursuit of their new claim.<sup>404</sup>

Earl Alan of Richmond was further promoted by Stephen when the king recognised his claim to the earldom of Cornwall, a large portion of which had been temporarily held by his paternal uncle Brian in the immediate aftermath of the Conquest. Alan seems to have little in the way of contemporary connections within Cornwall's networks of power, although his campaign to establish dominance of the region benefited greatly from the king's direct intervention in the area.<sup>405</sup> In 1141, however, he convened and oversaw a county court in the town of Bodmin suggesting some level of local engagement.<sup>406</sup> Alan's primary political and familial affinities were, with the exception of his relationship with King Stephen, derived from his Breton heritage which included a prestigious marriage into the duchy's ruling family. Alan's wife, Bertha, was the eldest daughter of Duke Conan and Duchess Matilda, an illegitimate daughter of Henry I. Bertha became Duchess of Britany in 1148 following her brother Hoel's disinheritance on the grounds of suspected illegitimacy and her eldest son with Alan would eventually hold both the duchy of Britany and earldom of Richmond. This meant that Alan was closely related by marriage not only to Empress Matilda but also his Angevin counterpart in the earldom, Reginald, who was his wife's uncle.

Reginald possessed a strong sense of familial identity and shared affinity with his half siblings, appearing in the Empress' court as she began military efforts to assert her claim and can be found amongst her retinue or that of Robert of Gloucester on several occasions. These personal connections and shared familial interests with the nucleus of the Angevin cause and war effort were of paramount importance in Reginald's assumption to the position as earl. This was the case with all elevated royal illegitimate children, their utility and importance being derived from the close conflation of political interest and the illegitimate family members' reliance upon a patron for advancement, meant it was almost in their best interests to support and cooperate with their legitimate family members. In a similar manner to Henry I's promotion of Robert of Gloucester, Reginald's utility to his family and

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<sup>404</sup> Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*; Hollister, *Henry I*, p. 29.

<sup>405</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 116.

<sup>406</sup> Crouch, *English Aristocracy*, p. 41.

resources within the region was further enhanced by marriage into a prominent local family. Reginald's marriage to Mabel FitzRichard, the daughter of former royalist supporter William FitzRichard, the Lord of Cardinham in central Cornwall, provided him with connections within the region's aristocratic affinities and the foundations of a powerbase.<sup>407</sup>

It remains unclear the extent to which Earl Robert and later the Empress invested Reginald with administrative and legal powers and privileges or how they envisaged the new earl's role within the county beyond its military pacification and securement for the Angevin cause. Reginald's apparent excommunication by Bishop Robert Warewast of Exeter in 1140 and alleged lack of local popularity seems to have arisen from his attempts to extract money for the dioceses and its affiliated monastic institutions.<sup>408</sup> The avarice and rapaciousness of Anglo-Norman magnates during this period of unrest and aristocratic factionalism were common themes in contemporary ecclesiastical writing, often levelled in support of those bishops who excommunicated magnates, on identical grounds, as one of their remaining mechanisms with which to register protests and deter the exclusion of lands from the Church.<sup>409</sup> This practice and its effect upon the formulation of the available sources make it difficult to determine the extent and form of Reginald's encroachment upon the Church and if in doing so he was exercising rights and privileges awarded to him as a royal deputy. Whatever his half-sibling's original intentions when granting him the earldom, following Matilda's withdrawal from England and a reduction in the tempo of the dynastic conflict, Reginald was, in a manner similar to Robert of Gloucester, able to maintain the internal integrity of his earldom which he then ruled autonomously. The affinity and sense of shared familial enterprise generated by Reginald's support and informal guardianship of his legitimate nephew, Duke Henry, during his initial military and diplomatic forays into England meant that the earl was able to retain a large measure of this independence and extensive suite of vice-regal powers following the accession of Henry II to the English throne.

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<sup>407</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 150.

<sup>408</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 116.

<sup>409</sup> David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 306.



The creation of earls by Anglo-Norman monarchs and royal claimants, like many contemporary political and governmental practises, was fluid. The exact form and intended function of each grant being determined on an individual basis depending upon the political needs and objectives of the grantee. This was similarly the case with the variable distribution of administrative and financial privileges amongst the earls.<sup>410</sup> The political circumstances and need by the royal household to construct a functional consensus amongst the magnates meant that several earls were invested with powers and integrated into royal governance to an extent comparable with those of the royal illegitimate family members elevated to earldoms within the twelfth century. While many royal bastards were engaged with their maternal familial and regional networks, they rarely extended to the upper echelons of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin aristocracy which, alongside their illegitimate status, meant that their advancement largely came as a result of their participation in royal family identity. This meant that while many recipients of the title of earl and potential deputies and partners in royal governance could bring significant military resources and aristocratic support to their patrons through their networks of familial and regional affinities, the elevation of illegitimate family members required more specific circumstances and a potentially greater investment of royal resources in order to advance royal interests. However, the permanence of their entanglement of political and familial interests and their accompanying potential for the establishment of personal affinities amongst fellow participants, meant that both Robert and Reginald, as well as the subsequent royal earls, were afforded not only considerable royal favour and latitude but were also the natural confederates and deputies of their legitimate family members during periods of crisis and political upheaval.

### **3.3 The Cultivation and Utilisation of Illegitimate Royal Family Members in Aristocratic Networks during the Reign of Henry II**

In order to cultivate support amongst the aristocracy and construct a royal alignment amongst the overlapping networks of familial, regional and landed interests, Henry II utilised a number of developing financial and administrative

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<sup>410</sup> Vincent, 'Did Henry II Have a Policy Toward the Earls?', p. 17.

mechanisms and practises.<sup>411</sup> One of the primary methods through which this was achieved was the variable application of various dues and taxes in order to reward magnates who were closely aligned with the king and provide others with a financial incentive to engage in royal service.<sup>412</sup> Upon his accession to the throne in 1154, Henry II had in accordance with previous agreements adopted a conciliatory position to the majority of King Stephen's supporters.<sup>413</sup> In addition to this agreement, the intermittent warfare of the previous reign had allowed many of these earldoms to increase their internal coherence and power further encouraging the king to recognise and legitimise a number of the earldoms awarded by both royal claimants during his predecessor's reign.<sup>414</sup> Rather than distribute largesse upon factional lines, Henry II sought to exercise authority within England's regional and aristocratic affinities by capitalising upon opportunities as they naturally arose to install royal garrisons in key castles through the country regardless of their previous allegiance. These included fortifications held by the families of some of his mother's most prominent supporters and crucially he extended this policy even to those with close ties of kinship to the royal family, such as in the case of his cousin Earl William of Gloucester whose ownership of Bristol castle the king had initially confirmed.<sup>415</sup>

By 1166, the nineteen earls, while representing only a small fraction of the total number of landholding aristocratic and barons within the Angevin Hegemony, controlled over 34% of all knights fees within England.<sup>416</sup> Nominally representing the amount of land sufficient to support a knight while maintaining his dignity and household, the knights fee is potentially a problematic and inexact unit for the measurement of wealth. The knights fee lacked standardisation and included huge potential variance in size depending upon the region, productivity of cultivated land and wastage. This is further compounded by ongoing administrative innovations and the knights fees' role in the frequently overlapping eligibility for military service and its function in the calculation of assessed tax which led to its frequent

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<sup>411</sup> Crouch, *English Aristocracy*, p. 74.

<sup>412</sup> Keefe, 'Pipe Roll Evidence', p. 203.

<sup>413</sup> Garnett, *Conquered England*, p. 299.

<sup>414</sup> Vincent, 'Did Henry II Have a Policy Toward the Earls?', p. 5.

<sup>415</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>416</sup> Keefe, 'Pipe Roll Evidence', p. 203.

fractionalisation.<sup>417</sup> It is, however, sufficient for conveying the relative size and importance of fiefs as they functioned within aristocratic networks of power and becomes vital in the discussion of Scutage and its role as a mechanism of royal governance and administration with potent political utility.

Henry II's thirty-five-year reign saw the levying of only seven rounds of scutage, each of which omitted a number of the earls and tenants-in-chief on the grounds of their participation in royal service.<sup>418</sup> The demographic which possibly benefited from this policy most dramatically were those empowered royal illegitimate family members who had been raised to an earldom as a result of their deep engagement with royal service and from their personal connection with the king who further invested them in upholding and maintaining royal power. Earl Reginald, the king's uncle and advisor who was deeply embedded within the court's inner circle, whose administration within his earldom was functionally separate from the royal centre was assessed for £370 worth of scutage under two levies. While none of this considerable sum was ever formally pardoned, it seems that not only did the earl make no attempt to pay the debt off, neither Exchequer nor the king ever made any attempt to compel him to do so.<sup>419</sup>

In such a 'top heavy' political configuration, in which the earls and the uppermost echelons of the aristocracy held such a high proportion of the kingdom's land and power, their cooperation or at least acquiescence was of paramount importance to the continuation of royal governance as well as the pursuit of the king's dynastic and political interests. While seeking to increase royal income to defend and maintain his vast landed interests and grow the productivity of the progressively more sophisticated Exchequer, Henry II left the private fortunes and financial interests of the earls relatively untouched.<sup>420</sup> The burden of the newly refined system of taxation and royal levies falling largely upon less influential and politically puissant strata of society. To Henry II then, the loyalty of this top tier of the cross-channel magnates and their active engagement with his domestic and foreign policies was far more important and their exploitation for the extraction of

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<sup>417</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 164.

<sup>418</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 117.

<sup>419</sup> Keefe, *Pipe Roll Evidence*, p. 199.

<sup>420</sup> Keefe, *Pipe Roll Evidence*, p. 203.

additional income. The king made use of a number of variably applied financial mechanism and levies such as scutage throughout his reign in order to provide him with a means, not only of raising additional capital but, to communicate favour and reward personal affinity. Scutage was an intermittently levied tax on the holders of knight's fees, ostensibly as an alternative military service in which they paid the king a sum of money per knights fee held in order to excuse the notional knight it supported from participation in the king's current campaigns; although it was occasionally called at times of relative peace as a way of quickly raising capital.<sup>421</sup>

This apparent indifference to the collection of outstanding debts on the part of Henry II did not extended as fully to other earls with less developed personal connections and affinities, although royal policy continued to promote a conciliatory attitude through the frequent use of pardons and the extension of considerable latitude. William of Gloucester (d. 1183), for example, whose relationship with the king and the royal administration was marred by occasional periods of mutual distrust and tension was over twenty-eight years assessed for £557 worth of Scutage but during this time only ended up paying £294; just over half of the original debt.<sup>422</sup>

A possible partial exception to this pattern can be found in the career William Longespée. While promoted to his earldom as an adult by his half-brother Richard and then greatly profiting from his entrance into John's inner circle of councillors in the subsequent reign, William had been granted the honour of Appleby while still a teenager by his father.<sup>423</sup> Appleby, however, was a relatively modest lordship and it seems that William was not envisaged by his father, at least at the time of the grant, as occupying any military or administrative roles within the region. Instead, it seems that this grant, rather than representing the elevation of an illegitimate family member in order to further royal power and influence, was an attempt by Henry to provide for his son's needs and probably as a concession to

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<sup>421</sup> Nick Barret, 'Finance and Economy in the Reign of Henry II', in Christopher Harper-Bill, and Nicholas Vincent, eds., *Henry II: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp.242-256. at p. 254.

<sup>422</sup> Barret, 'Finance and Economy in the Reign of Henry II', p. 254.

<sup>423</sup> Alice Curteis and Chris Given-Wilson, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (London, 1984), p. 100.

William's exceptionally strong aristocratic affinities afforded to him by his mother, Ida, who was a member of the Tosny family and married to the earl of Norfolk.<sup>424</sup>

Henry II's policy of cultivating support for the royal regime through the extension of financial privileges to the realm's leading magnates was not only deployed in the raising of scutage but also in a range of other fees and dues, though both irregularly and systematically applied. The trend continuing to be one of lower rates of repayment, often in conjunction with frequent pardons, for the king's closest political allies. For instance, Henry II's half-brother, Earl Hamelin of Surrey, was pardoned in 1180 for his outstanding debt of £20 incurred from forest pleas in Normandy.<sup>425</sup> The inclusion of royal illegitimate earls amongst the most prominent beneficiaries of Henry II's incentivising strategy of extending considerable financial latitude and leniency to his leading magnates alongside the king's councillors and leading supporters suggests not only the continuity of links of royal familial identity and political affinity but also the recognition that their support needed to be rewarded and their prestige and authority within their earldoms' networks of power needed to be maintained. In this sense then once imbedded within regional and familial aristocratic groups, through royal appointment and the creation of ties of affinity through marriage, illegitimate royals were treated in a manner very similar to other leading magnates, their differentiation being one of degree. The primary determinate of which was strength of personal affinity and political alignment with the king; a metric in which illegitimate royal earls were comparable with several other councillors and royal lieutenants such as Henry II's friend and frequent ambassador, Earl William de Mandeville.

### **3.4 The Household and Political Networks of Robert of Gloucester**

Possibly the first born of Henry I's numerous children, and certainly the eldest son, Robert of Gloucester was amongst the most powerful and influential nobles within the Anglo-Norman realm. Alongside his cousin, Count Stephen and the Beaumont twins, Robert and Waleran, Robert of Gloucester had been one of

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<sup>424</sup> P. C. Reed, 'Countess Ida, Mother of William Longespée, Illegitimate Son of Henry II', *American Genealogist*, 77 (2002), pp.137–49.

<sup>425</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*.

the rising stars of his father's court and was extensively engaged in high level royal service both in military and administrative capacities. The Beaumont brothers were the scions of one of Henry I's most powerful vassals, their inclusion in the court was part of a strategy to co-opt their influence and power to bolster royal authority and control. Waleran became a member of a faction of Anglo-Norman nobles who unsuccessfully backed the claim of Duke Robert's son, William Clito, and as a result spent much of the 1120s in royal custody.<sup>426</sup> Robert, Waleran's brother, who had stayed loyal to the king and supported him throughout the rebellion was rewarded with considerable lands in Normandy including the strategically important but troublesome honour of Bréteuil which had previously been held by the king's son-in-law Eustace.<sup>427</sup>

Both Robert and Stephen were in a sense, creations of Henry I, as respectively an illegitimate son and nephew whose inheritance prospects were limited by the presence of two elder brothers. They owed their power and extensive portfolio of titles and lands to their status as royal relatives and their capability in pursuing the advancement of their shared dynastic interests. Invested with an earldom in either 1121 or 1122 and with large grants from the royal demesne, supplementing the lands brought to him from his marriage to Mabel Fitzhamon, Robert was the first illegitimate member of the Anglo-Norman royal dynasty to be raised to comital status within the twelfth century.<sup>428</sup> William the Conqueror, who was himself illegitimate, had two generations earlier had, with the help of his guardians, been able to uphold his claim to the duchy of Normandy but as a result of his military and diplomatic success rose to become an anointed king.<sup>429</sup> William's status was not initially universally accepted by members of the Norman political community, particularly on the peripheries but he was aided in the securing of his claim by the existence of several contextual benefits and mitigating factors. Not only did William's succession as a minor in 1035 occur before the exclusion of bastards from legal rights of inheritance and the Church's reinvention of marriage as a sacrament had percolated fully through lay society but

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<sup>426</sup> David Crouch, *The Beaumont Twins*, p. 13.

<sup>427</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, VI, p. 294.

<sup>428</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. XX.

<sup>429</sup> David Bates, 'The Conqueror's Adolescence', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, XXV (2003), p. 1.

he was also his father's designated successor and one of the only remaining members of the family's main stem.<sup>430</sup>

In keeping with contemporary aristocratic dynasties' conceptions of familial inclusivity and political solidarity, the dukes of Normandy had long followed a policy of promoting extended and auxiliary family members, some of whom were illegitimate, to positions from which they could directly contribute to the support and advancement of the family's attempts to exercise authority over the duchy and occasionally its neighbours. The Conqueror's great-grandfather, Richard I (d. 996), installed one of his illegitimate children, Geoffrey (d. 1015), as count of Eu, additionally granting him Brionne castle, although at the point of Geoffrey's elevation in the 990's the delineation between wife, concubine and mistress and its implications was often unclear and blurred.<sup>431</sup> This alongside the still nascent status of the Church's formulation and colonisation of marriage makes the contemporary legal and social status of Geoffrey and his full brother William hard to ascertain. Perhaps a more apt comparison to Robert's career and those of the other illegitimate royal family members raised to earldoms in the twelfth century are the Conqueror's maternal half-brothers, Bishop Odo and Count Robert (d. 1095). In Normandy, William invested his brothers with positions of power and authority from which they could bolster ducal governance. In 1049, Robert was granted the county of Mortain in the aftermath of its confiscation from the Duke's cousin, William Wernlec, while in the same year the teenage Odo was implanted into the bishopric of Bayeux.<sup>432</sup> Numbering amongst the principal beneficiaries of the Conquest, as a result of their close ties of affinity and political cooperation with the new royal regime, both brothers accumulated vast estates in England which included the granting of the earldom of Kent to Bishop Odo and the incorporation of virtually the entirety of Cornwall into Robert's landed interests.<sup>433</sup>

The two heavily participated in royal service and the maintenance of their half-brother's rule in the tumultuous years following the Conquest, engaging in direct military service and acting as deputies in royal government. Bishop Odo and

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<sup>430</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 119.

<sup>431</sup> George Garnett, 'Ducal Succession in Early Normandy', in *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy*, pp. 80-111 at p.98; Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 296.

<sup>432</sup> David Bates, 'The Conqueror's Adolescence' in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, XXV (2003), p. 9.

<sup>433</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 58.

Count Robert were not illegitimate, being the product of a licit marriage between the Conqueror's mother Herleva and Herluin de Conteville which meant that while they were the Conqueror's half-brothers and lieutenants, heavily invested in his success and prosperity, their affinity with him was their only connection to ducal family identity, having no direct claims to either ducal or now royal titles.<sup>434</sup> This active and royally cultivated participation in a shared dynastic enterprise by close royal relatives, alienated from the succession, then has strong parallels to the manner in which Robert of Gloucester and other Anglo-Norman illegitimate royal members were deployed and utilised by their legitimate patrons. Robert of Gloucester was the first illegitimate Anglo-Norman royal family member to be raised to comital status within England in the twelfth century and while the form and function that this process took was heavily informed by an evolving political and cultural context, foremost of which was the increasing cultural and legal stigma of illegitimacy, this strategy of empowering members of the wider family group with limited prospects of legal inheritance has substantial precedent and was in keeping with larger aristocratic trends regarding the distribution and retention of family's resources.

The primary challenges in attempting to examine the extent and composition of Earl Robert of Gloucester's household and wider political affinities is the relatively small pool of surviving charters and financial evidence from his tenure as earl. This scarcity of evidence is due, in part, to the fragmentary survival of the Pipe Rolls from this period which was exacerbated by an ongoing process of bureaucratic experimentation and development of the mechanisms of royal government. One of the characteristics of administrative practices during the earl's lifetime, within both central and regional government, was a relative lack of standardisation in administrative and financial records which were largely produced when needed. The format differing between scribes utilised by the often-itinerant court or household which occasionally complicated their utility to future generations and indeed survival. Additionally, much of Robert's career, and surely the zenith of his temporal power and influence, took place during the dynastic conflicts and factionalism of King Stephen's reign in which Robert, alongside his

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<sup>434</sup> Elisabeth van Houts, 'The Origins of Herleva, Mother of William the Conqueror', *English Historical Review*, 101 (1986), pp. 399-404 at p. 399.



regional and political affinities, functioned largely autonomously from the mechanism of royal government. However, Robert's contemporary importance and active participation in first his father's efforts to exert authority over the Anglo-Norman realm and then the prosecution of his half-sister's claim to the throne means that he and his allies appear frequently in a variety of chronicler sources whose accounts contain fragmentary details of his landed interests, spheres of influence and associates. This alongside surviving charter evidence and the greater body of evidence from Earl Robert's immediate heirs and successors makes it possible to broadly sketch the boundaries of the earl's domains and influence as well as the extent of his engagement and integration with regional networks of power.

As discussed in the previous Chapter, the identity of Robert's mother remains unknown and is the subject of some ongoing historiographical debate.<sup>435</sup> This obscurity is perhaps an indication that Robert's mother, whoever she was, brought him no great ties of familial affinity or access to aristocratic networks of power. The details of Robert's early life are largely unknown, beyond the likelihood that he spent a portion of his youth in Normandy and that his father made provisions for his education and schooling, making the presence of any maternal networks hard to detect. It is possible that Robert's father's accession to the throne significantly altered his living arrangements and that he was raised and educated in the household of one of his father's allies or advisors in a manner similar to his half-brother Richard's fostering with the bishop of Lincoln, Robert Bloet.<sup>436</sup> Certainly, his investiture with the newly created earldom of Gloucester does not seem to have been accompanied by the conspicuous arrival of a particularly prominent or favoured family to the region. John of Worcester's testimony that Robert was a "cognatus" or cousin of Philip Gai, his temporary castellan of Bristol castle, is compelling evidence for Stephen Crouch's theory that Robert's mother was a member of the Gai family from Oxford.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', *Historical Research*, 72 (1999), p. 323.

<sup>436</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. xxix.

<sup>416</sup> Crouch, 'Robert of Gloucester's Mother and Sexual Politics in Norman Oxfordshire', p. 339.

Although seemingly confirming a familial connection between the two, John of Worcester's account leaves the exact nature and degree of their relationship unclear, leaving open the possibility that Robert's mother came from a separate family with some connection to the Gai's.<sup>438</sup> Philip's role in protecting both Bristol castle and the earl's eldest son, William, during his absence certainly suggests Robert held him and his abilities in high esteem; a loyalty and relationship possible based upon a shared family identity and subsequent entanglement of interests.<sup>439</sup> There is, however, a notable absence of members of the Gai family in the witness lists of charters from either Earl Robert or his son William and it seems that outside of his position as one of the earl's military retainers, neither Philip nor any other members of the Gai family seems to have been incorporated into Robert's household or engage significantly with his broader political affinity. Earl Robert then seems to have made only limited use of his maternal connections in the establishment and expansion of his powerbase, possibly as a result of their insubstantiality or perhaps because of their redundancy to the earl who was an active participant in royal familial identity.

The nucleus of Robert's earldom was provided by lands he gained from his marriage to the wealthy heiress, Mabel Fitzhamon, which were then enhanced by substantial grants from the royal demesne. Mabel's father, Robert Fitzhamon, was reputed to be a distant relative of the Conqueror and had constructed a large powerbase and accompanying political affinity through his generously rewarded support of King William Rufus in the rebellion of 1088 and his territorial acquisitions in southern Wales, which he consolidated into the honour of Glamorgan, centred on Cardiff castle.<sup>440</sup> It remains unclear at exactly which point Mabel, who was only a child at the time of her father's death in 1107, married Robert although the marriage certainly occurred by 1114 and predated the creation of the earldom by a number of years. In 1114, King Henry I confirmed by charter that Tewkesbury abbey, which had been re-founded and heavily patronised by Mabel's father, was permitted to retain all the same exemptions and rights under the lordship of Robert, the king's son, as they had held under the tenure of their

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<sup>438</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 248.

<sup>439</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 248.

<sup>440</sup> Lynn Nelson, *The Normans in South Wales 1070-1171* (Houston, 2012), p. 94.

previous lord.<sup>441</sup> The implication of the king's charter and the need for Tewkesbury to gain confirmation of its status at this junction is that Robert had only recently acquired lordship over the abbey and its surrounding lands. This timeframe for Robert's marriage and the assumption of authority over his wife's inheritance is supported by the fact that Robert only begins to appear as a witness to his father's charters in 1113, suggesting that it was during this period he became politically active and engaged with the advancement of a shared royal dynastic enterprise. Robert's charter to the monks of Rochester in which he confirms the use of land at Great Marlow, originally granted to them by his father-in-law Robert Fitzhamon identifies him only as Robert, the son of King Henry.<sup>442</sup> Whilst the date of the charter is unknown, the absence of Robert's comital title suggests that it was issued before the creation of the earldom in 1121 and that before this date Robert was already exerting control and authority over the lands he now held through his wife and actively involved in their regulation and administration.

Indeed, Robert seems to have been supremely confident in the management and dispensation of the land and property brought to him by his marriage, making no distinction either theoretical or practical between it and the grants he received from the royal demesne. The earl's charters generally never make any mention of his wife's right or contain the intimation that he is acting on her behalf to preserve and manage her familial interests. Instead, the authority and to a lesser extent the legality of his charters be they grants, confirmations or agreements rest upon his status as the son of Henry I and position as earl of Gloucester, an earldom which after all was created specifically to enhance his power and dignity. While Countess Mabel is almost always afforded precedence within those witness lists in which she appears, it seems that the main criteria for her inclusion in the witnessing and ratification of her husband's charters was availability rather than content.<sup>443</sup> The countess simply witnessing those charters that were issued when she happened to be present rather than specifically those pertaining to her inheritance.

The primary exception to this can be found in the foundation charter of the Cistercian Margam abbey issued by Robert in 1147 which makes specific mention

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<sup>441</sup> *RRAN*, Volume II, No 1069.

<sup>442</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.166.

<sup>443</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.84.

of the countess' consent to the foundation and an acknowledgement that the lands assigned for the support of the abbey are drawn from her inheritance in southern Wales.<sup>444</sup> It is unclear exactly why this charter, which otherwise conforms to Robert's usually adopted title and style of address, differs in this regard but it seems likely that this rare acknowledgement of the countess' rights comes from a desire for the clarity and permanency of the charter on the part of the earl and the nascent monastic community. Necessitating the assertion of a legal position which was in practice usually dispensed with as a result of the circumstances of their marriage and Robert's engagement with royal family identity. It is also possible that since the charter was issued shortly before the earl's death, at a time of compromise and reconciliation with King Stephen, Robert now lacked the autonomy and royal favour that had previously allowed him to sweep such legal niceties aside.

Interestingly, following the earl's death and the succession of their son, William, to the earldom, Mabel can be found issuing a number of charters alongside her son and was even given priority over William in the address clause of their restitutions to Bishop Jocelin of Salisbury, issued shortly after Robert's death in either 1147 or 1148.<sup>445</sup> This practice of emphasising Mabel's rights and the cooperation between mother and son likely arises from the thorny legal issues related to William's succession to the honour of Glamorgan and an earldom composed, in no small part, of Mabel's own inheritance prior to her death at a time where legal practice and the law courts were becoming increasingly prevalent and sophisticated, particularly in matter of inheritance. Indeed, as part of the settlement between the two, it seems that Mabel took over the management of the family's lands within Normandy.<sup>446</sup> This concern while reflecting advancing cultural norms and changing inheritance patterns within the shifting networks of aristocratic family interests, also to an extent, displays the benefits and leeway that could be afforded Anglo-Norman royal bastards as a result of their participation in royal familial identity.

Robert prominently proclaimed his royal heritage as one of his primary means of self-identification throughout his charters and consistently describes

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<sup>444</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.199.

<sup>445</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.171.

<sup>446</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.171.

himself as Robert, son of the king.<sup>447</sup> Robert was, as has already been noted, an active participant in royal family identity and went to considerable lengths to emphasise his personal dignity and adopt the trappings of royal authority, despite his illegitimacy. While engaged supporting both his father and half-sister in their attempts to maintain and exert royal authority, Robert's strong ties of familial affinity not only led to his participation in a shared dynastic enterprise but also contributed to a keen appreciation of his own status and importance.

Rather than describing himself with the Latin word 'comes' to represent his comital rank within his charters, as was done by his contemporaries amongst the earls and counts of the Anglo-Norman hegemony, Robert, who is noted by both his principal biographers William of Malmesbury and Geoffrey of Monmouth of being the recipient of an extensive classical education, adopted the more ancient and classical style of 'consul'. Although it was still linked explicitly to his control of the earldom of Gloucester 'consul' was a grander title than that of 'comes', which was derived from the Latin term for companions, and held strong almost imperial connotations of executive power and vice-regal status<sup>448</sup>. This unique use of the title, an affectation later dropped by his son, displays not only Robert's strong affinity with his legitimate royal family members but also his own ambitions for personal autonomy and authority over the aristocratic and regional networks which he presided over.

In a similar manner and further experimenting with allusions to royal authority, Robert not only initially promoted his half-brother Reginald de Dunstanville to the earldom of Cornwall under his own authority but also began to mint and distribute coinage in his own name within the bounds of his territorial affinities.<sup>449</sup> Robert was emulated in this by his son-in-law Earl Ranulf of Chester and while likely succeeding in emphasising Robert's authority and prestige within his domains, the earl's numismatic exploits also greatly contributed to the breaking

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<sup>447</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, p. 22.

<sup>448</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, Nos. 82, 83, 157, 68, 84, 119, 42, 283, 162; R. B. Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester: A Re-evaluation of the *Historia Novella*', *American Historical Review*, 70 (1964–5), pp. 983–97 at p. 988.

<sup>449</sup> Davies, *The Age of Conquest: Wales 1063–1415*, p. 41.

of the royal monopoly over coinage and an increase in political factionalism and regionalism.<sup>450</sup>

The extent and composition of Earl Robert's landed interests are difficult to ascertain given the only fragmentary survival of rolls of taxation and other financial records. Which is further compounded by Robert's high level of royally enabled autonomy and administrative digression during both his father's reign and again throughout the intermittent regional and political dislocation of Stephen's. In 1166 the earldom, now held by Robert's son William, contained 274.5 Knight's Fees which were further supplemented by its associated honour of Glamorgan which was assessed for a further 47.5 Fees.<sup>451</sup> The relative stability of the first half of Henry II's reign, at least in terms of the great magnates and their estates, within England as well as frequently employed rhetoric of restoration and continuity with the reign of his royal grandfather Henry I, suggest that William's dual honours were likely a close approximation in terms of size and boundaries to what they had been under Earl Robert. When comparing these holdings to those of other magnates in the 1120s' or even amongst subsequent Anglo-Norman or Angevin illegitimate royal family members raised to earldoms, it is clear that in attempting to stabilise his rule and establish Robert as a bulwark within the Welsh Marchers, Henry I turned his eldest illegitimate son into a magnate with few peers in terms of power and wealth. Robert's single greatest financial and military asset within England was his control of Bristol castle and its surrounding city.

Bristol, was at the time of the earldom's creation, amongst England's greatest cities and towns, behind only York and London in terms of wealth and populace.<sup>452</sup> The revenue generated from Bristol, based upon rents and tenures held there from the time of the earl's father-in-law, Robert Fitzhamon, constituted the single largest source of income within the earldom. As the primary administrative centre of the earldom and focus of Robert's political affinity, the defence and retention of Bristol castle during the civil war was of paramount importance to the earl, who in his absence delegated its defence to relatives engaged in the service

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<sup>450</sup> Oliver H. Creighton and Duncan W. Wright, *The Anarchy, War and Status in Twelfth Century Landscapes of Conflict* (Liverpool, 2016), p. 137.

<sup>451</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 97.

<sup>452</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, p. 4.

and support of their shared familial interests, his eldest son William and his likely cousin Philip Gai.<sup>453</sup> Robert also employed this strategy in his other principal English stronghold, Gloucester castle when he installed one of his illegitimate children Robert FitzRobert as castellan. The younger Robert seems to have thrived as a result of the office and its accompanying incomes and in 1147 married a daughter of Earl Baldwin de Redvers of Devon.<sup>454</sup> Following the earl's death and the accession of Henry II to the throne in 1154, control of Bristol castle became an issue of some contention between Earl William and his royal cousin who not only garrisoned the castle but furnished the city with an extensive charter of rights.<sup>455</sup>

In Wales, Robert significantly strengthened and expanded the honour of Glamorgan in the 1120s, waging several expansionary campaigns against the Afan family and its allies on his lordships western frontiers.<sup>456</sup> The earl reorganised these acquisitions into the lordship of Neath which was held on a tenurial basis by Mabel's uncle, Richard de Grenville (d. 1142). Richard in his witnessing to one of Robert's charters issued within Glamorgan some time before 1143 is styled as a constable of the earl of Gloucester.<sup>457</sup> This appointment which invested Richard with considerable control and authority over the earl's most vulnerable frontier, along with his status as one of Robert's primary tenants within Wales, shows that Robert cooperated closely with his wife's family and was able to effectively integrate with the existing regional and familial aristocratic affinities, mobilising them to participate in the maintenance and expansion of his own wider network. The town at Neath, which had likely grown up around the monastery founded there by Richard de Grenville in 1130 prospered to the extent that Earl William endowed the burgesses with a charter of liberties based upon that those his father had implemented in Cardiff and Newport.<sup>458</sup>

One of key factors in Robert's successful expansion into the culturally and politically permeable Welsh frontier, as well as the continued stability and consolidation of his administration, came from his establishment of a concordant

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<sup>453</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, III, p. 248.

<sup>454</sup> Nelson, *The Normans in South Wales 1070-1171*, p. 94.

<sup>455</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, (1901), Volume I, p. 31.

<sup>456</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 43.

<sup>457</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 283.

<sup>458</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 46.

with the Church in southern Wales. In a region with a strongly perceived, yet for the aristocracy at least increasingly ill-defined, delineation between different ethno-linguistic groups, the establishment of a working relationship with a clergy whose membership was derived primarily from the native Welsh was of great importance. In 1126 Robert reached a formalised agreement with the energetic Anglo-Welsh Bishop Urban of Llandaff, whose occupation of the dioceses had been formally recognised by Archbishop Lanfranc in 1107, in which the two agreed to cooperate with one another in the defence of their mutually recognised rights.<sup>459</sup>

Countess Mabel's father held a hereditary claim through his own grandfather Hamon de Creully on the Norman lordships of Creully, Mézy, Torigny, and Evrecy, although the extent to which Robert Fitzhamon was able to maintain these claims or exercise authority within these lordships is unclear. Through his marriage to Mabel, Earl Robert gained the honours of St Scholasse-sur-Sarthe and Evrecy in Normandy which contained ten knight's fees which strongly suggests that the Countess' family had been able to retain control of these territories.<sup>460</sup> The 1128 concordat made between Earl Robert and Abbot Roger of Fécamp abbey in which the earl offered the abbey significant rights and patronage, suggests that Robert was wielding considerable influence within the area and that he may also have been gifted or otherwise recovered lands around the nearby honour of Creully.<sup>461</sup>

While the majority of Robert's landed interests lay within the British Isles, on either side of the Welsh border, the Haimon family lands in Normandy raised him to the status of a cross channel magnate. This inheritance provided him with an anchor and resources in the duchy to which he frequently operated within either to attend his father's itinerant court or participate in the numerous military campaigns to protect Normandy from its rapacious neighbours and rival claimants to the ducal throne. Several years after Robert's death, his royal nephew, Henry II, confirmed by charter an agreement between the earl and the abbey of Saint-Evroul pertaining

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<sup>459</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 109; David Crouch, *Llandaff Episcopal Acta, 1140-1287* (Cardiff, 1988), no. 5.

<sup>460</sup> Lewis C. Lloyd, *The Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families*, (Baltimore, 1951), p. 88.

<sup>461</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 70.



to the control of the church at Sap and the distribution of its considerable income.<sup>462</sup> This charter not only testifies to the extension of Robert's landed interests in Normandy to the lands around Saint-Evroul and its environs, but also strongly emphasises Robert's relationship and affinity with the Anglo-Norman family within its text.

During the dynastic struggle between the rival claimants for the Anglo-Norman throne, Robert took advantage of his initial occupancy in Normandy and its successful invasion by his Angevin brother-in-law, Count Geoffrey, to increase his land holdings within the area and reassert his wife's hereditary claims. The majority of this expansion into the Bessin came at the expense of royalist aligned families within the area, such as his acquisition of the Lacy's estates within the area and the lands formerly belonging to Eudo Dapifer. The Lacy family which held considerable lands in Yorkshire and within the Welsh Marshes of Shropshire were firm supporters of Stephen and while not numbering amongst the foremost ranks of the aristocracy, it seems clear that Earl Robert was eager to prosecute the reduction of a royalist aligned family on the boundaries of his natural territorial affinity.<sup>463</sup> Eudo Dapifer had been the Conqueror's steward and continued to perform the same role in the royal households of William Rufus and Henry I. When he died in 1120, Henry I rather than letting his lands pass to his son-in-law, William de Mandeville, instead gifted them to Stephen; this royal ownership possibly making them a priority target in Robert's Norman expansion.<sup>464</sup> Other territorial acquisitions following Robert's rebellions in 1138, however, seems to have been opportunistic in nature featuring the absorption of the lands of middling aristocrats either unwilling or unable to directly align with and contribute to the Angevin cause such as in the case of the Malfiliastre tenure and lands previously held by Roger Suhart in 1133 which were valued at seven and eight knight's fees respectively.<sup>465</sup>

Robert also occupied lands belonging to his son-in-law, the Earl Ranulf of Chester in 1146 when Ranulf, looking to secure the best deal in England where most of his lands lay, re-joined Stephen's faction so placing his Norman lands under

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<sup>462</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, CCXIV p. 350.

<sup>463</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.1544.

<sup>464</sup> *RRAN*, Volume I, Nos. 399, 435, 442.

<sup>465</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, p. 35.

threat of confiscation by the Angevin party claimants who dominated Normandy. It seems likely then that Robert's swift occupation of these territories was an attempt to preserve them within the extended family and circumvent their possible forfeiture. If this is the case, it could be possible to represent Earl Robert's prioritising the preservation of his own constructed aristocratic affinity and connections, over the interests of royal familial identity. Although Ranulf's Norman land hardly represent a great loss to the Angevin faction within Normandy and indeed the arrangement may have been a result of an agreement formed in part as a result of Robert's connections and royal affinities.

Entrusting confiscated land to a more reliable member of a familial affinity was relatively common practice. Eudo Dapifer, for example, was granted custody over the lands forfeited as a result of William de Mandeville's failure to keep Ranulf Flambard incarcerated.<sup>466</sup> Earl Robert came to wield considerable influence in the Bessin region of Angevin aligned Normandy, a state of affairs facilitated by the installation of his eldest illegitimate son, Richard FitzRobert, as the bishop of Bayeux in 1135. Indeed, this promotion of familial resources in the furtherance of shared dynastic advance benefited the earl so much that Richard's successor, Bishop Philip, began legal proceedings against the earl as a result of his claim of certain fees within the region. Robert came to an agreement with Philip regarding his control of the region and the exploitation of its financial resources in 1146 in order to avoid either excommunication or bringing his lands under interdict.<sup>467</sup> A necessity which alongside Reginald's temporary excommunication in 1140, by the bishop of Exeter, displays the potential limitations of support derived from engagement with royal family identity and political alignment within ecclesiastical affairs, particularly at time of political fraction and division.

As a result of a high-level engagement with his familial identity and extensive service to his legitimate family members, Robert was afforded a number of rights and privileges within his earldom which provided him with additional streams of revenue and bound the aristocratic and political networks of the region closer towards him and as a result further into alignment with his royal patrons and

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<sup>466</sup> *RRAN*, Volume II, Nos.519, 553, 661, 688.

<sup>467</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 6.

family members. This process and Robert's use of the trappings of royal authority were accentuated and expanded by the outbreak of warfare in 1138 and Robert's subsequent dislocation from a centralised and active royal administration. The foremost example of this use of executive power by the king's son was his vassalage and control over the sheriffs of the earldom of Gloucester. Both the chroniclers, William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester, claim that when Henry I created the earldom of Gloucester, he subordinated the sheriffs of the county to his newly empowered son.<sup>468</sup>

This investment of authority and royal privilege was, in the shifting world of Anglo-Norman politics and continually transmitting networks of power, far more than a simply an administrative or clerical distinction. The revised edition of William of Malmesbury's histories was patronised by Robert, to whom it is dedicated to, while John of Worcester an English chronicler was writing at the behest of Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, whose diocese actually included the earldom of Gloucester and therefore could hardly help but have been exceptionally well informed upon the composition and form of the earl's regional administration. Both sources then were close to the earl and the inner workings of his political affinity and would have been well aware of the importance of such an award from the king. The, at least nominal, vassalage and subordination of Miles, one of the hereditary sheriffs of Gloucester before his elevation to the earldom of Hereford in 1141 as a result of his rise in Empress Matilda's court, can be seen in Earl Robert's confirmation of a grant to St Peter's abbey made on behalf of Mile's grandmother Adeliza.<sup>469</sup> While the exact date that the charter was issued is unknown, Miles' description in the witness list and his identification as constable of Gloucester means it cannot have been issued before 1126 when Miles succeeded his father to the office. Robert's confirmation of a donation made by Walter's family heavily implies political oversight and superiority while the wording of the charter in which Robert retains his rights and customs due from the donated lands shows that this lordship over the county's sheriffs and their lands extended to a legal and proprietary reality.<sup>470</sup> Robert also exercised considerable control over the cities of

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<sup>468</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, III, p. 56; Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester', p. 988.

<sup>469</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 83.

<sup>470</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 83.

Cardiff and Tewkesbury, the burgesses of which both received a charter of rights and freedoms from the earl which was closely based on the ones granted to Hereford by William FitzOsbern.<sup>471</sup> The earl, however, maintained control of the appointment of the town's constables as his deputies within the area and used them to exert influence over the distribution of land and revenues arising from the towns.

### 3.5 The Household and Political Networks of Reginald of Cornwall

In a manner similar to Robert, contemporary sources pertaining directly to Reginald's landed interests are few and far between. The primary causes of this obscurity are the circumstances and means by which Reginald established control over his earldom. Reginald was charged by his half-siblings, Earl Robert of Gloucester and eventually Empress Matilda, in 1140 near the height of the dynastic conflict's military intensity to secure his new earldom for the Angevin cause. Anchored into the region's political networks and familial affinities through his marriage to Mabel, the daughter of newly turned Angevin ally, William FitzRichard the Lord of Cardinan, Reginald and his father-in-law embarked upon a diplomatic and military campaign to exert hegemony over the county.<sup>472</sup> While initially thwarted by a concerted effort by King Stephen and his own earl of Cornwall and Richmond, Alan the Black, in 1141 their capture in rapid success by the earl of Chester and his allies allowed Reginald to dominate and fortify the earldom.<sup>473</sup> He was then able to maintain it as a stronghold of the Angevin cause in England through to the rapprochement between King Stephen and Reginald's nephew, Duke Henry of Normandy, whose initial campaigns in England in 1153 he had supported, and which led to Henry's eventual succession.<sup>474</sup>

Reginald's exertion of control over his newly re-founded, although culturally and geographically well-defined, earldom by direct military action and coercion in the absence of interaction with the royal government and with only limited recourse to or acceptance of higher royal authority means that evidence for the composition of the earldom and Reginald's networks of authority and power within it, prior to the reign of Henry II is extremely difficult to find. The obscurity is

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<sup>471</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No. 163.

<sup>472</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 37.

<sup>473</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 102.

<sup>474</sup> David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p.306; *RRAN*, Volume III, No. 796.

further complicated as a result of Reginald's close alliance and affinity with Henry II and his status as the senior remaining male member of the Anglo-Norman royal household. Within the earldom of Cornwall, Reginald was permitted extraordinary vice-regal powers and privileges, farming his domains, using sheriffs, he controlled with virtual independence from the Exchequer and other organs of the increasingly sophisticated royal government, leading to a scarcity of certain kinds of financial sources that relate to the earldom.<sup>475</sup>

This means that much of the evidence for the composition and form of Reginald's own domains and political affinity comes from his own charters and those royal financial records pertaining to the earldom created after the earl's death in 1175 and the county's reabsorption into the royal demesne. The Pipe Rolls for Cornwall and Devon well into John's reign make continued mention of lands formerly held by the king's uncle, Reginald. While holding no official post within his nephew's government, beyond his role as frequent royal confidant and perhaps the connotation's inherent to his rank of earl, William of Canterbury describes Reginald and Earl Robert Beaumont as the two most powerful magnates in the England during the opening decades of Henry II's reign.<sup>476</sup> William was the deacon of Christ Church priory who wrote a hagiography of Thomas Becket who he had previously served; his connection to the archbishop and former Chancellor making him a reliable source on contemporary perceptions of the magnates and royal court. Perhaps, unsurprisingly given his relationship with Becket, William was a notable critic of Henry II, although it seems unlikely that this would lead him to misrepresent the influence and power of members of the king's inner circle. Indeed, William recounts that he was personally acquainted with Reginald and his household having tried to insinuate himself into his service in order to gain access to the royal court.<sup>477</sup> In addition to the prestige and influence created by his participation in royal familial identity and long running support for his nephew, Reginald was in the foremost ranks of the aristocracy in terms of wealth and temporal power; the earldom of Cornwall containing within it 215 knight's fees which placed it within the top five richest English honours.<sup>478</sup> From 1162 until the

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<sup>475</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 99.

<sup>476</sup> *Becket Materials*, p. 16.

<sup>477</sup> Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley, 1986), p. 230.

<sup>478</sup> Keefe Pipe Roll Evidence, p. 195.

time of his death, Reginald also exercised control of the earldom of Devon which he held in guardianship for his grandson which brought a further 131 knights fees under the earl's oversight.<sup>479</sup>

Reginald took care to emphasise his royal heritage and affinity within his own charters and consistently styled himself as the son of King Henry.<sup>480</sup> Although interestingly, on occasion in the witness list of non-royal charters originating from within his own regional and familial affinities, he is described simply as Earl Reginald which is perhaps an acknowledgment that his comital title and role within wider familial affinities were more relevant in certain situations than his royal parentage. One example of this practice is in witnessing his brother-in-law, Richard FitzWilliams' donation to Launceston Priory, sometime in the late 1150s or early 1160s, of the rents derived from the lands of Tregear and mill of Castle Milford for the benefit of the soul of Reginald's late wife Countess Mabel.<sup>481</sup> Although of course since Reginald was only witnessing his brother-in-law's gift, alongside his son-in-law, Richard of Devon, the charter was presumably drawn up by a scribe outside of his household and may not have been formulated exactly in keeping with the earl's preferences.

Within his own charters, in contrast to his elder half-brother Earl Robert, Reginald represented his title of earl of Cornwall with the widely utilised permutation '*comes*' rather than adopt a more unique or prestigious style to reflect his royal affinity.<sup>482</sup> He did, however, emulate Robert in his willingness to issue charters on the basis of his royal heritage and comital status without feeling the need to include the consent of his wife or exert her rights. This is clearly, in part at least, a result of the circumstances around which Reginald gained the earldom which was reconstituted for him as result of his potential utility to a shared royal dynastic enterprise. The *Gesta Stephani* claims that Earl Reginald's wife suffered from a rapid deterioration in her mental health over the course of the 1140s which could further explain her obscurity within the charter records as well as her apparent alienation from the governance and maintenance of her husband's affinity.<sup>483</sup> Of

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<sup>479</sup> Keefe Pipe Roll Evidence, p. 195.

<sup>480</sup> PR, XII, p. 129.

<sup>481</sup> PR, XXI p. 93.

<sup>482</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37, Appendix II, p. 11.

<sup>483</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 102

course, while its authorship remains a subject of historiographical debate, the broader consensus being that it originates from a cathedral chapter in southern England, the narrative presented within the *Gesta Stephani* displays a strong favouritism for King Stephen and his royalist party. The *Gesta Stephani*'s revelations about Mabel's mental health are presented as one of manifestations of misfortune that afflicted Reginald following his excommunication and in retribution for the great level of violence he was alleged to employ in his campaign to secure the earldom of Cornwall.<sup>484</sup>

It is possible then, that the chronicle's claims about Mabel's condition, which were likely formulated at a time in which Reginald, as a stalwart of the Angevin cause in England, remained one of the king's foremost opponents, are either an invention or heavily exaggerated. It remains unclear if Reginald's marriage to Mabel brought him any lands outside the reasonably modest lordship of Cardinan and even whether or not this transfer was carried out during her father's lifetime. It seems likely that the majority of the earl's lands within Cornwall were gained during his attempts to gain control of the county and expel Stephen's supporters or through the application of royally sourced rights and administrative privileges within the earldom. During his guardianship of his grandsons, Earl Baldwin and William, Reginald took great care to emphasise within charters pertaining to the confirmation or gift of land within Devon that he was acting on Baldwin's behalf.<sup>485</sup>

Maintained and raised within their grandfather's household, following the death of their father in 1162, as the young earl and his brother grew older, Reginald began to include them in the witness lists of his own charters and the distribution of landed interests in Cornwall to members of his maternal aristocratic affinity in the early 1170s.<sup>486</sup> This guardianship and Reginald's lengthy period of control over Devon, in which he was able to wield considerable authority, allowed Reginald to build the two counties and their overlapping and conjoined aristocratic and ecclesiastical networks into a formidable power base in South West of England. Indeed, its power and internal cohesion may have contributed to Henry II's

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<sup>484</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 102.

<sup>485</sup> *PR*, XII, p. 129.

<sup>486</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37, Appendix II 15a, 15b

intercession in the distribution of Reginald's inheritance following the earl's death. This state of affairs emerged as a result of the long running and actively cultivated affinity between Reginald and the de Redvers family. Reginald's arrival in his half-sister's powerbase in Anjou in 1136 coincides with that of Baldwin, following his banishment from England by Stephen in the wake of his failed regionally centred rebellion.<sup>487</sup>

It is possible then that Reginald accompanied Baldwin and they had an existing affiliation, both having strong familial interest and ties within the region. Orderic Vitalis notes that the two cooperated closely together and engaged in active military service on the Empress Matilda's behalf, ravaging royalist aligned lands within the Cotentin together in 1138.<sup>488</sup> If Orderic's claims about the rapaciousness of this campaign and the duo's apparent focus on looting is to be believed, it would suggest that Reginald and Baldwin were already working together for their mutual benefit and advancement, while operating under the larger umbrella of the Angevin network. Following their elevations to the earldoms of Cornwall and Devon as result of their connection and utility to the Angevin cause, the two magnates continued to cooperate with one another and coordinate their activities to further secure and advance their hold over South West England.

This political affinity was reinforced and the two families' interest further entangled when Baldwin's eldest son and principal heir, Richard, married one of Reginald's daughters, Denise, following the death of his first wife Emma, the sister of one of his Devonshire vassals, Robert de Pont de l'Arche, sometime in the early to mid-1150s.<sup>489</sup> While Reginald was a long-time associate and ally of the de Redvers family, his guardianship of his grandson, the young earl and his, at least partial, assumption of control over committal governance and affairs, potentially excluded other politically active and engaged members of the de Redvers family. While there were no formalised rules or structure for the appointment of guardians of minors outside of its status as a royal right, Richard's younger brother, William de Redvers, sometimes identified as William de Vernon, could perhaps under normal circumstances have been expected to assume this position since it kept the

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<sup>487</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 32.

<sup>488</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V & VI, VI, p.510.

<sup>489</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37, p. 12.



family's lands and interests firmly attached to the stem of the family. In fact, William can be found alongside his nephews in the witness lists of the charter in which Reginald confirming a gift of land to his maternal cousin, William de Botrell, which suggests a significant level of cooperation or perhaps even temporary absorption of members of the de Redver family and its associates into Reginald's affinity and administrative apparatus.<sup>490</sup> It remains unclear though if the extent to which Reginald's dominance of the region and guardianship of the area was a result of his connections and natural affinities with Devon and the de Redvers or if it was enabled by his affinity and influence with the king.

In addition to the considerable royal favour he received as a result of his service and participation in a royal dynastic enterprise, in the creation and maintenance of his local administration and networks of power, Reginald made considerable use of his wider familial affinities and connections, the mobilisation of which allowed him to exert considerable influence throughout his domains. Reginald's intervention, on behalf of his half-brother and fellow royal bastard Robert FitzEdith with their royal nephew, Henry II, in arranging his marriage to the heiress of Oakhampton, Matilda d'Avranches, suggests that they remained aware and engaged with their shared familial identity and that Robert may have previously operated within his half-brother's affinity. The succession of a close ally and family member to the quite considerable honour of Oakhampton in Devon, which contained ninety four knight's fees, can only have increased Reginald's influence and ability to project authority within the area, drawing the county and its interconnected aristocratic networks and landed interests further into the earl's political affinity.<sup>491</sup>

Additionally, in 1146 Reginald's sister, Rhose, likely his maternal half-sister since no mention is made of any possible royal heritage, married Henry de Pomeroy who held land within both Cornwall and Devon, further spreading Reginald's familial and political connections throughout his earldom and its surrounding regions.<sup>492</sup> Following her husband's death in the early 1170s Reginald

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<sup>490</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Appendix II 15b.

<sup>491</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 35.

<sup>492</sup> Judith Green, 'Family Matters: Family and the Formation of the Empress's Party in South-West England', in Katharine Keats-Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The*

gifted his sister with the manor of Roseworthy in Cornwall in order to contribute to her maintenance. Amongst the witnesses of this gift are Reginald's half-brothers, Herbert and William Fitz Herbert suggesting the continuation and active nature of familial ties between Reginald and his maternal half-siblings.<sup>493</sup> As discussed in the previous Chapter, Reginald's mother Sybil was almost certainly a member of the Dunstanville family, a toponym which Orderic Vitlais applies to Reginald. Although Reginald never adopted the use of the toponym himself in either the dispensing, reissuing or witnessing of charters, its use by a source as well informed as Orderic Vitalis, who provides reliable details regarding the structure and composition of the royal household shows that his affiliation with the Dunstanvilles was well known within aristocratic circles and already extant by the time of his promotion to earl. Sybil was certainly affiliated with the Corbert familial connection which Reginald maintained and utilised. In 1172, he confirmed to his cousin, William de Botrell, land in Penheale and Widemouth which he had gifted to William's father in recognition of his service to the earl. He further confirmed to William, lands in Crackington and Beeny in Cornwall which the earl had originally granted to his Aunt Alice Corbert at the time of her marriage to William's father.<sup>494</sup>

Reginald eventually came into control of a considerable portion of the Dunstanville lands in Wiltshire and testified on behalf of their previous ownership to his Aunt Gundra de Dunstanville during a legal case of the disputed inheritance. Kathleen Thompson in her examination of Henry I's illegitimate children, proposes a convincing solution to this conundrum which is that Sybil was the daughter of Reginald and Adeliza de Dunstanville and that following Reginald's death, Adeliza married Robert Corbet.<sup>495</sup> Adeliza's benefaction in Tewkesbury abbey proves that her husband predeceased her, while a marriage to the Corbet's, another family operating within the Montgomery sphere of influence, is a natural step. Her children with Robert Corbet would then have been Sybil's half siblings and thus Earl Reginald's aunt and uncle as described in his charters and later legal cases. This theory fits well with both Sybil and Reginald who are both frequently associated

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*Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 147-164 at p. 147.

<sup>493</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37 Appendix II, No. 15a.

<sup>494</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37 Appendix II, No. 15b.

<sup>495</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 146.

with the Dunstanville family, interestingly given that the names of Henry I's other sons were drawn from the Norman ducal staples. Furthermore, if Alice Corbet was the product of a second marriage on her mother's part and substantially younger than her sister, it would explain why Reginald was in a position to gift land to his aunt on the occasion of her marriage.<sup>496</sup>

Whatever the exact nature of their relationship, Reginald's association with the Dunstanville family was clearly a familial one and its members frequently appear within the witness lists of his charters or engaged within his service. One of the primary examples of this was the clerk, Hugh de Dunstanville, a long serving member of his household who was made protector of the earl's still minor grandchildren after his death, later transitioning into the household of Earl Baldwin III of Devon and can be found witnessing a notification alongside the two brothers of the sale of land to Breamore Priory by Robert son of Liger and his wife Adeliz in the early 1180s. The connection with Earl Reginald introduced the Dunstanville family into the wider Plantagenet aligned affinity during the civil war and Alan de Dunstanville witnessed a charter given by Empress Matilda in 1141, alongside the earl.<sup>497</sup> Robert de Dunstanville himself a frequent witness of the earl's own charters appears to have also accompanied his kinsmen to the Angevin court as part of his retinue and witnessed acts by both the Empress and of the future Henry II. Following the king's accession to the throne in 1154, he is described as a royal steward, suggesting that he was able to parley his connection to Reginald into a career within the royal household. A lucrative career in the royal household receiving from the mid-1150s onwards the revenues of Heytesbury, Wiltshire and from about 1160 he received the revenues of Colyton in Devon.<sup>498</sup>

Yet another member of the extended Dunstanville clan was Richard de Dunstanville, a clerk and scribe in the service of Bishop Robert of Exeter who had strong connections to the cathedral at Canterbury.<sup>499</sup> The Diocese of Exeter extended over and had its financial and landed interests interlinked with both the

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<sup>496</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37, Appendix II 15b.

<sup>497</sup> Kathleen Thompson, 'de Dunstanvilles', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>498</sup> Kathleen Thompson, 'de Dunstanvilles', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>499</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Vol. 37, No. 46, No. 47.

earldoms of Cornwall and neighbouring Devon, making cooperation between earl and bishop an important prerequisite for both of them to effectively exercise authority within their spheres. Richard was perfectly placed to mediate between the earl and bishop if necessary, possibly intervening on his extended family's behalf. Indeed, his presence and acceptance within the bishop's retinue suggests that the two had a functional working relationship despite the difficulties between Reginald and Robert's predecessor. Robert was succeeded to the bishopric by one of this protégés and former archdeacons, Bartholomew Iscanus in 1161.

Similarly, Reginald seems to have forged an effective relationship with this wide-ranging bishop who appears in the position of precedents in the witness lists of several of the earl's charters.<sup>500</sup> Reginald was a patron of Launceston Priory which had grown out from the church of St Stephen in the town, although there seems to be no apparent paternal or maternal familial connection to the Augustinian house. The Priory was located in the vicinity of one of the earl's principal castles in which he was temporarily confined during his struggle to claim the earldom. In the mid-1150s Reginald gave alms and the part of the Chapel of Launceston to the developing priory, issuing his own charter as well as obtaining a confirmation from his royal nephew.<sup>501</sup> Reginald's patronage of the institution continued throughout his life and in 1174 he gifted the Priory the manors of Caradon and Rillionton as well as ownership of a mill near the earl's castle at Dunheved. There does, however, seem to have been some tension between the Priory and the earl, as part of this grant in 1174 Reginald also agreed to pay the canons of St Stephens a portion of the rents and dues of the castle in recompense for the tower of the church which he had apparently destroyed; perhaps as part of a construction programme at the castle or because of military concerns raised by the presence of the tower so near to the castle.<sup>502</sup> Whatever the possible cause of this dispute and the role of the tower within it, shortly after the earl's death Henry II, in reintegrating Reginald's power base and political affinities back into the royal demesne, was compelled to write

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<sup>500</sup> Beaman, *Charters of the Redvers Family*, Appendix II 15a 15b.

<sup>501</sup> *Cartulary of Launceston Priory* (Lambeth Palace MS. 719), ed. P.L. Hull, (Exeter,1987), ff.16v-17r, No. 27.

<sup>502</sup> *Cartulary of Launceston Priory*, ed. P.L. Hull, (Exeter,1987) ff.16v-17r, No. 539.

separately to both his Cornish bailiffs and the canons to keep the peace and refrain from violence with one another.<sup>503</sup>

Within the earldom of Cornwall Reginald wielded considerable vice-regal authority and the accompanying financial mechanism by which he utilised the advancement of his regional familial interests through the construction and maintenance of political affinities and relationships. In the early 1160s Reginald bestowed a number of privileges upon the burgesses of the expanding town of Truro which was originally fortified and issued a charter by the future Justiciar of England, Richard de Lucy in 1138 who was then allied with Reginald's rival Earl Alan of Richmond.<sup>504</sup> Earl Reginald granted the town's folk freedom from the jurisdiction from both the hundred and county court as well as exemption from tolls in the markets and fairs of the county. The address clause of this charter refers to both English and Cornishmen, suggesting that Reginald acknowledged the existence of overlapping regional and national identities present within his earldom although there is no evidence that this distinction actually held any weight or role within the law.<sup>505</sup>

### **3.6 The Household and Political Networks of Hamelin de Warenne**

Rather than a son of a king, Earl Hamelin of Surrey was the son of Count Geoffrey of Anjou and the paternal half-brother of Henry II whose claim to the throne and royal heritage was derived exclusively from his mother, the Empress Matilda and his status as a legitimate grandson of Henry I.<sup>506</sup> Hamelin's position then is an interesting one; rather than a royal bastard he is instead an illegitimate member of the extended royal family. While possessing a strong personal affinity with his royal half-brother and a participant and beneficiary of familial interests, this distinction had alongside advances in the development of the legal system and inheritance practise, a distinct effect upon the methods and manner in which he integrated with the regional affinity which his royal connections embedded him within.<sup>507</sup> The identity of Hamelin's mother, as well as the details of his early life

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<sup>503</sup> *Cartulary of Launceston Priory* ed. P.L. Hull, (Exeter, 1987) ff.16v-17r, Nos. 541, 542.

<sup>504</sup> Cornwall Records Office, Brtru/1.

<sup>505</sup> Cornwall Records Office, Brtru/1.

<sup>506</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, p. 18.

<sup>507</sup> Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*.

and upbringing, remain unknown although it can be presumed from the commencement of his career in 1164, relatively deep into his brother's reign, that he was born sometime in the late 1130s or 1140s during which time his father was successfully prosecuting a series of campaigns to subdue Normandy in support of his wife's claims to the Anglo-Norman realm and his own family's long standing dynastic objectives. Hamelin's elevation into the upper strata of the Angevin hegemonies' aristocratic networks was the direct result of the sudden death of his legitimate half-brother, William in 1164 at the height of Henry II's struggles with Archbishop Thomas Becket during the Investiture dispute.<sup>508</sup>

This then conforms to the pattern set by the previous two royal earls who were both promoted at times of crisis or instability, in which the monarch or royal claimant turns to an illegitimate member of their family whose engagement in family identity and otherwise limited prospects ensures their continued alignment with royal interests. The loss of William to Henry II, aside from its likely considerable personal impact, was a significant blow to Henry II's support within England at a time of political and constitutional friction which the king quickly moved to stabilise through the deployment of Hamelin, in pursuit of royal interests and the consolidation of his authority and influence within both the Church and aristocracy. At the Council of Northampton, in accordance with his royal brother's wishes, Hamelin unleashed a robust condemnation of the archbishop, building upon the aristocratic perception that Becket's supposedly malicious and politically motivated blocking of William's proposed marriage to Isabel de Warenne, on the grounds of their consanguinity, had a detrimental effect to the Prince's health and contributed to his death. Possibly as a reward for this service and support and in order facilitate his further utility to the advancement of royal interests through the alignment of aristocratic networks and affinities, Hamelin was married to his late brother's betrothed, Countess Isabel de Warenne of Surrey.<sup>509</sup>

Isabel was the only child of William de Warenne and his wife Adela which connected Isabel and her new husband to the Beaumont family, since her father was the maternal half-brother of Robert of Leicester and Waleran of Meulan as well as

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<sup>508</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, p. 206.

<sup>509</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, p. 206.

the counts of Ponthieu and Alençon on her mother's side.<sup>510</sup> Isabel's great grandfather, William had been created earl of Surrey by William Rufus and the family had held significant concentrations of land in the county since the immediate aftermath of the Conquest so they were deeply rooted within the region and had a strong local affinity. By the time of her marriage to Hamelin in 1164, Isabel was already a widow having previously been married to William of Blois, the youngest son of King Stephen, their marriage having been one of Stephen's principal pillars of support in the latter days of his reign; a support which with William's death on campaign in 1159<sup>511</sup> Henry II now sort to incorporate into his own powerbase.

Perhaps because of the tangential nature of his royal connection and lack of direct engagement with royal identity, while still supporting his royal half-brother and participating in the advancement and defence of royal dynastic enterprises, Hamelin integrated more fully with the aristocratic family and wider affinity which he was placed within. Hamelin's charters, for example, rarely make references to his royal connection and extensive familial ties; in Hamelin's gift to Lewes Priory made some time before 1202 of all the tithes derived from eels within Yorkshire for the souls of his relatives, his brother's royal status is mentioned only as a means of identification.<sup>512</sup> A clause of this gift was that the abbey undertake prayers for the souls of the earl's family, a list that included not only King Henry II and their father Count Geoffrey of Anjou but also his father-in-law, William de Warenne and his wife's ancestors. This shows that while Hamelin was aware of his own familial connections and certainly benefited considerably from his involvement and support of the regime, he was heavily integrated into the de Warenne family and keenly felt the obligation or perhaps political necessity to honour and care for them in the same way. Indeed, Hamelin seems to have adopted the de Warenne name as his own, referring to himself in his charters as Hamelin, earl of Warenne. This styling excludes not only the royal connections which made Hamelin's marriage and elevation possible but also the toponym of Surrey, a strategy which stressed Hamelin's membership and concordant with his adopted family while also building upon the conflation between the family and its long held comital title to further

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<sup>510</sup> H. M. Thomas, *Vassals, Heiresses, Crusaders, and Thugs: The Gentry of Angevin Yorkshire, 1154–1216* (1993).

<sup>511</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Volume 8, No. 51.

<sup>512</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Volume 8, No. 64.

spread their influence and authority through the region's aristocratic affinities.

Hamelin throughout his charters often carefully stressed the status of his wife, the hereditary countess, as his co-ruler and that he acted with her consent in the defence of her family's interests. In the day to day maintenance of the earldom and its wider networks, Hamelin seems to have been comfortable acting under his own authority, such as in his gift to Matthew de Horbury of 42 acres of forested land within the earldom or his thrice yearly gift of fish to the abbey of St Mary of York, from his lands in nearby Sandtoft.<sup>513</sup> The worth of such gifts and accommodations dispensed by the earl under his own authority vary considerably and it's possible that they were awarded by the earl on an ad hoc basis, in the Countess' absence, in response to petitions by his tenants. While this sentiment remained fairly consistent within these parameters throughout the earl's life, the still extant charters record its exact form as varying over time and in response to circumstances such as the Countess' presence and availability. Hamelin and Isabel on several occasions issued joint charters under shared authority and writ, although in many of these cases Hamelin as the earl and an illegitimate member of the extended royal family was given precedence over his wife, such as in their grant to Lewes Priory which stated that those engaged in the Priory's service were exempt from carrying out service to the earl's new castle at Conisbrough.<sup>514</sup> As their son William, the future earl de Warenne, began to come of age his assent to the distribution and management of his inheritance was also included into the address clause of his parents jointly issued charters such as their gift sometime in the 1180s of the income from the mills of Conisbrough castle for the maintenance of the castle's chapel dedicated to St Philip and St James.<sup>515</sup> The necessity to include William, and an at least notional reference to his assent, within the administration and redistribution of the family's interests perhaps reflects the increasingly well-defined and legally entrenched inheritance practices during the latter half of the twelfth century.

In a similar manner to Robert and Reginald, Hamelin's position as an intimate of the king complicates the task of gauging the extent of his new found

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<sup>513</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Volume 8, No. 69 and No. 71.

<sup>514</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Volume 8, No. 62

<sup>515</sup> Farrer and Clay, *Early Yorkshire Charters*, Volume 8, No. 62.



wealth and power since he was amongst a small number of royal favourites and supporters who were excused from participation in either of Henry II's great surveys, the *Cartae Baronum* and the *Infeudationes Militum*.<sup>516</sup> The Domesday evaluations of the family's lands in England amounted to some £1140, which places them among the wealthiest and most powerful magnate families within England, while this figure is drawn significantly before Hamelin's tenure as earl, the relative stability of the de Warenne family's successive inheritance and its internal political coherency suggests that the de Warenne landed interests were preserved from this period and while never isolated were largely unaffected by the rise and fall of the other cross channel magnates. By the second half of the twelfth century over 140 knight's fees had been subinfeudated by the de Warenne family to its allies and supporters and was one of the principal ways in which Hamelin and the de Warenne family continued to reward and cultivate political affinity within their earldom. Hamelin through his wife also held considerable lands within Upper Normandy centred upon the strategic castles of Mortemer and Bellencombre. Hamelin was well connected politically outside the royal family. His brother-in-law, Reginald de Warenne (d. 1179), worked frequently as a baron of the English exchequer. Hugh de Cressy, a Warenne tenant and Hamelin's former seneschal, rose to become Henry II's constable for Rouen emerging through this lucrative service as confidant.

### **3.7 The Household and Political Networks of William Longespée**

Like Hamelin de Warenne, his nephew William Longespée was raised to his earldom through a marriage brokered by a royal half-brother as a means of increasing their authority and influence within the aristocracy at a time of political tension and instability. At the time of their father's death in 1189 Richard was in a state of open revolt against the king who he had recently directly confronted in a rapid series of military engagements.<sup>517</sup> While the presumptive and widely acknowledged heir to the Angevin hegemony as the eldest surviving legitimate son of Henry II, Richard's belligerent stance towards his father and through him the powerful clique of loyalist earls and magnates presented a potential source of instability and complication. It is interesting to note that Richard's elevation of his

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<sup>516</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 6.

<sup>517</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, p. 293.

illegitimate half-brother to an earldom, a position in which he would be able to lend the king considerable political and material support, did not come in the immediate aftermath of his rise to regal status and authority.

Instead of expending royal largesse on creating a new ally in the form of a royal bastard too young to participate directly in political affairs, Richard embarked upon a wider programme of consolidation pursuing a conciliatory policy towards the powerbrokers of the Angevin aristocracy and those already involved in the prosecution of royal governance. After a period of intensive negotiations, the new king sponsored his elder half-brother and the former chancellor, Geoffrey, to the archbishopric of York.<sup>518</sup> A compromise which provided the potential troublesome Geoffrey with a prestigious and lucrative position while also having the advantage of removing him from the heart of the royal administration and bringing the resources of the archbishopric further under the umbrella of royal influence. William de Mandeville, the earl of Essex and one of Henry II's principal supporters and confidants was afforded a position of prominence within the coronation ceremony and was later appointed co-Chief Justiciar of England. Richard also further utilised his royal privileges of guardianship in the immediate aftermath of his assumption of the throne, granting William Marshal's outstanding petition for the hand of the wealthy heiress Countess Isabel de Clare of Pembroke.<sup>519</sup> These appointments and the period of reorganisation and tacit renegotiation signalled to the aristocracy that not only was Richard prepared to work with his father's erstwhile allies but was actually willing to reward their loyalty and service to the previous king. Instead Richard's most substantial patronage and support of William in the form of the brokering of his marriage to Countess Ela of Salisbury, came in 1196 following the death of her father, Earl William of Salisbury.<sup>520</sup> This was a period in which the king was heavily committed to resisting French military incursions into Normandy and still working to repair the disruption and political fault lines that had emerged as a result of his long absence and imprisonment. The now adult William's career and the circumstances surrounding his elevation to a position of power, namely being granted a marriage to a countess in royal wardship

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<sup>518</sup> *English Episcopal Acta 27 York 1189-1212*, eds. David, Michael Smith, Marie Lovatt (Oxford, 2004), p. iii.

<sup>519</sup> *The History of William Marshal*, ed. Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge, 2018), p. vi.

immediately after her succession at a time a political instability, strongly displays the opportunism and pragmatism which directed Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs deployment of their illegitimate family members. Richard's brokering of a marriage between his illegitimate but aristocratic half-brother and countess at a time where the authority and power of royal government was facing substantial challenges provided the king with a grateful and well-connected earl whose loyalty and sense of active investment in the regime was anchored by substantial personal and familial affinity.

William was the son of King Henry II and possibly the most aristocratic and well-connected of his mistress', Ida de Tosny who was herself the daughter of Roger de Tosny a significant magnate with extensive holdings in Normandy and his wife Ida a member of the expansive and powerful Beaumont family. Sometime after the conclusion of their relationship and the birth of William, the king either permitted or perhaps even arranged for Ida to marry Earl Roger Bigod of Norfolk, with Henry providing a dowry for his former mistress in the form of the return of three manors previously confiscated from Roger's father.<sup>521</sup> Earl Roger and Ida had a number of children, the eldest of whom Hugh married a daughter of the earl of Pembroke, William Marshal. This meant that in addition to his participation in royal familial identity and the cultivation of close ties of affinity with his royal half-brothers William was intimately connected to powerful and influential members of aristocratic familial networks through his maternally sourced networks and connections which were far more extensive than those enjoyed by the majority of illegitimate royal family members. William's bride, Countess Ela, was the sole heir of Earl William FitzPatrick who had despite supporting Prince John in his struggles with Richard's Chancellor and royal deputy, William Longchamp (d. 1197), quickly associated himself with the royalist party following the king's return, accompanying him on campaign in Normandy and participating in the king's second coronation as part of a strategy to re-establish royal legitimacy and authority.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> Marc Morris, *The Bigod Earls of Norfolk in the Thirteenth Century*, (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>522</sup> Gillingham, *Richard I*, p. 287.

The family's title was derived from the support of William's father Patrick, the constable of Salisbury, for Empress Matilda and the Angevin faction during her long running dynastic conflict with King Stephen. This elevation in status which coincided with the formation of a close and long-lasting affinity with their former rival John FitzGilbert whose marriage to Patrick's sister Sibyl resulted in the birth of the couple's eldest son William Marshal (d. 1219) around 1146. Whether as part of a conscious policy to uphold and cultivate his wife's familial affinities and connections or simply as a result of their similar age, shared military service and presence within the royal court, William Longespée was closely associated and allied with Marshal's eldest son. Indeed, Longespée participated in a number of military exhibitions on behalf of his legitimate royal family alongside members of the Marshal family and the *Historie de Guillaume le Mareschal* commissioned by the younger William Marshal to celebrate and record the life of his father also takes care to emphasise the royal bastard's military capabilities and leadership role.<sup>523</sup>

The earldom of Salisbury, a designation which both Ela's father and grandfather used interchangeably with that of Wiltshire, was reasonably modest when compared to the other English earldoms, containing fifty-six Knights Fee's.<sup>524</sup> Additionally, the family's landed interests and holdings did not include any castles outside of their traditional custodianship of the royal fortress at Salisbury, a vital royal association which was likely reinforced and renewed by William's own royal affinity. William's marriage to Countess Ela provided him with title, status and the foundation of a powerbase while the earl's finances and political influence were enhanced through his engagement in military and administrative service on behalf of his royal half-brother, John, and the assumption of a number of offices within royal governance. A mutually beneficial aspect of this service and William's engagement in the preservation and advancement of royal interests was the king's practice of occasionally placing lands in which he had some political or financial interests under his illegitimate brother's custodianship for safe keeping. In addition to William's appointment in 1125 as the custodian of the honour of Eye, John appointed him as supervisor of the extensive

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<sup>523</sup> *The History of William Marshal*, p. 182.

<sup>524</sup> Matthew Strickland, 'Longespée, William Third Earl of Salisbury (b. in or before 1167, d.1126)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

lands attached to the diocese of Ely as a retaliatory measure against a clergy who displayed a strong adherence to the papacy during the king's ongoing dispute with Pope Innocent III.<sup>525</sup> In 1212, with the papal interdict officially at least still in place, William was additionally granted control of the archbishopric of Canterbury and its vast estates following a breakdown in negotiations and the king's continued refusal to recognise the election of Stephen Langton as archbishop.<sup>526</sup> However, these custodianships, while potentially lucrative for the earl and providing him opportunity to support royal familial interests and strengthen his own political association with the king, were for the most part only temporary and in some cases complicated by their connection to the Church.

It seems unsurprising then that Earl William made little effort to enmesh the landed interests brought by these royally nominated guardianships into his sphere of influence and wider political affinities. Throughout his career William retained an abiding interest in gaining control of the town of Trowbridge and its affiliated lands which lay within his earldom. As a result of this attempt to consolidate authority over the region's aristocratic affinities and capitalise upon its financial resources, William formed a rivalry with the town's lord, the extremely well-connected Earl Henry de Bohun of Hereford (d. 1220). Henry who was the hereditary Constable of England was awarded the earldom of Hereford, previously held by his paternal grandmother Margaret, upon John's accession to the throne in 1199.<sup>527</sup> John's favouritism for his half-brother and sympathy toward his bid for hegemony within Salisbury may have threatened Henry and contributed, alongside increased tension amongst the aristocracy, to join the rebellion against the king in 1213 at which point William was able to annex the lordship of Trowbridge from his rebellious rival and integrate it into his own administrative framework. Indeed, Henry de Bohun's later status as a supporter of Prince Louis of France and the clash of interests generated by their competing claims was a possible influence in William's decision to re-join the royalist faction following the death of his brother in 1216.

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<sup>525</sup> Christopher Harper-Bill, 'John and the Church of Rome', in *King John: New Interpretations*, S.D. Church ed. (Woodbridge, 1999), pp.289-315 at p. 302.

<sup>526</sup> Harper-Bill, 'John and the Church of Rome', p. 309.

<sup>527</sup> 'Charters of the Earldom of Hereford, 1095-1201', ed. D. Walker, *Camden Miscellany*, XXII (London, 1964), p. 4.

During his tenure as earl of Salisbury, William worked to maintain and strengthen his adopted affinities already substantive connections with various ecclesiastical and monastic institutions. William heavily patronised the Augustinian house of Bradenstoke Priory located within his earldom which had a long standing and intimate connection with his wife's family.<sup>528</sup> The priory was founded in 1142 under the sponsorship of Ela's great grandfather, Walter FitzEdward, who later joined the community following the death of his wife and retirement from secular affairs. In 1222 William founded a Carthusian Charter House in Hatherop in Gloucestershire, granting them land in Chelwart and the forest at Bradene.<sup>529</sup> Upon his death in 1226, Hatherop was richly endowed and provided with the means to begin an extensive construction programme gifting them with the income generated from the wardship of his daughter-in-law, a large reserve of livestock for the support for the monks including 1000 ewes, 40 rams, 58 oxen and 20 bulls.<sup>530</sup> He further lavished upon them several more personal gifts and luxuries including his collection of relics, the finest set of vestments from his private chapel, a jewel adorned golden chalice, a golden pyx set with pearls and two silver phials. The monks, however, deemed the site unsuitable to their needs, appealing to the earl's widow that they be allowed to settle a more remote site, better in keeping with their eremitical tradition which she duly granted, moving the foundation to Hinton in Somerset but otherwise leaving her husband's endowments unaltered.

William's location of the Carthusian Charter House, well within his sphere of influence in a readily accessible location might indicate his ambition to exert direct authority over the site as he and his father in law had both done with Bradenstoke. While the extensive nature of his posthumous endowments suggests a sense of genuine piety and a desire for monastic intercession in the afterlife may have been a prominent motivating factor in the foundation of house, the symbiotic overlap between sincere religious obligation and political expression was one that sat easily within twelfth century aristocratic culture. Indeed, it is interesting to note

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<sup>528</sup> *The Cartulary of Bradenstoke Priory*, ed, Vera C.M. London, *Wiltshire Roll Series*, 35 (Devizes,1979), p. 34.

<sup>529</sup> Michael Aston and Glyn Coppack, *Christ's Poor Men: The Carthusians in England* (Kalamazoo, 2002), p. 33.

<sup>530</sup> Aston and Coppack, *Christ's Poor Men*, p. 30.

that in founding the charter house and patronising the ascetic Carthusian movement, William was emulating his father, Henry II's foundation of Witham, the first English Carthusian house.

While Henry was an enthusiastic patron of the growing ascetic movement supporting both Gilbertine and Grandmontine foundations, the king was initially reluctant to expend significant resources on the foundation which lost two abbots in quick succession.<sup>531</sup> Witham only began to flourish under its third abbot, the future bishop of Lincoln, Hugh of Avalon, who succeeded in winning the king's support; an official charter of foundation being issued in 1180 as well a substantial income derived from Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Berkshire. However, despite Henry's strong, likely proprietary interests in the Charter House and his close relationship with Hugh there were considerable delays in construction due to lack of funds and the influx of capital into the site was gradually reduced including the eventual cancellation of pensions to the site in 1188, leaving the Carthusians an influential and generally highly regarded but ultimately minor order.<sup>532</sup> It is of considerable significance to the continuity of familial identity and of the connections between the adopted household and political affinities of royal bastards and their legitimate relatives that the Carthusian order only began to expand in England following the foundation of a second Charter House by the illegitimate son of their original patron. By emulating his father's support for the Carthusians William was not only cultivating and broadening potentially lucrative and influential monastic connections with his own political affinity but also strongly aligning himself with a royal familial identity.

Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs sought to capitalise upon their illegitimate family member's sense of familial affinity and participation in royal identity by empowering and further incentivising them to protect and advance their shared dynastic interests. Invested with power and authority within aristocratic political networks by their legitimate family members, royal bastards were not only furnished with further means of supporting and protecting the interest of their patrons but more inclined to do so as a result of the strong alignment of their

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<sup>531</sup> David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A history of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940-1216* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 375.

<sup>532</sup> Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, p. 375.

political interests. The position of those illegitimate family members who were placed into existing aristocratic networks of power within those regional and familial affinities were deliberately cultivated by legitimate patrons in a number of ways such as the liberal distribution of vice regal rights and privileges. In addition to this, as a signal of royal favour and association the material and political position of royal bastards were enhanced through the use of the growing financial and administrative mechanisms of royal governance as part of a wider policy of incentivising cooperation amongst the upper echelons of the aristocracy. The extent to which Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards integrated into the local aristocratic networks and familial interests in which they operated was variable. Those individuals who attained their primary titles and land through marriage were often careful to present themselves as operating on behalf of their spouse to represent and maintain their family's existing interests and connections.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Royal Service and Office Holding**

Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate royal family members formed a reserve of potentially useful allies and subordinates for their legitimate family members who empowered and elevated them as the needs of the royal political and dynastic situation dictated, capitalising on their talents and loyalty as a means of safeguarding and promoting royal interests. Several royal bastards held a variety of position and offices within the increasingly elaborate apparatus of royal governance throughout the twelfth century, within both the developing royal household and at the regional level. Those royal bastards who benefited from an acknowledged personal affinity with a member of their legitimate family or were otherwise permitted to participate within royal family identity were the most active in royal service engaging in diplomatic, administrative and military activity on behalf of their family and legitimate patron. In addition to this, the presence of royal bastards, particularly those embedded in existing regional and familial affinities through royally brokered marriages, within wider aristocratic networks of power, served a useful political purpose by bringing aristocratic families further into alignment with the rulers' dynastic interests and reinforcing a royally constructed consensus amongst the magnates to the king's rule.

The mechanisms Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings used to deploy and enhance the capabilities of their illegitimate family members were not necessarily unique to royal bastards and were used to reward and incentivise cooperation throughout the aristocracy in an attempt reinforce the kings' power and authority. However, while illegitimate royal family members often lacked significant personal resources, what made them such a particularly useful and favoured resource by their legitimate family was their pre-existing engagement with a shared familial identity and subsequent stake in royal fortunes. Through holding royal offices and engaging in diverse forms of service to their legitimate family members, politically active and engaged royal bastards were not only defending and advancing royal familial interests but were also justifying their inclusion and increasing their political investment within family identity.

The variable degrees of affinity which twelfth century Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs experienced with their illegitimate relatives, as well as the extent of these relationships' reciprocal natures, depended upon an assortment of factors. The dynastic and political context, such as the nature of the familial relationship as well as the age and birth order of illegitimate children and nature of a royal bastard's maternal connections, was certainly an important contributor to the formation and maintenance of bonds of affinity. The family's political situation and the monarch's immediate dynastic and operational needs also played a role in determining the degree to which these familial sourced personal connections translated into an active engagement with the royal family's political interests and crucially the form that this participation would take. Both Henry I and Henry II displayed a marked favouritism for their eldest illegitimate sons, upon whom they would invest their paternal affection and participate together in the male dominated aspects of courtly and aristocratic culture. This scope for social proximity allowed these kings and their eldest sons to interact in a way that was not necessarily viable or desirable with their illegitimate daughters and possibly without the restrictions of courtly life and dynastic necessity imposed upon legitimate male children.

It is equally clear that more ephemeral and personal factors, the extent and intricacies of which are often difficult to ascertain from a historical perspective, also played an important and natural role in the formation of familial and political affinities between Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs and their illegitimate children or siblings. Richard I's elevation of his illegitimate half-brother to the earldom of Salisbury, through a royally brokered marriage to its heiress, served as an acknowledgement of their shared family identity but was principally an act of political opportunism. Despite Earl William FitzPatrick's initial support for Prince John, during the series of the crisis sparked by the king's absence, following Richard's return to England the earl and many of his contemporaries had gravitated back towards the restored centre of royal government and authority, realigning himself with the king. By marrying his half-brother to the daughter and sole heir of the recently deceased earl, Richard was further drawing the region's constituent and surrounding aristocratic networks deeper into the king's sphere of influence, helping to expand the authority of a regime whose stability and consensus amongst the aristocracy and been damaged by the king's imprisonment.

The newly created Earl William Longespée, however, continued to play little active role in royal governance or familial service, outside of his position as earl and nominal inclusion amongst the king's allies. William gained far more political prominence and engaged heavily in royal service and office holding during the reign of another of his half-brothers, King John, with whom the earl was close to in age and shared a strong personal affinity.<sup>533</sup> Clearly John's advancement of his half-brother's career and preference for William in the entrusting or delegating of military and administrative offices and position also resulted from a political motivation. As the king's reign was increasingly beset by internal dissent and foreign aggression, he may well have perceived the advantages of a trustworthy lieutenant whose interests were intimately connected to his own through familial identity and personal affinity. It is possible to speculate that such a connection with a family member may have held particular personal significance to John who had been raised largely in isolation from his legitimate brothers.<sup>534</sup> Longespée's political utility to the king, as both a royal bastard and aristocrat, and therefore the extent to which he was allowed to participate in royal service and governance, was enhanced by and even rested upon the strength of their personal affinity. While royal bastards within the twelfth century experienced variable levels of affinity and political cooperation with their legitimate family, with some being left largely to subsist within their maternal networks and connections, they were recognised as a broad and accepted phenomenon within aristocratic society, participants of which often had strong ties of personal and familial affinity with the king rather than as a necessarily prescriptive classification.

Many of these illegitimate family members were implicitly permitted, through their acknowledgement or actively empowered through their integration into courtly life and the aristocratic interests that orbited it, to engage with and participate in royal familial identity. Both Robert of Gloucester and Richard of Lincoln were active participants within Anglo-Norman aristocratic culture and were fully integrated members of the royal court. Details of Robert's early life are sparse but the assertion by his biographers that he was highly educated with a solid

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<sup>533</sup> Matthew Strickland, 'Longespée, William Third Earl of Salisbury (b. in or before 1167, d. 1126)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>534</sup> Stephen Church, *King John: England, Magna Carta and the Making of a Tyrant*, (London, 2015), p. 4.

foundation in the classics, a claim lent some credence by his adoption of the unusual and classically sourced style of 'legate', as well as his swift induction into royal service and sharp rise to prominence suggests that he was perhaps raised within or close to the royal court.<sup>535</sup> Certainly, the younger Richard, most a likely a half rather than full sibling of Robert, grew up and was educated within the satellite court and household of the extremely wealthy and well-connected Bishop Robert Bloet of Lincoln who served as one of the king's principal advisors as well as a key ally within the ecclesiastical sphere.<sup>536</sup>

Robert of Gloucester supported his sister's hereditary claim to rulership of the Anglo-Norman hegemony, with his extensive territories and position within wider aristocratic networks forming the military nucleus of her campaign within England. Robert was an experienced and fully engaged participant within royal family identity whose alignment with his half-sister in her dispute with King Stephen and the close degree of political and military cooperation between the two, indicates a measure of personal affinity. Robert's father and benefactor, Henry I, had attempted to preserve, cultivate and formalise this affinity and commitment to a shared dynastic enterprise when Robert, alongside the other prominent members and powerbrokers of the Anglo-Norman court and aristocratic society, made a public oath acknowledging Matilda as Henry's designated heir and committing them to supporting her rights. In a manner similar to Stephen, Robert's public acceptance and support of the oath was of particular importance not only because of their power and status relative to contemporaries but because of their shared status as potential rival claimants. Indeed, William of Malmesbury in his depiction of the oath giving ceremony, intimates that Robert and Stephen quarrelled over which one of them was entitled to swear the oath first which would have provided a conspicuous display of loyalty and primacy.<sup>537</sup> The *Gesta Stephani* on the other hand portrays Robert as seceding precedence to Stephen over the objections of other courtiers.<sup>538</sup> It also alludes to discussions around Robert's claim to the throne and the, at least notional, possibility of his candidacy, a feature which is absent in the accounts of pro-Angevin chroniclers, possibly as a means of emphasising the

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<sup>535</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.171.

<sup>536</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p, XXIX.

<sup>537</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 294.

<sup>538</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 116.

indivisibility of their cause in England and the strong bonds of familial and political affinity between the Empress Matilda and her half-brother.<sup>539</sup>

Following Henry I's death, Robert like the vast majority of Anglo-Norman aristocrats, ended up supporting, at least temporarily, Stephen's claim to the throne and accepting an offer from the Church to release them from their oaths and obligations toward Matilda which had been negotiated by Stephen's brother, Bishop Henry of Winchester. The extent, duration and sincerity of Robert's cooperation with King Stephen is a matter of some historiographical debate, although it seems that for a time at least, Robert's sense of political affinity with his half-sister and commitment to a shared family identity were outweighed by either a perceived need or desire to gain an advantage through realigning himself in reaction to changing political circumstances in the wake of Stephen's proactive and systematic campaign for the throne.

Robert's decision to support Stephen, however, should not necessarily be viewed as an abandonment or repudiation by Robert of his commitment or affinity with royal family identity, Stephen was after all his cousin while Robert's seeming desertion of Matilda, following their father's death, may have been a reaction to the conflict and breach of confidence that had erupted between Henry I and his daughter's Angevin husband and father-in-law.<sup>540</sup> Count Geoffrey's invasion of Normandy, following Henry's death may well have complicated the question of Robert's loyalty and placed him in a difficult position, contributing to the apparent ambiguity of his position in the immediate aftermath of Stephen's accession to the throne.<sup>541</sup> Whatever the case, Stephen's ongoing difficulties in the opening years of his reign and failure to mollify the earl and incorporate him into the king's inner circle provided Robert and other sympathisers with the Angevin cause with the motive and opportunity to commit, or recommit, to supporting Empress Matilda. For the twelfth century Anglo-Norman aristocrat, particularly one with Robert's wealth status and abundance of connections and affinities, the distinction and delineation between private and familial interests were blurred to the extent that a

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<sup>539</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 116.

<sup>540</sup> R. B. Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester: A Re-evaluation of the *Historia Novella*', *American Historical Review*, 70 (1964–5), pp. 983–997 & p. 988.

<sup>541</sup> Patterson, *William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester*, p. 988.

family's landed interests and position within the aristocratic web of affinities and obligations provided a framework for and heavily informed the political position and orientation of its members as well as the direction of their ambitions.

Twelfth century aristocratic families tended towards cooperation with members of a broad and inclusive familial identity. Aside from the considerable political and personal benefits of membership in a tightly knit and supportive family group, this bias toward family cohesion allowed them to more effectively protect, coordinate and regulate the often already interconnected landed interests which they shared a common stake in, through the promise, or at least possibility, of access to inheritance.<sup>542</sup> Even conflict and dissent between members of the same immediate family can be seen as being informed and shaped by the family's status as mediating wealth and its role in the transmission and distribution of inheritance and landed interests across the personal webs of obligations and personal affinities. This was the case with Philip, the rebellious son of Robert of Gloucester, discussed briefly in Chapter One. Philip's defection to the royalist party presented Stephen with an opportunity to disrupt Earl Robert's powerbase by granting the ambitious young nobleman license to represent himself as an alternative figurehead for these political and regional networks. Robert's initial navigation of the overlapping and competing political interests and familial obligations surrounding the disputed Anglo-Norman succession was complicated by his somewhat unusual circumstances as an illegitimate but acknowledged, active and self-conscious styled participant in royal family identity at a time where the boundaries and implications of illegitimacy were gaining sharper definition.

Rebellion for Anglo-Norman and Angevin aristocrats, more often than not in the form of targeted and limited warfare, was to an extent a form of protest towards their overlord, functioning as a natural extension of politics and negotiations and representing an extreme method for the resolution of disputes.<sup>543</sup> In addition to the use of warfare and rebellion as a tool, albeit one that carried with it substantial risks, in the defence of aristocratic rights and interests, dynastic

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<sup>542</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, p. 204.

<sup>543</sup> Stephen Morillio, *Warfare Under the Anglo-Norman Kings, 1068-1135*, (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 28; P. Latimer, 'How to Suppress a Rebellion: England 1173-74' in Paul Dalton and David Luscombe, eds., *Rulership and Rebellion in the Anglo-Norman World 1066-1216*, eds. (Farnham, 2015), p. 61.

disputes and internecine warfare between members of the royal family were also reasonably common during this period, either in the form of direct competition for the throne or arising from disputes surrounding the structure or distribution of familial landed interests. William the Conqueror's son, Robert, engaged in rebellion against him, which is possibly responsible for his designation in his father's will as only duke of Normandy and not king of England, before engaging in a protracted series of conflicts with his brothers for control of the Anglo-Norman hegemony during which time, at one point each brother formed an alliance with another against their remaining sibling.<sup>544</sup>

Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate family members in contrast, tended to display a relatively consistent and high degree of loyalty to their legitimate patrons and remained active within royal service during intermittent periods of instability and the aggressive renegotiation of status and position which characterised aristocratic politics. This general adherence was the result of a mutually cultivated personal affinity informed by the natural confluence of political and dynastic interests, stemming from participation in a shared familial identity. While empowered and politically active, royal bastards pursued their own interests and agendas as circumstances dictated; the social and legal limitations of illegitimacy made them largely reliant upon the support and patronage of their legitimate relatives which had a role in informing and contextualising their position within the court and wider aristocratic networks of power.

The rare occasions of antagonism and aggression between royal bastards and their legitimate family members, such as Juliane's attempted assault of her father, Henry I, with a crossbow, tended to occur in the absence of a strong personal affinity and in the prosecution or defence of disparate political and personal interests.<sup>545</sup> In the case of Juliane, who given the date of her marriage probably spent little time in court or in her father's presence, she was attempting to hold the Castle of Bréteuil for her husband following the escalation of the dispute between him and the king's constable of Ivry castle which led to Henry's mutilation of her children.<sup>546</sup> This predisposition towards fidelity to the family members who

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<sup>544</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V and VI, p. 104.

<sup>545</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V and VI, p. 294.

<sup>546</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V and VI, p. 294.

empowered them and inducted them further into royal familial identity, during both times of peace and war, was a result of and governed by the close alignment of their interests and the necessity of acquiring and retaining the support of a patron.

While it appears that Henry I's host of illegitimate children were too young to play a significant role in the sequence of conflict and political manoeuvring that led to the eventual reunification of the Anglo-Norman hegemony under the king, Henry planned to endow his two eldest illegitimate sons with significant lands in Normandy as part of the process of reasserting control and authority throughout the duchy. Indeed, Henry later entrusted the care and defence of his captive brother, Duke Robert, to Robert of Gloucester an important and conspicuous display of mutual trust, to an extent necessitated by the degree of sympathy and support for Robert amongst the Anglo-Norman aristocracy which was manifested in several uprisings led by leading cross-channel magnates and Robert's son, William Clito (d. 1128).<sup>547</sup>

King Stephen fought a long sequence of campaigns throughout his reign against both rebellious nobles seeking to distance themselves from royal authority and against Henry I's designated heir, the Empress Matilda and her adherents, not least amongst them were several of her illegitimate half-brothers. Matilda was a direct and serious competitor for the throne, although her party struggled to formulate an ideological or practical approach to removing Stephen and negate his status as an anointed king; even during his period in Angevin captivity, the king's person and to a lesser extent this status remained inviolate.<sup>548</sup>

The political and military high watermark of Empress Matilda's campaign within England was the ultimately abortive attempt to hold a coronation for herself in London.<sup>549</sup> Much like her rival, substantial elements of Matilda's support base were at times undermined by the factionalism and opportunism of her aristocratic supporters, occasionally exacerbated by her Angevin husband's otherness and rapacious behaviour within Normandy. Earl Robert of Gloucester's initial

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<sup>547</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans, Michael Swanton, (London, 2000), p. 127.

<sup>548</sup> Laura Ashe, 'The Anomalous King of Conquered England', in Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, eds, *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies of Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 173-194 at p. 184.

<sup>549</sup> Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: The Civil War of 1139-53* (Stroud, 2005), p. 110.



prevarication following his father's death and acquiescence to Stephen's seizure of the throne can possibly be seen in the context of tangled and overlapping familiar obligations as well as a reluctance to jeopardise his own political interest in pursuit of his half-sister's claim. Possibly suspicious of the new king's reluctance to intervene directly during the Welsh uprisings and with it becoming increasingly apparent that Stephen did not intend to integrate Robert into his inner circle or maintain the level of status and favour that the earl had enjoyed under Henry I, the royal bastard elected to align himself with his half-sister.<sup>550</sup>

Robert's loyalty to Matilda and commitment to enforcing her claim to the throne, in addition to their shared familial identity, was also likely influenced by his comparative status and power to Matilda within the Angevin faction. Heavily entrenched within royal familial identity and as one of the most powerful aristocrats within the Anglo-Norman hegemony, in many ways, Robert was more Matilda's confederate than subordinate, acting as a key member in the leadership of the Angevin party and their foremost military commander within England. Earl Robert's importance to the Angevin war effort posed a challenge to Matilda following his capture in 1141, compelling the Empress to trade him for King Stephen in order to maintain the viability and coherency of her party within England. Conversely, the prominence and strong alignment and entanglement with his sister's political interests ensured that even after the decline in her prospects and return to Normandy, Robert remained heavily invested in preserving the Angevin cause within England up until his death in 1147.

As one of the youngest of Henry I's illegitimate children, Earl Reginald, primarily owed his position of power and elevation above many of his half-siblings to his early commitment to the Angevin party, joining Empress Matilda's court in Normandy prior to her invasion of England.<sup>551</sup> Despite lacking substantial resources of his own, Reginald's presence at his half-sister's court and the military service he, and his aristocratic allies undertook on her behalf, enabled them at the same time to expand upon and cultivate their shared familial identity and its requisite obligations into a political alignment. Reginald's adoption and

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<sup>550</sup>David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 75.

<sup>551</sup>Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V and VI, p. 510.

participation in the dynastic enterprise of his more powerful and politically central family members was rewarded with a more prominent and potentially lucrative position within it, being granted the title, earl of Cornwall, with instructions to bring the county under Angevin control.<sup>552</sup> Reginald's high-profile association with and service to the Angevin cause, in addition to the enormous material benefits the alliance with his half-sibling's in the Angevin leadership had brought him, meant that he was heavily invested in its defence, contributing to both Empress Matilda's campaign and later rallying support around her son, Henry. Both Robert and Reginald then, to varying extents, were brought further into alignment with, and committed to, the preservation of their wider familial interests through their engagement in service to a legitimate family member.

While Henry II endured a number of armed and dangerous rebellions from his legitimate sons as they sort to protect their own interests against a perceived paternal encroachment or came to act as figure heads for internal dissidents and foreign sponsors, his eldest son, the illegitimate Geoffrey, remained loyal to his father serving him both in a military capacity on the majority of the king's major military campaigns and later as his Chancellor. In addition to personal affinity and feelings of filial affection, Geoffrey's adherence to his father may have been informed by an awareness of the close conflation of their political interests. Unlike Henry, the 'Young King', who sort to exert his authority as co-king, outside of a merely ceremonial role, and gain direct access to the resources necessarily to support himself and his entourage or Richard I who was angered by Henry II's proposed redistribution of the Angevin domains to better position and provide for his youngest son John, a proposal which would have required Richard to surrender several key castles within Aquitaine, the illegitimate Geoffrey lacked the resources, status and motivation to work against a father on whose patronage he relied.<sup>553</sup> Similarly, Earl Hamelin de Warenne stayed loyal to his legitimate half-brother throughout the various rebellions and crisis that beset his reign, lending him both political support and direct military assistance. Unlike Geoffrey, however, who had eschewed the security of promotion within the hierarchy of the Church, possibly

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<sup>552</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 102.

<sup>553</sup> Maire Lovatt, 'The Career and Administration of Geoffrey Archbishop of York 1151?-1212' (PhD Diss, University of Cambridge 1974).

either as the result of a desire to retain his place amongst his father's most intimate retainers or in an attempt to preserve his lay status and the possibility of inheriting title and property, Hamelin was for the majority of his political career a powerful aristocrat deeply imbedded within regional and political affinities. Indeed, his position and title were to a large extent derived from his loyalty and contributions to the king during Henry's feud with Archbishop Thomas Becket.<sup>554</sup> Following Henry II's death in 1189, Hamelin transferred his allegiance to his nephew, Richard, offering substantial support to the king's appointed regent, William Longchamp, during the difficulties and power struggles that ensued during his absence even when this adherence to the king's representative brought him into conflict with other family members, such as his nephews John and Archbishop Geoffrey.<sup>555</sup>

William Longespée, while playing only a marginal or supporting role during the reigns of Henry II and Richard I was heavily engaged in royal service both as a military commander and through appointment to various royal offices during the reign of his half-brother John I.<sup>556</sup> William's loyalty and faithfulness to the king originated from their shared familial identity and strong personal affinity, a bond which made him a useful and appealing lieutenant to a king whose reign would be marked by increasingly ingrained internal dissent. This affinity and alignment of political interests was then subsequently reinforced by the material benefits and increased political status afforded to William through this prominent service to the king and position within the apparatus of royal governance. William's political career demonstrates the mutual advantages of the integration of royal bastards into a shared dynastic enterprise and of the potential resilience of the relationships between kings and certain illegitimate members of their family, with William operating as one of John's chief lieutenants in both a military and administrative capacity, through difficulties with the Church, rebellions and, initially at least, foreign invasion. However, it also showcases the limitations of this method of cooperation, while even an embattled king was a powerful and influential patron, following the invasion of England by Prince Louis in 1216 and

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<sup>554</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 4, p. 145.

<sup>555</sup> Ralph de Diceto, *The Historical Works*, Volume 2, p. 171; John Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170-1300*, (Oxford, 2014), p. 142.

<sup>556</sup> Strickland, 'Longespée'.

the functional collapse of royalist resistance, William defected to the rebels judging that his political interests could no longer be maintained through an alignment with royal fortunes.<sup>557</sup> William subsequently joined the coalition of aristocrats led by William Marshal who opposed Louis, promoting the rights of John's young son, Henry III, but the earl's status and role as a participant in royal familial identity was only cursorily acknowledged by the king's regents and thereafter he functioned in a manner similar to any other member of the aristocracy.<sup>558</sup>

Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate royal family members, during the twelfth century, contributed to the success and support of their shared familial dynastic enterprise in a wide variety of ways such as participation in military campaigns, the fostering of a royally aligned consensus amongst members of the aristocracy as well as participation in the increasingly sophisticated administrative apparatus through which the royal court functioned and transmitted its authority. While the limitations of the fiscal and administrative structures of the great hegemonies of twelfth century Europe, not to mention political and dynastic concerns, often imposed restrictions to the royal court's ability to effectively mobilise the full extent of their military resources, they were on the individual level highly militarised societies with a strong central martial culture. As acknowledged participants in courtly life and aristocratic culture, the majority of male royal bastards, raised either within the royal court or by their maternal connections, grew up with the expectation they would to some extent engage with the contemporarily dominant chivalric and militarily aspirational culture. Many of the preferred pastimes of the nobility, such as hunting or even in the latter half of the twelfth century, the growing secular literary tradition, held strong military connotations; one of the primary conceits of aristocratic culture being their role and status as the prosecutors of warfare in an idealised tripartite society.<sup>559</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising then, given their cultural context and participation in familial identity that many acknowledged illegitimate royal family members engaged in military service on behalf of their legitimate family members and their shared dynastic interests. While the numerous and widespread territorial and

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<sup>557</sup> Strickland, 'Longespée'.

<sup>558</sup> Nigel Bryant, *The History of William Marshal*, (Woodbridge, 2016), p. 215.

<sup>559</sup> George Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postam, (Berkeley, 1997), p. 112.

military commitments of Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings, as well as the often decentralised and skirmish based nature of medieval warfare which relied upon personal ability and initiative, meant that they required numerous capable lieutenants possessed of a strong political alignment with the royal family in order to defend and expand their extensive dynastic interests. When taken as a demographic, as a result of their conspicuous loyalty to their legitimate family members and patrons, illegitimate royal family members with the necessary resources or those who occupied suitable positions often found themselves engaged in military service during periods of domestic unrest such as rebellion or dynastic disputes between competing family members.

#### **4.1 Illegitimate Royal Family Members Engagement in Military Service**

Both the Anglo-Norman hegemony and its expanded successor, the Angevin Empire, were to an extent amalgamations of disparate entities often with their own distinct identities, legal customs and languages which were held together as a result of a network of traditional and personal obligations through which authority was transmitted. The patchwork nature of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings' domains which were also crisscrossed and maintained by entangled aristocratic familial affinities and interests, formed potential fault lines of tension and aristocratic dissent in the governance of these larger entities and the vital distribution of their resources between the king, his family and his supporters amongst the magnates. The assumption or attempted maintenance by aristocratic affinities and familial groups of the inviolability of their access to their network's portfolio of inheritable interests was an impediment to the transmission of royal authority across the Anglo-Norman and Angevin domains and was further exacerbated by their size as well as the ambiguity surrounding the king's status and utilisation of royal prerogatives outside of England.<sup>560</sup> A particularly persistent vexation for English kings, throughout the twelfth century, was the technical and legal overlordship held by the French monarchy over their extensive French domains. While the Norman and Angevin kings of England pursued several strategies to subvert the mechanisms of this status, it could not be refuted outright. For instance, in 1159, Henry II's siege of the city of Toulouse and his attempts to

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<sup>560</sup> John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (London, 2001), p. 9.

gain the submission of Count Raymond, one of their most powerful and truculent vassals within Aquitaine, was stymied by Louis II personal intervention.<sup>561</sup>

During these sporadic outbreaks of internecine conflict within the, often fractured, hegemonies of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal family, politically active royal bastards who shared strong personal ties of affinity with the monarch often played a pronounced role. It can be argued that this prominence resulted from the strong level of association and close political orientation of royal bastards towards their family members during periods of conflict and disruption in which the interconnected and overlapping ties of family and regional affiliation and obligation were more sharply divided and defined from one another by political circumstances and affiliation. In addition to this trend of adherence to the royal centre and their legitimate family members, in the eventuality that internal disputes and aristocratic disenfranchisement manifested themselves in armed rebellion, several illegitimate royal family members were also actively engaged in military service on and beyond the borders of their legitimate family's landed interests. Both the borders within the British Isles and those that lay alongside the Île-de-France and eastern Normandy where culturally and politically permeable with various aristocratic interests and affinities, including those of illegitimate family members functioning within and beyond the limits of these sections of political hinterland. As a result of their relative power and degree of centralisation, the borders with France as well as to a lesser extent Scotland and Wales received significant royal attention.<sup>562</sup>

Royal bastards participated in a number of their legitimate family member's military campaigns directed against foreign neighbours throughout the twelfth century. Henry I's illegitimate son, the ultimately ill-fated Richard of Lincoln, as a youth, took part in the latter portion of his father's sprawling and extended war against Louis VI.<sup>563</sup> Seemingly serving as a member of his father's immediate military household; Orderic Vitalis places him in the company of Ralph of Pont-Echanfry, a former crusader and one of Henry I's most trusted military retainers

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<sup>561</sup> W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (Berkeley, 1977), p. 85.

<sup>562</sup> Sean Duffy, 'Henry II and England's Insular Neighbours', in Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent, eds., *Henry II: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 129-153 at p. 129.

<sup>563</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. xix.

whose adventuring career and its moral ramifications were a source of considerable interest to Orderic within his Ecclesiastical history.<sup>564</sup> While Orderic states that Richard was almost captured during the fighting around Les Andleys in 1119 and was only saved due to Ralph's intervention, he remained an active participant of his father's military retinue throughout the campaign and is later depicted as being present alongside Henry I at the siege of Erveux and participating in the decisive Battle of Brémule.<sup>565</sup>

Rather than simply serving as part of the royal military household, several illegitimate royal family members, with strong ties of personal affinity with their patrons, functioned as trusted military lieutenants directing and prosecuting large scale raids and campaigns on behalf of their shared dynastic enterprise. Shortly after his elevation to power and authority amongst the family and regional affinities of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, Robert of Gloucester engaged in substantive military royal service during the rebellion in 1123 which was sparked by the death of Henry's heir William the Aetheling. Leading a large contingent of troops from Henry I's heartland, the Cotentin, alongside Ranulf le Meschin, Robert saw extensive action in containing the rebellion in Normandy, going on to fight alongside his father when the king arrived with reinforcements later that year, quashing the rebellion.<sup>566</sup>

In 1173 Henry II's illegitimate son Geoffrey led a spectacularly successful campaign to counter the opportunistic invasion of William I of Scotland which was launched to take advantage of the rebellion of the Young King and his younger legitimate brothers. During the course of the campaign which culminated with the capture of the Scottish king through a surprise assault launched by Ranulf de Glanville, Geoffrey successfully rallied the royalist elements in the north of England and reduced a number of castles belonging to the prominent rebel Roger de Mowbray.<sup>567</sup> Similarly, Geoffrey's half-brother, William Longespée, led a number of military expeditions on behalf of their youngest legitimate sibling, King John, commanding armies in Wales, Ireland, England and France; his most

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<sup>564</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX and X, pp. x and 298.

<sup>565</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX and X, pp. x and 298.

<sup>566</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 180.

<sup>567</sup> Lovatt, 'The Career and Administration of Geoffrey Archbishop of York'.

dramatic military success being the pre-emptive destruction of the Flemish invasion force in 1213.<sup>568</sup> As a trusted member of the increasingly embattled king's inner circle, the earl was one of the royalist's premiere military commanders, while strong personal affinity and political investment in the king contributed to his possible status as John's favoured military substitute.

In addition to royally led or sponsored campaigns, considerable efforts were made to secure the strategically vital intermediate areas, such as the Vexin on the Norman French border, and bring them into alignment with the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies. This was achieved in part by a programme of fortification and the maintenance of considerable royal garrisons for castles within strategic border areas which functioned both as a defensive measure as well as a proactive means of projecting power within the region and prosecuting raids. The upkeep of such garrisons, many of which were composed partially of foreign mercenaries, were a significant expense and were to an extent an attempt by Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings to compensate for the often fractious or contentious state of the Norman aristocracy through the exploitation of the superior revenue generated from England and its developing administrative and financial mechanisms. Indeed, according to Robert of Torigni, who alongside his contemporary Orderic Vitalis invests considerable effort in describing the composition and character of the royal military household, the king on his deathbed in 1135 ordered Robert of Gloucester to use funds from one of the principal royal treasuries currently residing at Falaise to pay off and reward the king's troops.<sup>569</sup> The earl, who was one of the king's children present at this death, is subsequently described by Robert of Torigni as having removed a considerable portion of this treasury prior to surrendering the castle of Falaise in the immediate aftermath of his acknowledgement of Stephen's kingship, perhaps implying that he carried out his father's wishes.<sup>570</sup>

Another method deployed by Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings to exert their influence and control over the peripheries of their domains, particularly those with significant strategic importance, was the cultivation of relationships with the

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<sup>568</sup> Bryant, *The History of William Marshal*, p. 176.

<sup>569</sup> J.O. Prestwich, 'The Military Household of the Norman Kings', in Matthew Strickland, ed., *Anglo-Norman Warfare: Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo Norman Military Organisation and Warfare* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 90.

<sup>570</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.



noble families embedded within the region. In creating a degree of affinity with participants in regional aristocratic networks and by empowering them through the distribution of royal offices or an elevation in status, even extending members' administrative privileges and considerable political latitude, these nobles were then more capable and inclined to protect and expand their own landed interests. By projecting power into the peripheries and through the maintenance of the border's integrity, these regional aristocratic affinities and their interests were aligned with those of the royal centre. This was the strategy broadly pursued with the marcher lords established astride the Welsh border amongst whom were imbedded two illegitimate royal family members, the paternal half-brothers Robert of Gloucester and Henry Fitzroy. Robert of Gloucester's title was created specifically for his use while the lands he gained through his royally mandated marriage to Mabel Fitzhamon, one of several eligible heiresses under the king's wardship, were supplemented by gifts from the royal domains within the region. It seems evident then that Robert's empowerment and consequential primacy amongst the regions aristocratic and political networks was the result of a deliberate royal policy.<sup>571</sup> By elevating his eldest illegitimate child to a position of power and authority amongst the marcher lords, Henry I was attempting not only to ensure their continued adherence to his rule but also the security of the Welsh border.

Equally as important was the attempt to exert some measure of royal authority and control over the marcher lords' private wars in the ongoing domination and conquest of Wales by placing an acknowledged participant in royal family identity in a position of influence over it. In this respect, Robert performed significant military and diplomatic service, considerably advancing his newly acquired interests and fulfilling the role envisaged for him by his father in safeguarding royal interests and Norman power in Wales. Robert undertook the expansion of western Glamorgan, originally brought under Norman control by his late father-in-law, as well as the conquest of the lordship of Neath, acquired at the expense of the native Welsh princes.<sup>572</sup> The earl was able to effectively administrate and protect this acquisitions, in part, because of the rapprochement he had

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<sup>571</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. xx.

<sup>572</sup> Patterson, *Gloucester Charters*, No.43.

negotiated with elements of the natively dominated Welsh Church across much of southern Wales in 1126.

Henry Fitzroy in contrast persisted primarily within his maternal connections and while he held and administered sections of the royal domain within Wales on behalf of Henry I, most notably in Pedigog and Narberth and appears to have received royal acknowledgment, there exists some indications of doubt surrounding his paternity amongst some cotemporary sources.<sup>573</sup> Henry's mother, the Welsh princess Nest, was married to the ambitious Norman aristocrat and constable of Pembroke castle, Gerald FitzWilliam. As a result of this connection, Henry was firmly rooted in one of the most influential and successful of the Cambro-Norman families and participated with his maternal half-brothers in the defence and expansion of the family's considerable interests within Wales. Indeed, one of the greatest proponents of Henry's claim to royal heritage, was his nephew, the royal clerk and chronicler Gerald of Wales, a position no doubt made more tenable by Henry I's apparent acceptance.<sup>574</sup> In 1158 Henry led a military expedition on behalf of his royal nephew, Henry II, against Owain ap Gruffydd, the king of Gwynedd and one of the primary focal points of Welsh resistance and independence. The raid, while disastrous and resulting in Henry's death in battle, clearly represents an engagement with royal service in a military capacity.<sup>575</sup> However, it remains unclear the extent to which he was chosen to lead the campaign as the result of his royal connections and tangential membership in royal family identity or if he had been operating primarily as a marcher lord and was selected as an influential member of one of the most powerful Cambro-Norman dynasties.

#### **4.2 Illegitimate Royal Family Members Engagement in Diplomatic and Dynastic Service**

As previously discussed, the proper management of dynastic policy and the successful capitalisation of available resources in order to foster alliances, as well as gain access to new aristocratic affinities and potential access to their landed interests, was as equally important to the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal houses

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<sup>573</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, I, p. 130.

<sup>574</sup> *Annales Cambriae*, p. 47.

<sup>575</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, I, p. 130.

as it was for their subjects. Their royal status, however, was accompanied by considerable influence and legal prerogatives which were used by kings throughout the twelfth century to great effect in conjunction with a pool of politically utile illegitimate children. Participation by royal bastards within their family's wider dynastic policy, through royally brokered marriages, was one most important way in which they served and benefited their wider familial interests. Several of Henry I's large reserve of illegitimate daughters were deployed in a manner virtually indistinguishable from those of legitimate royal daughters and were given in marriage to high level aristocrats such as the Count of Perche as well as the rulers of neighbouring and at least nominally independent polities, such as the King of Scotland and the Duke of Brittany.<sup>576</sup> These strategic marriages served to enhance the influence and status of the Anglo-Norman royal family, acting as a mechanism to further foster the authority and overlordship of the Anglo-Norman hegemony and its rulers within both the British Isles and Northern France. The frequent presence of Countess Matilda of Perche at her father's court, for instance, helped to maintain and further encourage cooperation and cordial relations with a strongly aligned but distinct county whose inclusion within the Anglo-Norman realm was ambiguous and largely underwritten by the personal affinities and the power of the king. In the case of Countess Matilda, Henry further provided her husband with a substantial dowry of lands within England which gave her husband, Rotrou, a newly vested interest in maintaining the internal integrity of the Anglo-Norman realm and bringing his interests closer into alignment with those of the king and the royal affinity.<sup>577</sup>

Throughout this period, perhaps the most dramatic and consistently applied strategy across multiple reigns for the utilisation of illegitimate male members of the extended royal family was to empower them by furnishing them with advantageous marriages. These aristocratic unions which brought the royal bastards and through them their legitimate family members' access to their brides' family lands and titles were procured through the use of royal influence and privileges, most notably the exploitation of the king's traditional role as the guardian of orphans and widows. Illegitimate royal family members elevated this way were

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<sup>576</sup> Thompson, *Affairs of State*, p. 144.

<sup>577</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

normally selected as a result of the combination of a strong personal affinity with the monarch and beneficial contextual factors such as their age. The intention behind these royal sponsored marriages and the subsequent promotion of illegitimate family members to positions of power and authority, such as control of an earldom, not only provided them with the means and mechanisms to better support their patrons and shared familial interests but also as a means of drawing these newly acquired aristocratic interests as well as those of their wives' often extensive family connections closer into alignment and affinity with those of the king. In addition then to more active or personal forms of service, the royal illegitimate earls and other royal bastards who married into the aristocratic networks of England, Normandy and its neighbours, such as Robert FitzEdith who held the lordship of Okehampton through his wife Matilda d'Avranche, were engaged in royal service through their role as conduits between their legitimate family members the wider aristocratic networks of power in which they operated.<sup>578</sup>

#### **4.3 Illegitimate Royal Family Members Engagement in Administrative Service**

One of most fundamental ways in which both Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings maintained and exercised their fiscal and political authority over members of the nobility was through the distribution of royal offices. In a similar manner, kings utilised the increasingly sophisticated administrative apparatus of the royal household and exchequer to politicise tax and the various feudal duties as a means of rewarding service and encouraging aristocrats to align themselves more closely with the royal centre and its interests. Throughout the twelfth century a limited number of illegitimate family members contributed to the advancement of their shared dynastic interests through involvement in the developing and expanding administrative apparatus of royal governance. Both Robert of Gloucester and Geoffrey, the future archbishop of York, were their respective fathers' eldest children and the beneficiaries of considerable paternal affection and affinity. The acceptance of these royal bastards into positions of authority over the mechanisms of royal governance were both acknowledgments of their capabilities and manifestations of the strong bonds of familial feeling and personal connection. Far

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<sup>578</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 99.

from being reserved for the benefit of royal bastards, this form of sponsorship was widely utilised by kings, with appointments to offices within the royal administration representing a means of rewarding and empowering the king's servants and allies as much as a way to capitalise upon their talents. Indeed, even amongst those illegitimate royal family members who cooperated with and were empowered by their legitimate patron, the tendency was for them to promote royal familial interests from within the aristocratic affinities that they were imbedded in.

It is notable that only two royal bastards were given explicit authority and position within the operations of royal governance and that the two were utilised in markedly different ways. In a manner similar to the elevation of royal bastards to the upper echelons of the aristocracy, Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings did not pursue a cohesive or premediated strategy in the integration of their illegitimate children into the apparatus of royal governance. Instead, royal bastards formed a useful pool of potential allies and royal satellites who already possessed a significant political affinity and vested interests in the advancement of a shared dynastic enterprise and could be deployed in a variety of ways on an ad hoc basis to promote and secure royal interests in response to differing political contexts or challenges. Robert of Gloucester's extensive engagement with the royal administration was an extension of his role as a senior magnate and second man of the realm, acting as the king's deputy and proxy, a position to which his father had elevated him to following the death of William Aetheling who might normally have been expected to fulfil that position.

Geoffrey's promotion to a position of great authority and control over the developing mechanisms of royal government was also a reactive measure on the part of the king resulting from his explicit rejection of Henry II's attempts to insinuate him within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Following Geoffrey's papally prompted renunciation of the bishopric of Lincoln, the king was then compelled to find an alternate means of providing status and income for a favoured son who was already extensively engaged in royal service. It is of considerable significance that Geoffrey, seems to have been absent from the royal court for much of this time as Chancellor and perhaps only cursorily engaged with the position's duties. Instead his appointment invested him with a considerable income and the increased status and recognition afforded by an official and senior appointment within the royal

government which allowed Geoffrey to operate more effectively as a proxy of his father as well as helping to retain his loyalty and engagement in royal service.

Under his father, Henry I, Robert served alongside other members of his father's inner circle of councillors as a senior member of Court of the Exchequer.<sup>579</sup> Flexible in its composition and remit, drawing recruits from a pool of capable royal advisers and administrative officials, the Court was extended considerable autonomy in the maintenance and oversight of the king's finances, possibly as a result of the itinerant nature of the royal court and the king's long periods of absence from the English royal centres. In 1130, Robert can be found attesting to a charter in Winchester alongside the chief Justicar, Bishop Roger of Salisbury, his nephew and treasurer Nigel, the Bishop of Winchester, the Royal Chancellor Geoffrey Rufus and the Royal Constable Robert of Olli as well as a number of other royal officials and Exchequer staff which may represent the king acting in concert with and granting approval to the members of his Exchequer Court.<sup>580</sup> Members of this body and their financial interests and obligations often appeared clustered together within the annual Pipe Rolls which they oversaw, perhaps as a means of organising and accounting for the substantial pardons and remissions from taxation which they both dispensed, pending royal approval, and personally greatly benefited from. Robert of Gloucester's frequent appearance within these Pipe Roll clusters of vested administrative interests, which was substantially higher than any of his colleagues or contemporaries; a prominence which significantly extended to those years in which he accompanied the king to Rouen, suggests a strong and permanent association with the management of the Exchequer. Robert, then, was one of the core members of the powerful and influential administrative body responsible for the maintenance of royal finances and in a large part the distribution of royal largesse. In addition to this position, Robert was also engaged in service to his legitimate family members in an administrative capacity when he was entrusted in 1128 to carry out an audit of the royal treasury, acting as a direct deputy to the king alongside his long term ally Brian FitzCount, whose strategically vital castle at Wallingford would go onto play an important role in the maintenance of the

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<sup>579</sup> Stephanie Mooers Christelow, 'The Fiscal Management of England under Henry I', in Donald F. Fleming and Janet M. Pope, eds., *Henry I and the Anglo-Norman World: Studies in Memory of C Warren Hollister* (Woodbridge, 2007) pp.158-182. at p. 170.

<sup>580</sup> Mooers Christelow, 'Fiscal Management of England', p. 170.

Empress Matilda's dynastic claims in England.<sup>581</sup> The duo also performed the same function in 1129 when they audited the Durham treasury.<sup>582</sup>

Geoffrey, the second royal bastard to be elevated to a position of authority within the royal administration during this period was compelled to abandon his position as Bishop Elect of Lincoln in 1182 following complaints levelled against Geoffrey by his cathedral canons and the eventual issuing of a Papal ultimatum to either become ordained or relinquish the bishopric. Following this resignation, Geoffrey was appointed Royal Chancellor by his father and at the same time endowed with considerable resources for his maintenance drawn from both royal domains and vacant ecclesiastical dioceses amounting to a considerable yearly income, in the region of five hundred marks, while the position's current incumbent, Ralph de Warneville, was raised to the bishopric of Lisieux.<sup>583</sup> In addition to Chancellorship, Geoffrey inherited from Ralph the positions of treasurer of York and the archdeaconry of Rouen as well as receiving the custodianship and accompanying incomes of the castles of Bauge and Langeais in southern Anjou.

Strangely given his closeness to his father and his earlier engagement in royal service, Geoffrey's role as chancellor, nominally responsible for the operation of royal governance and its increasingly diversified and invasive administrative apparatus, seems to have been limited. The chancellor appears to have been in the king's company fairly frequently witnessing court documents at various stages throughout the 1180s, in which he is identified either alternatively or concurrently as the king's son and chancellor.<sup>584</sup> Within these charters he is listed foremost amongst the charters secular witnesses as a result of the authority of his position and by dint of his personal affinity with the king. However, his employment of Walter de Coutances to act the keeper of the seal and discharge many of the formal legal and ceremonial duties of the Chancellor suggest an extended or frequent absence from the royal court.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Mooers Christelow, 'Fiscal Management', p. 171.

<sup>582</sup> Mooers Christelow, 'Fiscal Management', p. 172.

<sup>583</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p. 130.

<sup>584</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle (Paris, 1916), Book II, DCX, p. 216, DCCXLI, p. 372, DCCXLII, p. 373, DCCXLV, p. 378, DCCXLVI, p. 382

<sup>585</sup> Lovatt, 'Career and Administration of Geoffrey'.

It is possible, however, that Geoffrey was engaged in royal service elsewhere representing his father's tangled interests abroad. During this period near the height of Henry II's temporal power and influence, he received overtures from magnates within both Italy and the crusader states, to which he had dynastic claim, suggesting the possibility of the king or one of his sons could claim thrones within the respective regions. It's possible then that Geoffrey was engaged in some way in negotiating these potential suits on behalf of his father and familial dynastic interests. Indeed, the contemporary Angevin court functionary and diplomat, Peter of Blois, records that Geoffrey's own candidacy had been discussed and that as a result of his well-known admirable qualities, or possibly more likely his strong affinity with a powerful monarch who continuously flirted with the notion of crusade, the patriarch of Jerusalem, Heraclius, experimented with the notion of offering him the throne of the holy city.<sup>586</sup> Peter of Blois was an intimate of the Angevin court and held the position of chief letter writer to the archbishop of Canterbury before his dogged work as a royal advocate and propagandist on behalf of Henry II saw him rewarded with a series of diplomatic appointments. Peter and Geoffrey were almost certainly personally acquainted as a result of their shared membership and service to the royal court. What is more Peter dedicating his work on the life of the Anglo-Saxon St Wilfred to the royal bastard, suggested the two were connected through ties of sponsorship or patronage. Peter then is an exceptionally well-informed source regarding the dynastic and hegemonic ambitions of Henry II and his family, although it is possible he exaggerated the extent or seriousness of these discussions in order to inflate perceptions of the Chancellor's importance and the Plantagenet family's international kudos as a result of his personal connection with Geoffrey and general adherence to Henry II.<sup>587</sup> The idea that Geoffrey may have acted as his father's envoy in Jerusalem and the king maintained an interest in the region is possibly given further credence by Geoffrey's role in witnessing a royal charter issued in 1181 in which the king

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<sup>586</sup> John D. Cotts, *The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century* (Washington D.C, 2009), p. 49.

<sup>587</sup> Cotts, *The Clerical Dilemma*, p. 49.



donated forty marks of silver to the then expanding Lepers of Saint Lazarus which were based in Jerusalem .<sup>588</sup>

#### **4.4 Illegitimate Royal Family Members and Office holding: Earldoms**

Several of the most favoured Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards who benefited from a strong engagement with royal family identity and a favourable political context were elevated to the position of earl, a role and title originating from the Anglo-Saxon system but heavily adapted to function alongside Norman conceptions of aristocratic hierarchy and administrative innovations.<sup>589</sup> To an extent, earls could be viewed as royal office holders and functionaries whose positions, in addition to the prestige of comital rank, held strong connotations of vice-regal powers and responsibilities within their earldoms.<sup>590</sup> However, under Anglo-Norman and Angevin rulers this executive status was largely aspirational, with the rights and administrative authority of an earl being fluidic and dispensed by monarchs on an individual ad hoc basis, although the recognition of certain financial and administrative privileges such as the right to extract income from judicial proceedings within their earldom were reasonably common.<sup>591</sup> Those magnates who were most strongly aligned and associated with the king, which naturally included illegitimate royal family members raised to earldoms, were rewarded through the granting of the most extensive and lucrative of these rights and powers, including the much sought and coveted control over the appointment and operation of an earldom's sheriffs.

The use of these financial and administrative privileges not only enriched the recipient earls, encouraging their further observance of royal interests and policy but also enhanced their influence and authority within their regions networks of power through the increased social prestige that accompanied comital rank but also provided them with more resources to distribute amongst their own affinities.

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<sup>588</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book II, DCXI, p. 218

<sup>589</sup> David Crouch, 'Athelings, Dukes and Comites in Insular Societies, 800-1300', in J. Peltzer, ed., *Rank and Order, 3, The Formation of Aristocratic Elites in Western and Central Europe, 500-1500* (Ostfildern, 20015), pp. 117-30.

<sup>590</sup> Crouch, *English Aristocracy*, p. 208.

<sup>591</sup> Keefe, *Feudal Assessment*, p. 117.

This strategic assignment of vice regal powers and privileges to those earls most heavily engaged in royal service then served to further increase the power and stability of these royally aligned magnates. While in a sense those royal bastards elevated to the rank of earl by their legitimate family members were occupying a royal office and performing an administrative function and political service for the royal government, the extent of these responsibilities was in part the result of a self-reinforcing mechanism to reward royal service and loyalty. Those Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards who had been bestowed with earldoms as a result of their personal affinities and investment in familial dynastic interests were granted financial benefits and privileges in the administration of those earldoms as a means of increasing their capability to protect and advance their mutual interests.

#### **4.5 Illegitimate Royal Family Members and Office Holding: Shrievalty**

Similar to the rank of earl, the office of sheriff was a key position in the transmission of authority and the financial administration of twelfth century royal government which had greatly evolved and been purposefully re-engineered from its Anglo-Saxon origins.<sup>592</sup> Responsible for the collection of tax within a region and the meeting of the Exchequer's financial quotas, the position of sheriff was vital to the proper maintenance and running of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin hegemonies within England. Taxation and the redistribution of money was, of course, a highly politicised process for members of the aristocracy and the considerable level of autonomy afforded to sheriffs meant that the position was not only lucrative but also afforded its holders considerable scope to increase their influence within their region of authority.<sup>593</sup>

The Mandeville family, for instance, was able to construct a formidable powerbase and in part pave the way for their elevation to an earldom through their hereditary custodianship of the Tower of London and frequent appointment as the city's sheriff. When in 1141, Earl Geoffrey de Mandeville was negotiating with the Empress Matilda for his support in her on going dynastically motivated struggle, he not only wished for the confirmation of his royally granted earldom but also succeeded in securing his appointment as sheriff in Essex, London, Hertfordshire

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<sup>592</sup> Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, p. 223.

<sup>593</sup> Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170-1300*, p. 83.

and Middlesex.<sup>594</sup> Demonstrating that occupancy of the post of sheriff represented an important political and financial windfall to even established aristocrats. Like many aspects of twelfth century aristocratic life, appointment as a sheriff was not without its risks, requisite to the acceptance of the office was often the paying of a substantial fee to the exchequer while those who failed to meet their quotas were obligated to make up the difference themselves or else be dismissed.<sup>595</sup>

It seems that the Earls Robert and Reginald, both illegitimate sons of Henry I, appointed and controlled the sheriffs of their respective earldoms without significant direction or interference from the royal centre. This degree of latitude was extended to them as a result of their pronounced participation in royal family identity and extensive engagement with royal service as well as favourable political circumstances. In Robert's case, the foremost of these outside political factors was the instability and concern over the succession in the aftermath of the White Ship disaster which led to Henry I's perceived need for a powerful ally within the aristocracy deeply invested in the preservation and advancement of the royal family's dynastic interests.<sup>596</sup> While the administrative and financial privileges enjoyed by Reginald were informed by the circumstances through which he acquired his earldom during the Angevin struggle with King Stephen and his later seniority within the royal family under Henry II as the most politically engaged and temporally powerful of Henry I's remaining sons. This direct control over the sheriffs within their quite considerable spheres of influence significantly enhanced the half-brother's financial resources and the authority they held over the aristocratic affinities and family groups within their domains. This ceding of authority over a royal office by both an Anglo-Norman and Angevin king to trusted illegitimate family members engaged in royal service and the advancement of their shared dynastic interests displays the acknowledged political utility of royal bastards and the manner in which royal offices and privileges could be deployed to support and enhance these relationships.

Unlike Reginald and Robert, Henry II's illegitimate half-brother Hamelin de Warenne was the son of a Count rather than a king which possibly had a

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<sup>594</sup> Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World*, p. 117.

<sup>595</sup> Mooers Christelow, 'Fiscal Management', p. 174.

<sup>596</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume V Books IX and X, pp. x and 298.

detrimentally effect upon his relative status within aristocratic society and courtly life despite his personal affinity with Henry II. Although Hamelin was committed to the support of his royal family members, consistently acting to protect royal interests during periods of crisis or conflict, he was otherwise largely removed from the apparatus and function of royal governance and when not actively engaged in royal service, primarily operated within the affinities and networks he had inherited through marriage into the influential Warenne family. When Hamelin was raised to the earldom of Surrey in 1164 through his royally brokered marriage to its heiress, Countess Isabel, it appears that he was not granted authority over the sheriffs of his earldom in the manner enjoyed by earlier and more powerful elevated royal bastards or else appointed to the position himself. Instead, at the time of Hamelin's marriage to Isabel the position was occupied by Gervase of Cornhill, a minor aristocrat and royal official who performed a variety of administrative roles within the royal government.<sup>597</sup> He served additionally and frequently as the sheriff of London throughout the 1150s as well as that of Kent for a number of years from 1167 to 1174. The Gervase family, which held diverse interests in London, were deeply involved in royal administrative service and upon his death in 1183 he was succeeded as sheriff in turns by his sons Henry and Reginald.<sup>598</sup>

While there is little direct evidence about the nature of the interactions between Earl Hamelin and the administrative dynasty operating within his earldom, Henry of Cornhill was like Hamelin a close supporter of Richard I's Chancellor, William Longchamp, during the difficulties and infighting arising during the king's absence; suggesting they were capable of cooperation and may have shared a cordial relationship.<sup>599</sup> Hamelin was a devoted, if somewhat remote, participant in royal family identity, whose elevation to an earldom and the upper echelons of the aristocracy originated from his political utility to his legitimate family. However, the control or occupation of the office of sheriff within a county was neither a default privilege for royally aligned earls or royal family members regardless of their legitimacy. Personal factors and family dynamics, as well as a greatly changed political context under Henry II, perhaps could have contributed to the decision that

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<sup>597</sup> H. M. Thomas, *Vassals, Heiresses, Crusaders, and Thugs: The Gentry of Angevin Yorkshire, 1154–1216* (1993).

<sup>598</sup> Thomas, *Vassals, Heiresses, Crusaders, and Thugs*

<sup>599</sup> Thomas, *Vassals, Heiresses, Crusaders, and Thugs*

was more politically and finally expedient to assign royal offices, in an increasingly sophisticated system of governance, to members of an emerging clique of committed administrators. It could also be argued that in addition to a general shift in royal policy, Henry II and his sons simply saw no need to further reinforce the loyalty and power of an already committed illegitimate family member who occupied a position of relatively marginal importance amongst the ranks of the Angevin magnates.

Shortly after his accession to the throne in 1199, John endowed his half-brother Earl William Longespée with the shrievalty of Wiltshire, an appointment the earl would hold on and off again from his brother in 1199-1202, 1203-1207 and finally in 1213 -1226.<sup>600</sup> A royal favourite, William evidently shared a strong personal sense of affinity with his half-brother with whom he would often gamble and carousal, and was also heavily engaged in military royal service and served as the castellan of several key royal castles such as Dover and Salisbury. The earl maintained strongly that his wife Countess Ela and by extension himself held a hereditary claim the position of sheriff of Wiltshire which had been held at various points by his wife's father and grandfather.<sup>601</sup> The king, however, while periodically bestowing the office upon William, steadfastly refused to recognise this claim to control the shrievalty of the relatively small earldom by default. John's reluctance to grant William and his family the office of sheriff of Wiltshire in perpetuity may be a further reflection of advancing royal policy and administrative practice in separating the great magnates and aristocrats from the mechanisms of royal government and connotations of vice-regal authority.<sup>602</sup> Indeed, later in his career, the earl's attempts to exercise power and authority over Devon and Somerset, which had been promised to him by Henry III's Council of Regents in exchange for his support, was stymied in a large part due to the interference of the region's sheriffs who were entrenched in the localities and unwilling to relinquish their positions.

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<sup>600</sup> B. W. Holden, 'The Balance of Patronage: King John and the Earl of Salisbury', *Haskins Society Journal*, 8, pp. 79-89 at p. 83.

<sup>601</sup> Holden, 'The Balance of Patronage: King John and the Earl of Salisbury', p. 79.

<sup>602</sup> Sabapathy, *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England 1170-1300*, p. 121.

Possessed of a cultivated awareness of his participation in a royal family identity and serving as one of the king's principal military lieutenants, in a sense, William was in a limited way engaging in a vice-regal executive role in acting as a proxy and enforcer for the king.<sup>603</sup> While John and William seem to have possessed an intimate familial affinity, the gifts the king bestowed upon his half-brother were generally either of a relatively modest personal nature or as a direct result of his engagement in royal service; such as his custody of Church lands in Ely and his acquirement of barony of Trowbridge in his earldom which had to be confiscated from the rebellious Earl Henry de Bohun.<sup>604</sup> By retaining ultimate control over the office of sheriff and potentially limiting or removing William's access to the valuable resources and authority the position represented, John was possibly not only preserving his royal prerogatives but working to ensure the continued dependence of his illegitimate half-brother on royal favour and active engagement in the preservation of their shared dynastic interests.

#### **4.6 Robert of Gloucester Participation in Royal Service**

The career of Earl Robert of Gloucester and his extensive engagement in service to his legitimate family members displays the potentially reciprocal nature of these relationships and in the political and dynastic deployment of illegitimate family members. As an acknowledged participant in royal family identity, Robert was through his activities in safeguarding and advancing these shared familial interests, furthering both his own interests and alignment with his legitimate relatives. Robert was made one of the Anglo-Norman realm's greatest magnates by his father in response to a royal dynastic crisis and the resultant political instability. An integral facet of his new position as Henry I's foremost supporter and ally within the aristocracy being a participation in royal service. However, the earl, much like other elevated and empowered illegitimate royal family members, was not merely a royal satellite or proxy but instead functioned as an aristocrat whose political interests were heavily aligned with those of legitimate family members. It is

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<sup>603</sup> David A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (Berkeley, 1990), p. 69.

<sup>604</sup> P. C. Reed, 'Countess Ida, Mother of William Longespée, Illegitimate Son of Henry II', *American Genealogist*, 77 (2002), pp. 137-49 at p. 143.

notable then that Robert was possibly the illegitimate royal family member most engaged in cultivating the trappings and status of royal identity with his experimentation with the minting of his own coinage and adoption of a style with profound imperial and classical connotations.<sup>605</sup> The earl's support and engagement in royal service, on behalf of both his father or to a greater extent his half-sister, Empress Matilda, can be seen then as the pursuit and advancement on his own dynastic and political interests which were, similar to many Anglo-Norman aristocrats, to a degree framed and informed by his acknowledged membership of a familial identity. This is particularly clear during this extensive period of cooperation with Robert's confederate and family member, the Empress Matilda, whose dynastic claims he sought to uphold while also emphasising his own authority and royal identity.

In 1123, relatively recently after his creation as a cross-channel magnate, Robert was heavily engaged in quelling a uprising in Normandy launched in conjunction with a military incursion into southern Normandy by the aggressive Count Fulk of Anjou.<sup>606</sup> Henry's legitimate son and chosen successor, William Aetheling, had as part of his father's attempts to safe guard the Anglo-Norman realm and expand its influence, been married to Fulk's daughter Sybilla. Following William's death during the sinking of the White Ship disaster, Henry quarrelled with Fulk over the return of Sybilla's extensive dowry which included a number of strategically important castles on the Norman Anjou border.

As a result of this disagreement and Henry's cupidity, the Count of Anjou married his daughter to William Clito, the dispossessed but extremely politically active legitimate son of the imprisoned Duke Robert of Normandy. William was supported in his newly renewed attempts to claim his ancestral duchy, not only by his new father-in-law, but by a number of dissident Norman aristocrats, such as the Count of Evreux, Amaury de Montfort, Waleran of Meulan, his brother-in-law Hugh de Montfort and William Lovel. Robert was entrusted by his father, alongside Earl Ranulf of Chester, with the leadership of a large royalist army and charged with subduing his cousin's supporters amongst the Norman nobility,

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<sup>605</sup> Marion M. Archibald 'The Lion Coinage of Robert Earl of Gloucester and William Earl of Gloucester', *British Numismatics Society*, 71 (2000), pp.71-86, p. 71.

<sup>606</sup> Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and The Chronicler*, p. 34.

operating initially from his base within Henry's former heartland of the Cotentin. Later that year, following the king's arrival in Normandy, he summoned Robert and his lieutenant Nigel d'Aubigny to join him in the reduction of Montfort-sur-Rilse, the principal stronghold of Hugh de Montfort.<sup>607</sup> While not listed by Orderic Vitalis as being amongst the royalist commanders at the Battle of Bourgthéroulde in 1124, it is possible that Robert was either in the king's company, liaising with the itinerant royal centre at Caen or was simply prosecuting the war elsewhere in a mode of warfare where decisive battles were rare and theatres fluidic.<sup>608</sup> William Malmesbury, the first edition of whose *Gesta Regum Anglorum* would be written only a year after the campaign, as well as the substantially less biased chronicler Symeon of Durham both emphasise Henry's trust in and reliance upon Robert's military abilities in their accounts of the rebellion.<sup>609</sup>

Robert was also heavily involved during this time in the expansion and consolidation of the Anglo-Norman presence within Wales, annexing substantial land in southern Wales from native dynasties while cultivating a working relationship with the region's bishops and religious institutions. In advancing Norman power and hegemony within Wales, through military and diplomatic means, Earl Robert was cultivating his own interests and personal power while also serving those of his legitimate family members by maintaining the integrity of the Welsh border and providing royally aligned supervision over the Marcher Lords' efforts to expand into Wales.<sup>610</sup> Indeed, one of principal factors in determining Henry II's aggressive policy in Ireland was the desire to exert authority and control over those Anglo-Norman and Cambro-Norman aristocrats seeking to carve out a potentially independent powerbase within the area; an eventuality which Robert's strong royal alignment and ascendancy amongst the Marcher Lords had worked to preclude in Wales.<sup>611</sup>

In 1136, during the opening stages of Stephen's reign, Robert again performed a form of royal service, albeit in a slightly more nebulous form, in

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<sup>607</sup> Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and the Chronicler*, p. 34.

<sup>608</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 2, p. 51.

<sup>609</sup> Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de Exordio qtque Proscursu istius hoc est Dunhelmensis Ecclesice*, ed. David Rollason (Oxford, 2000), p. 312.

<sup>610</sup> Lynn Nelson, *The Normans in South Wales 1070-1171* (Houston, 2012), p. 94.

<sup>611</sup> Sean Duffy, 'Ireland's Hastings: The Anglo-Norman Conquest of Dublin', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, XX (1997), pp. 69-83 at p. 69.



defending royal interests and Anglo-Norman power within Wales by bringing an end to the large scale Welsh uprising perpetuated by Morgan ab Owain and his allies. Here, however, his success was achieved largely through negotiation and the redistribution of lands to members of the Welsh nobility in exchange for fealty.<sup>612</sup> The military response to the resurgent Welsh being limited by the presence of Robert and several other Marcher Lords at the siege of Exeter and the reluctance of King Stephen to intervene directly, a cautious approach which ironically may well have been prompted by the reluctant magnates compelling of Stephen to lift the siege and negotiate with the rebellious Baldwin de Redvers.

Robert served his father as one of his key counsellors and officials in the operation of Anglo-Norman governance. In addition to his membership and association with the Court of the Exchequer, a body integral to the continued function of royal governance and projection of the king's authority. The degree of his father's immense trust in Robert and his abilities was demonstrated when he was given responsibility for carrying out an audit of the principal royal treasury at Winchester.<sup>613</sup> As an intimate of the royal court, Robert frequently appeared on the witness lists of his father's charters, both an important tool and function of royal governance. During times when the court was absent from significant royal centres, Robert was called upon to validate and ratify writs issued on his father's behalf either on his own or more commonly alongside other senior royal councillors.<sup>614</sup>

The earl also participated and represented his father in several notable ecclesiastical councils in the 1120s, whose consequences directly impacted the administrative and political geometry of the Anglo-Norman world. Over the course of 1125, the earl witnessed two legatine courts established by Pope Calixtus II in an attempt to resolve the long-standing ambiguity and animosity surrounding the archbishoprics of Canterbury and York.<sup>615</sup> The dispute over Canterbury's alleged primacy having been reignited by Archbishop William de Corbeil's refusal to consecrate or recognise Thurstan of York until his primacy was acknowledged. In 1127, Robert represented his father at an ecclesiastical council held by Archbishop

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<sup>612</sup> David Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 57.

<sup>613</sup> Mooers Christelow, 'Fiscal Management', p. 170.

<sup>614</sup> Judith A. Green, *The Government of England Under Henry I* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 139.

<sup>615</sup> Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and the Chronicler*, p. 37.

William which attempted to further disseminate and enforce the policies and theological positions of the growing Church reform movement by reiterating the ban on simony and the prohibition of marriage for those under holy orders or occupying positions within a cathedral.<sup>616</sup> Robert's inclusion in the council's witnesses on behalf of his father leads to the strange occurrence of an elevated and empowered royal bastard engaged in service to his shared royal dynastic interests by rubber stamping elements of the theological reforms and innovations which had so strongly delineated his illegitimate status. In 1138, Robert attended another council held by the archbishop of Canterbury which considered the amalgamations of the Welsh diocese of Llandaff and St David, an enterprise on which the earl would have had a considerable personal interest in, and influence over, directly impacting as it did the administration and projection of authority within southern Wales.<sup>617</sup>

Robert's engagement within royal service and subsequent importance within the royal court can be attested to in his high placement amongst the lay witnesses to his father's acta and was in 1130 even granted primacy over his legitimate cousin, Count Stephen and the other magnates of the Anglo-Norman realm. Robert then was heavily engaged in service to his father through the maintenance and execution of royal government to the extent that he may have formed something of a rivalry with the Chancellor, Bishop Roger of Salisbury whose royal authority he may have encroached upon. In 1126, Earl Robert replaced Roger as the gaoler of his uncle and possible namesake, Robert of Normandy, an important form of participation in the protection of the royal familial interests and service as a result of the Duke's status as a potential focus for further aristocratic dissent and arguably superior claim to not only Normandy but the throne of England.<sup>618</sup> In addition to his uncle, Robert further received from the Chancellor, custodianship of two castles and their peripheries within Kent, granting Robert substantial influence over the region.<sup>619</sup> A further suggestion of their relative roles and status within the implementation of royal governance can possibly be detected

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<sup>616</sup> Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and the Chronicler*, p. 37.

<sup>617</sup> John Reuben Davies, *The Book of Llandaff and the Norman Church in Wales* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 54.

<sup>618</sup> Aird, *Robert Curthose*, p. 277.

<sup>619</sup> Aird, *Robert Curthose*, p. 277.

in the obscure circumstances in which the bishopric granted the lordship of Kidwelly in the Welsh Marches to one of Robert's tenants in the region, Maurice de Londres.<sup>620</sup>

In 1130, Geoffrey de Clinton, a royal clerk and member of Robert of Gloucester's affinity, was placed on trial for treason on what court intimate and chronicler Henry of Huntington describes as false and inflated charges. It is possible that Geoffrey's arrest was instigated by Bishop Roger as a politically motivated attack on the earl and his faction within the court, following the treasury audit, a task which arguably fell within the Chancellor's traditional purview. However, it is just as plausible that Geoffrey's arrest and eventual acquittal was the result of the findings of the audit itself or else entirely unrelated. The *Gesta Stephani*, which was formulated in the midst of the dynastic struggle between King Stephen and his cousin Empress Matilda, describes Stephen as being eager to accept his illegitimate cousin into the fold and ingratiatingly granted all the earl's demands in exchange for recognition and homage.<sup>621</sup> What these conditions were, beyond the recognition of the lands and titles granted to him by Henry I, are unknown, however, and throughout his chronicle the anonymous but likely cathedral based author of the *Gesta Stephani* takes careful pains to portray Stephen and his royalist faction in a positive light. William of Malmesbury, whose sections of contemporary history in his revised work is equally as biased in favour of his patron, suggests that the earl believed himself to be the target of a royally sponsored conspiracy and assassination attempt.<sup>622</sup> William depicts this belief as a part of a pattern in which the illegitimate royal earl was deeply suspicious of Stephen's intentions towards him and believing the king to be a false friend intent upon sidelining and damaging him.<sup>623</sup>

Robert's position amongst the political and social pinnacle of Anglo-Norman society had been based not only upon his wealth and extensive landed interests but also his access to the king and association with royal service. A political dissociation from the royal court and the prestige and connections it

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<sup>620</sup> RRAN, II, no.1042

<sup>621</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 46.

<sup>622</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 70.

<sup>623</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 70.

brought, then directly threatened Robert's ability to attract parties to his affinity as well as potentially damaging the earl's status and highly cultivated sense of royal identity. As a result, following the political manoeuvring and tumult that accompanied Stephen's succession and attempted consolidation of authority, Earl Robert's apparent perception that he was being isolated from the king's inner circle, as well as perhaps the king's inaction during the uprising in Wales seems to have convinced Robert of the personal and political advantages of alignment with the dynastic claims of his half-sister and her deeply politically divisive Angevin family. Robert's decision to support Matilda in her bid for the throne was surely a result of their shared familial identity, the obligations and conflation of interests inherent to this connection forming a solid basis for their cooperation. Their status and association as children of Henry I mirrored their positions and relative authority as the joint leaders of the Angevin cause in England. While the earl may also have been influenced by a desire to adhere, albeit belatedly, to his father's wishes, the highly politicised nature of their alliance and Robert's status as a confederate, predicated equally upon Matilda's reliance on Robert's established power base within England and Robert's own sense of royal identity and subsequent desire to secure his position through integration with the royal centre and association with his legitimate family.

While a powerful magnate whose affinities and associations formed the mainstay of the Angevin war effort within England, Robert's initial military service on behalf of his legitimate family member and fellow participant in royal family identity was less than encouraging. Travelling to Empress Matilda's court in the summer of 1138, Robert's declaration in defence of his half-sister's rights was accompanied by a mobilisation of his followers within England and a coordinated invasion of Normandy in the company of his brother-in-law, Geoffrey of Anjou.<sup>624</sup> Both facets of this cross-channel enterprise met with disaster, with the earl's embattled adherents being forced out of his lands in Kent while Geoffrey's offensive was stymied and Robert's Norman holding were successfully ravaged by his old rival Count Waleran of Meulan.<sup>625</sup>

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<sup>624</sup> David Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester (b. before 1100, d. 1147)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>625</sup> Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester'.

While it is unclear what steps Robert took for the preservation of their now conjoined interests and mutual cause, in the interim in mid-1139 the earl accompanied Empress Matilda to England, leaving the campaign for their ancestral duchy in the hands of Matilda's husband. The siblings at first took refuge with their stepmother, Queen Adeliza, before escaping to Robert's stronghold at Bristol, much to the vexation of her new husband Earl William d'Aubigny of Arundel who was strongly aligned with King Stephen.<sup>626</sup> Upon re-establishing himself within his powerbase and consolidating his forces, Robert then sacked the city of Worcester in retaliation for the Beaumont family's destruction of his Norman estates.<sup>627</sup> Robert also advanced his sister's claims and shared family interests in 1140 by establishing their young half-brother Reginald amongst the Cornish aristocratic familial networks through marriage to the daughter of a prominent Angevin within the region and in cooperation with the Empress, elevating him to the disputed earldom of Cornwall.<sup>628</sup>

During this time, Robert also acted as his half-sister's envoy in preliminary but ultimately inconclusive negotiations with Stephen's supporters at Bath, meeting Archbishop Theobald of Bec, the king's younger brother Bishop Henry of Winchester as well as his wife, the active and formidable Queen Matilda. Robert subsequently made an abortive attempt to capture the city and complete the growing Angevin domination of the south-west of England before participating in a large scale and successful raid on royalist Nottingham in conjunction with Ralf Pagnell, the castellan of Dudley and Earl Roger de Beaumont of Warwick, a cousin of Count Waleran and Earl Richard.<sup>629</sup> Robert was also instrumental in orchestrating the Angevin's greatest victory in the conflict and military high-water mark when acting in cooperation with the powerful and independent Ranulf of Chester, who exercised near hegemonic power in the north of England, and supported by several his Welsh tributaries they caught and decisively routed Stephen's army at Lincoln, capturing the king.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 42.

<sup>627</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 272.

<sup>628</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 102.

<sup>629</sup> Crouch, 'Robert, First Earl of Gloucester'.

<sup>630</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, p. 141.

As Matilda's close relative and most powerful supporter amongst the magnates, Robert was naturally present at Empress Matilda's failed Coronation and humiliating flight from London, taking command of Angevin forces during the siege of Winchester. It was during this sudden reversal of fortunes that Robert was captured by royalist forces while covering the Empress's retreat and directing the rear guard of the Angevin army.<sup>631</sup> Robert's singular importance as a military proxy for Matilda and the degree of his association with royal family identity and position as joint leadership of the Angevin cause proved to be a double-edged sword for his half-sister. Without Robert's prestige amongst the aristocracy, the resources of his own extensive affinities and his energetic, if perhaps unimaginative, military leadership, Matilda was unable to effectively counter Stephen's resurgent supporters and she was swiftly compelled to exchange the imprisoned king for her half-brother.

Following his release, Robert continued to defend their shared political and territorial interests, operating from both his powerbase in the Welsh Marches and Empress Matilda's court at Oxford. In 1142, Robert once again acted as his sister's envoy, travelling to Normandy and participated in his brother-in-law, Geoffrey of Anjou's successful campaign to further pacify the south of the duchy.<sup>632</sup> However, as advantageous as this was, he failed in his original intention to entice the count to travel to England and support his wife's campaign there. Worse still in Robert's long absence, Stephen had besieged Oxford from which Empress Matilda was forced to flee after a newly returned Robert proved unable to break the siege.<sup>633</sup> In 1143, in one of the conflicts last decisive battles, Robert effectively checked the Angevin's decline in England by soundly defeating Stephen and his allies at Wilton, capturing the castle and ransacking the town.<sup>634</sup> An incident, occurring shortly before his sudden illness and death in 1147, which highlights Robert's conception of himself as a member of the Anglo-Norman royal family and subsequently cultivated association with leadership of the Angevin party, was the arrival in England of Matilda's son Henry. Eager to participate in the claiming of his patrimony and establish himself, the teenage Henry travelled to England with a

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<sup>631</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 298.

<sup>632</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 71.

<sup>633</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 75.

<sup>634</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p.144.

company of mercenaries in a bold and poorly thought out scheme. Upon arrival within England, Matilda and Robert closed ranks, refusing to accept or cooperate with the young adventurer, who the siblings likely viewed as an unwanted complication and potential usurper whose own claim to the throne could potentially divide Angevin loyalties and support.

It seems that both the Empress Matilda and Earl Robert still envisaged that Matilda could claim the throne in her own right as the daughter and chosen successor of Henry I and then presumably rule in concert with Robert whose political and dynastical interests cleaved so closely to her own, restoring his position as the kingdom's chief subject. Henry on the other hand was an unknown quantity, raised primarily by his father in Anjou and possessing a rival claim without the complications introduced by Matilda's gender. As a result, when the politically isolated and overwhelmed Henry failed to make any headway in England and was then taken hostage by his disgruntled escort, who he was unable to pay, both his Mother and Uncle refused to give him aid. Henry was instead ransomed and returned to Normandy by a more unlikely relative, King Stephen.<sup>635</sup> Stephen seems to have been perpetually mindful of his obligations to family members and the duty of care inherent to kingship having previously generously, if unwisely, allowed his cousin the Empress Matilda to make the journey to Robert's stronghold at Bristol, unimpeded following their initial invasion of England.

#### **4.7 Reginald of Cornwall's Participation in Royal Service**

In contrast to the close cooperation and relative parity of authority between Robert and Matilda within the Angevin faction, the political prominence of their half-brother Reginald de Dunstanville was derived from his potential political utility and enthusiastic engagement in service on behalf of more senior participants in a shared royal familial identity. While not positively identified within the chronicles, it is probable that Reginald was present during friend and ally Baldwin de Redvers' seizure of Exeter and subsequent piratical campaign, since Reginald first appeared in his half-sister's emergent court in Baldwin's company shortly after his negotiated withdrawal from the city.<sup>636</sup> Robert's

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<sup>635</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 206.

<sup>636</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 16.

insistence alongside many of the other magnates that Stephen lift the siege and come to a concordant with the rebels may then have been motivated by his awareness and concern for Reginald, in addition to the danger of the concurrent uprising in Wales. Reginald quickly ingratiated himself with his half-sister and participated in the advancement of her dynastic interests through military service, with Orderic Vitalis recording that they ravaged the lands of Stephen's supporters in the Cotentin alongside Baldwin throughout 1137 and 1138.<sup>637</sup>

Reginald may have accompanied Robert and Matilda as part of their retinue on their expedition to England in 1139 and he was certainly in the country by 1140 when his elder half-siblings appointed him the earl of Cornwall. Reginald was furnished with a marriage to a powerful local aristocratic affinity and charged with securing the region. By consolidating his own power and authority within the earldom with the help of his newly acquired marital connections and siblings within the Angevin party's leadership, Reginald was advancing their mutual dynastic interests by securing Angevin control in the south-west of England. Correspondingly as a now active and empowered member of the Angevin faction, who shared a strong personal affinity with the party's leadership, as a result of participation with a shared family identity, Reginald was now even more heavily invested in their success and incentivised to further service on behalf of his legitimate royal family member. Reginald initial attempts to control of the county were successful only to see dramatic reversals as a result of Stephen's direct intervention within the region, alongside Earl Alan the Black of Richmond whose dubious heritage claim to the earldom Stephen had chosen to recognise out of political expediency.<sup>638</sup> Reginald was swiftly contained within Launceston castle but following the capture of both the king and Alan during the Battle of Lincoln and its immediate aftermath in 1141 he was, perhaps in the absence of an effective royalist deputy, able to consolidate his authority within the earldom surprisingly swiftly, bringing it under Angevin control.

As part of this process, Reginald took direct possession of the earldom's royal demesne and castles as well as taking control over the functioning of royal

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<sup>637</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, Volume III Books V and VI, p. 510.

<sup>638</sup> *Gesta Stephani*, p. 100.



institutions and offices within its borders; the assumption of these executive vice-regal powers in the absence of an effective royal centre laid the foundation of his later power and prominence under Henry II. Later that year, Reginald accompanied Empress Matilda to London and her planned coronation and was present during the flight to Winchester, John of Worcester recording that while Earl Robert led the rear-guard, Reginald was entrusted with escorting the Empress to safety.<sup>639</sup> In a manner similar to Robert, Reginald often acted as envoy and representative of his half-sister with whose interests he was so closely aligned. In 1146 while en-route to negotiate with Stephen and travelling under the promise of safe passage, Reginald was captured by Robert's youngest son Philip of Cricklade who had allied himself with his kinsmen, the king. However, such of a breach of accepted diplomatic and aristocratic codes was potentially extremely damaging to both Philip and the king's reputation and the young castellan was quickly compelled to release his Uncle from captivity.<sup>640</sup> In 1152, the earl was dispatched by his English based allies and fellow Angevin adherents to Normandy and the court of his nephew, Duke Henry, inviting him to come to England and revive the factions flagging fortunes. When the young Duke arrived in 1153, Reginald who as a significant magnate and illegitimate participant in Anglo-Norman royal family identity helped maintain the political and military integrity of the Angevin party after Robert's death and the Empress Matilda's absence, completed the transition of his loyalty and dynastic aspirations from mother to son.<sup>641</sup> Henry's small army landed in his uncle's territory and rendezvoused before moving north to the Angevin heartland in Malmesbury where they were joined by the Angevin aligned earls of Gloucester, Hereford, Lincoln and Salisbury.

During this initial period of consolidation within England, Reginald may also have been in attendance during Henry's meeting at Devizes in Wiltshire with Earl Ranulf of Chester to whom the Duke made lavish promises in exchange for his support. Reginald accompanied his legitimate royal nephew throughout the largely bloodless campaign acting as one of Henry's principal advisers as he moved throughout western England, forming relationships with the various aristocratic

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<sup>639</sup> John of Worcester, *The Chronicles*, p. 272; *Gesta Stephani*, p. 102.

<sup>640</sup> Crouch, *King Stephen*, p. 217.

<sup>641</sup> William of Malmesbury, *GRA*, p. 200.

affinities and cultivating his authority and prestige through the confirming of writs and acting as an adjudicator in disputes. Reginald alongside his nephew, Earl William of Gloucester and Earl Patrick of Salisbury supported the Duke through a series of negotiations with a powerful royalist aligned ecclesiastical bloc composed of Archbishop Theobald, the bishops of Bath and Chichester as well as the king's brother Henry of Winchester.<sup>642</sup> Also present for this series of meetings was Reginald's associate and maternal relative Robert de Dunstanville which suggests something of the degree of importance and the integral position that Reginald and his affinity had assumed within the Angevin faction through the earl's pursuit of his legitimate family's dynastic claims. The conclusion of the campaign and hostilities, limited though they were, came with the abortive confrontation at Wallingford after which a settlement was reached whereby an equilibrium was agreed between the two factions within England and Duke Henry was ultimately recognised as King Stephen's successor to the Throne displacing the king's son William. With the Duke's return to Normandy in 1154 it was Reginald who he designated as his representative and spokesperson in England, making sure that the agreement and interests within the country were maintained in his absence.<sup>643</sup> Henry perhaps chose Reginald not only because of his relative status and seniority amongst the Angevin aligned earls but because his engagement with royal family identity meant that his own interests were heavily invested in the promise of Henry's successful assumption of the Throne.

Following Stephen's unexpected death and Henry's coronation later that year, Reginald was a significant and near continuous presence at the royal court throughout the early years of the new king's reign and reconstruction of royal authority and governance. The earl's presence within the court and participation in royal service during this ante bellum period is attested to through this frequent and prominent appearances within the witness lists of royally issued acta in which he is inevitably afforded a position of prominence.<sup>644</sup> Indeed, Reginald is the sole named

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<sup>642</sup> *RRAN*, III, no. 796.

<sup>643</sup> *RRAN*, III, no. 709.

<sup>644</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, XLV, p. 144, LII, p. 153, LXXVI p. 180, CXVI, p. 220 CCXXVII p. 367 CCXII p.461

witness in a royal charter issued by King Henry II from Brockenhurst in 1158 which arbitrated a dispute between the abbey of Jumièges and royal officials.<sup>645</sup>

While not actively engaged as a royal official or office holder outside of his retention of executive powers and authority within his earldom, Reginald's shadow and status as a senior member of the royal family seems to have loomed large over the royal court whose presence and support acted as a stabilising factor for his nephew's regime. Gervase of Canterbury records that Reginald and Richard de Lucy were the king's closest advisors and the only people he trusted to consult with on his high profile and potentially politically incendiary feud with Archbishop Thomas Becket. Reginald also acted as a royal envoy and go between during the long period of negotiations with the archbishop, most notably at the Council of Northampton.<sup>646</sup>

It appears that by the late 1160s and early 1170s, in contrast to the early years of the reign, that Reginald attended the royal court infrequently probably as a result of his guardianship over the earldom of Devon and cultivation of his own political affinities within the south west of England. A royal charter issued in Chester by the king in 1172, confirming a transaction between Jourdain de Barneville and the abbey of Saint-Hélier of Jersey, however, still saw the earl occupying the position of primacy amongst the secular figures of the witness list, suggesting that Reginald's status as a participant within royal family identity and personal affinity with the king precluded the degradation of his position within the royal court through distance or separation.<sup>647</sup>

Despite a minor dislocation from the royal centre, following the rebellion of Reginald's great-nephew, the Young King, launched in tandem with a French invasion and supported by Queen Eleanor and the majority of Henry's other legitimate sons, the illegitimate royal earl was once more heavily engaged in royal military service on behalf of his legitimate relative and patron. Electing to support his nephew, the king, as a result of their personal affinity and in order to preserve

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<sup>645</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, XCII, p. 196

<sup>646</sup> *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, ed. James Craigie Robertson, (1876), Volume II, p. 389.

<sup>647</sup> *Recueil des actes de Henri II, roi d'Angleterre et duc de Normandie, concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, ed. Léopold Delisle, Book I, CCCXII, p. 461.

the mutual dynastic interests which formed the basis of his power and authority. Reginald acted to contain the uprising within England while the king engaged his rebellious children in Normandy. Alongside his long-term ally and fellow royal confidant, Richard de Lucy, Reginald moved against the younger Henry's most prominent adherent within England, the young and ambitious Robert de Beaumont, earl of Leicester, sacking the city and besieging the castle there.<sup>648</sup> Robert's attempts to relieve the castle alongside his ally and fellow rebel Earl Hugh Bigod of Norfolk ended when he was captured following a disastrous ambush at Bury St Edmunds, launched by Reginald and his loyalist allies which shattered the rebel army.

#### **4.8 Hamelin de Warenne's Participation in Royal Service**

Much like Reginald, Henry II's illegitimate paternal half-brother Hamelin was elevated to political prominence and a position within the upper echelons of the aristocracy as the result of a political crisis in which his support could be counted upon to help resolve, as a member of the extended royal family and subsequent alignment with a shared dynastic enterprise. Hamelin's sudden elevation from obscurity to engagement with the upper most strata of the Angevin hegemony was the direct result of the death of his legitimate half-brother William.<sup>649</sup> William's death coincided with, or as his friend and allies claimed was brought about by, the so called investiture crisis and Henry II's struggles with Archbishop Becket.

The loss of William, an ally within whom he had invested considerable resources, at a time of political and constitutional friction, was a potentially serious blow to Henry who quickly moved to stabilise his support and the retention of an aristocratic consensus through the deployment of Hamelin. In 1164, Hamelin appeared before the Council of Northampton, convened by Henry to redress the growing breach between king and archbishop and he hoped to enforce his authority and privileges over both Becket and the wider aristocracy.<sup>650</sup> The young illegitimate royal family member issued a strong condemnation of the archbishop, accusing him

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<sup>648</sup> Ralph de Diceto, *The Historical Works*, p. 209.

<sup>649</sup> Thomas K. Keefe, 'Warenne, Hamelin de, Earl of Surrey [Earl Warenne] (d.1202)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>650</sup> *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, p. 389.

of causing William's death through the great hurt caused by Becket's supposedly malicious and politically motivated blocking of William's marriage to the heiress Isabel de Warenne on the grounds of consanguinity and his refusal to seek a dispensation.<sup>651</sup>

In 1173, with the king still reeling from the dramatic political fallout of Becket's murder and heavily engaged with directing the invasion of Ireland and the exertion of royal authority over the participants and their newly established territories, he appointed Hamelin to the position of viscount of Touraine giving him responsibility over a crucial border region and potentially dangerous political fault line.<sup>652</sup> It is possible that Hamelin gained control of this important lordship as a result of his presence at the king's side earlier that year during the Treaty of Fontevraud in which Henry took the submission of the troublesome Count Raymond of Toulouse (d. 1194), greatly increasing royal authority and power within the region. Later that year, Henry nominated Hamelin as the proposed custodian and guardian of the castles of Chinon and Loudun which the king intended to bestow upon his youngest son, Prince John; possibly as a means for providing for him and securing his investment and participation with the Angevin hegemony as a whole.<sup>653</sup> However, this period of guardianship never took place as a result of the rebellion of the Young King, who already disenfranchised and dissatisfied by his alienation from the resources and mechanisms of governance, went into open rebellion against his father, partially in protest of this redistribution of the royal demesne.<sup>654</sup>

In 1176, Hamelin was further engaged in family service when he escorted his royal niece, Joan to Sicily, witnessing her marriage to King William II of Sicily. In a potential contrast to his unwavering but detached and distant support shown during the lifetime of his half-brother, Earl Hamelin quickly gained entry into the confidences of his nephew Richard I, travelling with the new king extensively during the opening of his reign, attesting to at least thirteen charters within a matter of months as the king and his advisors sought to put the Angevin realm in order.

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<sup>651</sup> *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, p. 389.

<sup>652</sup> Ralph de Diceto, *The Historical Works*, p. 145.

<sup>653</sup> William of Jumièges, *GND*, 4, p. 145.

<sup>654</sup> Strickland, *The Young King*, p. 133.

Following his nephew's departure on crusade and the resulting politicking amongst the Anglo-Norman aristocracy, Hamelin emerged as one of the pre-eminent forces within England. He sided with the king's chosen deputy, the Chancellor William de Longchamp against the ambitions of his nephew, Prince John, and the Royal Justiciar Hugh de Puiset, the bishop of Durham. Also, on behalf of the Chancellor and ostensibly at least through him the political and dynastic interests of his legitimate patron, Hamelin was involved in the abortive attempt to arrest his nephew the archbishop of York following his return from exile.<sup>655</sup>

Possibly Hamelin's most important service during this time to his nephew and patron was the collection and management, in partnership with Earl William d'Aubigny of Arundel, of the massive ransom required to secure the king's release from captivity.<sup>656</sup> Following Richard's death while on campaign, much of Hamelin's political capital and dynastic investment was spent and while present at John's coronation, he returned to the management of his own estates, eschewing further engagement with the various crisis which beset the Anglo-Norman world.<sup>657</sup>

#### **4.9 William Longespée's Participation in Royal Service**

When in 1196 Earl William FitzPatrick of Salisbury died, King Richard took the opportunity to further his campaign to reconstruct royal authority and power within England following the political turmoil that resulted from his long absence and captivity, by marrying his bastard half-brother William Longespée to the earl's young heir Ela. By elevating Longespée to an earldom with its accompanying resources and status within aristocratic society, Richard was creating a potentially useful lieutenant, tied to him through a shared familial identity as well as fostering his own support and consensus amongst the English aristocracy. In addition to his status as a son of Henry II with an accompanying acknowledged participation in royal identity and investment in a shared dynastic enterprise, William was extremely well connected within aristocratic networks through his extensive maternal affinities. William's mother, Ida, was not only a member of the powerful Tosny family which held extensive landed interests in

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<sup>655</sup> Ralph de Diceto, *The Historical Works*, Volume 2, p. 171.

<sup>656</sup> *The Itinerary of King Richard I: With Studies on Certain Matters of Interest Connected with His Reign*, ed. Lionel Landon (London, 1935).

<sup>657</sup> Howden, *Chronica magistri*, p. 87.

Normandy but also the wife of Earl Roger Bigod of Norfolk. It is possible that by co-opting William further into royal affinity and service, Richard also drew his extensive maternal connections further into alignment with the re-emergent royal centre.

Following the assumption and establishment of authority over his relatively modest earldom and his wife's traditional political affinities, William seems to have closely adhered to his royal half-brother by actively participating in royal service as a member of the court. William can be found amongst the witness lists of a number of royal charters issued from his brother's new fortress and base of operations within Normandy, the Chateau Gaillard.<sup>658</sup> Richard was at the time heavily engaged in resisting and reversing Capetian expansion into Normandy. As a frequent member of his brother's entourage and participant in a shared familial identity, William took an active part in these revanchist campaigns most notably accompanying Richard when the king defeated Philip and the French host at Gisors in 1198.<sup>659</sup> Following Richard's death on campaign, William participated in the coronation of his remaining regal half-brother, John, with whom he appears to have shared a strong friendship and close political affinity. As a reflection of this close association and in order to both position and further incentivise William to defend royal dynastic interests, William was heavily involved with royal service holding a number of different offices engaged in royal governance. William served as the castellan of the royal castle of Salisbury, a significant royal centre located within his own earldom, throughout much of his career. As William's importance within his brother's government grew, he was entrusted with further responsibilities; from 1205 he administered the honour of Eye and its castle while in 1212 he was made custodian of Dover castle, an important royal bastion and England's primary line of defence against the anticipated French invasion.

William was also used as a proxy by his royal half-brother in his often-fraught relationship with the Church and the king's assumption of the management of Church lands. In 1208, perhaps predicating the political and material fallout that would result from his clash with Church, John appointed him as custodian of the

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<sup>658</sup> *Rotuli Litterarum Clausaurum*, 2 vols, RC, ed. T.D. Hardy (London, 1833-4) vol. 2. p. 71.

<sup>659</sup> Elizabeth Hallam, *Capetian France 987-1328*, (London, 2001), p. 172.

diocese of Ely and its holdings before further investing him with the lands of the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1212. While John disputed William's claim to hold the position of sheriff of Wiltshire by hereditary right, he appointed him to the position on three separate occasions, possibly using the promise of the office or threat of its removal to encourage his brother to remain in alignment with royal interests and further engage in royal service. The illegitimate royal earl was also awarded with the shrievalty of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in 1212, further bolstering his own resources and aiding in the continuation and financial wellbeing of royal government during a period of political disruption.

In addition to his role as a royal office holder and custodian of the royal demesne under King John, William also engaged extensively in military and diplomatic service on behalf of his legitimate half-brother and in defence of their shared dynastic interests at a time where they were threatened from both internal aristocratic dissent and the predations of foreign princes. As a trusted confidant with a strong personal affinity with the king, an acknowledged participation in royal family identity and extensive aristocratic connections, William was an ideal envoy for John representing his interests throughout the British Isles and Europe at the highest diplomatic level. In 1202 the young earl travelled to the court of King Sancho VII of Navarre (d. 1234), the elder brother of Richard's widow, Queen Berengaria (d. 1230), successfully concluding a treating with him theoretically securing the southern borders of the duchy of Aquitaine which Sancho had himself ravaged intermittently during Richard's imprisonment. Alongside Earl William Marshal of Pembroke, then the most powerful and influential of the marcher lords with whose family he shared a strong affinity, William negotiated with Llywelyn of Gwynedd (d. 1240) and effective master of Wales, brokering a meeting with King John at Worcester in 1204. William was also a member of an embassy John dispatched to King William of Scotland in 1205 before again acting a royal intermediary the next year where he escorted the king to John in York. Possibly one of the notable of Earl William's diplomatic achievements on behalf of his legitimate family members came in 1209 when he travelled to Germany in order to canvas support amongst the aristocracy on behalf of his nephew and key Plantagenet ally King Otto, the son of his half-sister Duchess Matilda of Saxony,



who was subsequently accepted as Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>660</sup> Faced with increasingly severe incursions from France and the possibility of an invasion of England, John dispatched William as his envoy to Count Ferrand of Flanders (d. 1233) in order to court Flemish support.

Earl William was one of his brother's foremost military lieutenants and supporters at a time of great difficulty for the shrunken royal dynasty, often in conjunction with other royally aligned aristocratic and members of his extended affinity. In 1202 in conjunction with his nephew Earl William de Warenne, the earl of Surrey and de Warenne's father-in-law, the famed Earl William Marshal, Longespée led a force to hamper and harass the army of King Philip Augustus.<sup>661</sup> During this period, William was also active in attempting to protect his family's interests on the Angevin hegemonies frontiers within the British Isles being appointed to a position of oversight and authority within the Welsh Marches in 1208 as well as accompanying the king on his expedition to Ireland. William was also heavily involved in supporting the king's efforts combating French expansion into Normandy, most notably in his routing of the French fleet in 1213, relieving their ally Count Ferrand and curtailing a French invasion of England, leading to John appointing him to the position of Marshal of England.<sup>662</sup> William was then captured at the disastrous Battle of Bouvines in which King Philip routed the allied army, although the *Histoire de Guillaume le Marchal* depicts the earl as advising against seeking a decisive battle as well as stating his nephew Emperor Otto would have been killed or captured if it were not for William's intervention.<sup>663</sup> The *Histoire de Guillaume le Marchal* takes care to emphasize the role and capability of Longespée and elaborates mitigating factors to his defeats, such as his capture at the Battle of Bouvines. This favouritism is to an extent unsurprising since the works which commemorates the extraordinary life and deeds of William Marshal was commissioned by its subject's son Earl William Marshal II (d. 1231) who was a close ally and lifelong collaborator of the royal bastard in addition to the close familial connection between Countess Ida and the family.

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<sup>660</sup> *The History of William Marshal*, ed. Nigel Bryant, p. 196.

<sup>661</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France*, p. 162.

<sup>662</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France*, p. 182.

<sup>663</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France*, p. 182.

William again participated in military service on behalf of his legitimate family's royal dynastic interests, reorienting himself to combat increasing rebellion and resistance to royal authority throughout England. Despite his strong affinity with John and extensive contribution to the maintenance of the royalist cause within England and the king's personal authority, the earl defected following Prince Louis of France's successful invasion in an attempt to safeguard his own interests and holdings by disentangling himself from what he saw as a lost cause. William subsequently changed sides again following the death of King John and the formation of a power bloc around his young successor Henry III, acting as one of the senior royal commanders at the Battle of Lincoln in a collation led by his associate William Marshal.<sup>664</sup> The earl was, upon the establishment of peace, able to negotiate for the granting of substantial new land in return for his support and recognition of Henry III regents, however, it is unclear the extent to which his interactions with this group were influenced by his heritage and participation within royal familial identity. It could be strongly argued that the majority of political status and influence granted by this participation was reliant upon the acknowledgment of and a recognised affinity with a legitimate family member and that following his abandonment of his remaining royal half-brother and relative, William operated in a manner similar to any other magnate in regard to the royal centre. William continued to participate in royal service and received several appointments to shrievalties during the king's minority. However, he was no longer a member of court's inner circle and his occasionally contentious relationship with Henry III's regents in regard to the enforcement of his rights and their grants to him suggests that Williams role in the governance of England and commitment to royal service and the protection of family interests rested upon the existence of personal stake in their success, an alignment which was created and anchored by a personal ties and a reciprocal family identity.

The degree to which Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards were permitted to participate in family identity was often heavily dependent upon the acceptance and acknowledgement of their legitimate family members. Those illegitimate family members that possessed strong ties of affinity with their legitimate relatives or were further integrated into royal family identity as a result

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<sup>664</sup> Hallam, *Capetian France*, p. 205.

of political and dynastic contextual factors were deployed and empowered by their legitimate patrons as a means of strengthening and advancing royal dynastic interest. As part of this objective they were appointed to positions or offices within the aristocracy and royal government which bestowed upon them the agency and resources necessary to effectively engage in royal service and advance their family's dynastic interests. Illegitimate royal family members served these dynastic interests in a number of ways including, bringing regional and dynastic affinities closer into alignment with the royal centre through their mutual association, participation in the organs and mechanism of royal governance and office holding as well as direct service as a royal proxy either as an envoy or military commander. Neither these forms of service or the administrative and political mechanism through which the royal bastards empowered were unique to them and were widely deployed by kings as a means of rewarding service and to cultivate support within the aristocracy and apparatus of royal government. However, while not unique amongst the benefices of royal favour, the great utility royal bastards represented to their legitimate family members and their consistently high level of support and loyalty toward their patrons was a direct result of their participation in a shared dynastic enterprise. Illegitimate royal family members were largely dependent upon the support and patronage of their legitimate family members for advancement and formed a potential pool of talented individuals whose fortunes were deeply connected with those of their legitimate family. Royal bastards were of particular use to their legitimate patrons and allies as lieutenants and functionaries specifically because of their status as illegitimate members of the royal family. The increasing legal and social restrictions imposed upon them by their illegitimacy meant they were to an extent dependent upon the good will and personal affinity of their legitimate patron for advancement. The nature of their participation in a shared family identity meant that by engaging in royal service they were not only advancing the mutual dynastic interests in which they were invested as family members but also justifying and strengthening their inclusion and intimate royal association.

## Conclusion

Family and orientation around a familial affinity was of paramount importance to the twelfth century English aristocracy and the formation of their political aspirations and sense of personal identity. Familial identity provided a crucial conceptual and social framework within which an aristocrat's identity was formulated as well as providing the contextual boundaries of their participation in aristocratic networks and affinities.<sup>665</sup> An acknowledgment of this importance is, of course, present and implicit throughout much of the historiography, being particularly notable within biographies of prominent participants in Anglo-Norman aristocratic networks such as William Aird's study of the life and career of Robert Curthose.<sup>666</sup> Indeed, much of the current historiography on the subject of the formation and the role of family connections to political affinity in the context of eleventh and twelfth century aristocratic culture, has been influenced in part or formulated in reaction to the work of Georges Duby.<sup>667</sup> A valuable and relatively recent development within the historiography, which has had a significant influence upon the structural and methodology of this thesis, has been a greater appreciation and analysis of the role of women in the creation and maintenance of aristocratic connections and family affinities.<sup>668</sup> This increased emphasis and the importance of woman in the changing structure and form of aristocratic families is also stressed in growing number of works relating directly to the study of illegitimacy such as Sara McDougall's *Royal Bastards: The Birth of Illegitimacy*.<sup>669</sup>

The position of an individual's family relative to these networks of affinity were no less influential for illegitimate members of aristocratic families, royal or otherwise. Their engagement within these formative identities was complicated by the increasingly codified ramifications of their illegitimacy and the central importance that the retention and mediation of inheritance played within family identity. Within an eleventh and twelfth century aristocratic family this served not only as a mechanism for the transmission of land and property but the aggregate of

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<sup>665</sup> Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin*, p. 27.

<sup>666</sup> Aird, *Robert Curthose*, p. 23

<sup>667</sup> Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bay, (Chicago, 1983)

<sup>668</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 125.

<sup>669</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 17

its wealth and power formed a portfolio of resources, defining a sphere of influence through which its identity was reinforced and nurtured. While shared family political and landed interest were important in orientating an individual within aristocratic networks and fostering a sense of familial affinity, the familial identity built around them was not necessarily monolithic or exclusive, coexisting alongside a number of other dynastic connections and regional or political sourced affinities. Legitimate family members were necessary for the perpetuation of a family, serving as heirs and curators to a portion of a shared inheritance, expanding and connecting familial landed interests through marriage, acquisitions and their participation in other aristocratic identities. Both the indulgence of familial rivalries and grievances, as well as the formation of familial power blocks, were legitimate and widely adopted strategies for twelfth century aristocrats, dictated by a wide range of personal and contextual factors.

McDougall's great contribution to the field, which is also touched upon by James Brundage's study of the changing nature and parameters of marriage during the eleventh and twelfth century, is primarily centred around the process and effects of the formation and gradual codification of illegitimacy as a legal and social category.<sup>670</sup> This thesis then compliments and draws upon these significant historiographical developments, not by further exploring or expounding upon the creation and form of illegitimacy during this period but through an examination and analysis of its political ramifications within aristocratic society in the context of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal family. The political careers of twelfth century royal bastards were, alongside the degree to which they were permitted to participate within a family identity, greatly influenced by the legal precepts and social context of this status. This caveat in their acceptance within the royal affinity and subsequent general dependence upon the patronage of their legitimate family members for advancement meant that royal bastards were a useful and flexible dynastic resource to Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings who embedded them within aristocratic society to protect and advance their shared familial interests.

Through this thesis, use of comparative case studies of the lives and careers of prominent royal bastards during this time period and an examination of their

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<sup>670</sup> James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987)

engagement in service to their legitimate family members, it can be seen that Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings of the twelfth century were given significant support in the pursuit of their political and hegemonic activities by individual illegitimate members of the royal family. Internecine conflict and warfare brought about by disputes between family members on regulation and distribution of inheritance was a relatively common phenomena within aristocratic society, with Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchs, throughout the twelfth century, faced with rebellions launched by or on behalf of members of their own family. Royal bastards were almost always loyal and adhered to their legitimate family members as a result of their membership of a shared familial identity and the greater dependence upon the patronage of their family necessitated by their exclusion from access to inheritance. This predisposition towards cooperation made illegitimate royal family members an extremely valuable resource to their legitimate patrons who integrated these auxiliary family members into prominent positions within royal governance and political strategy on an ad hoc basis in reaction to their immediate needs and circumstances.

Throughout the twelfth century, then, individual illegitimate royal family members were invested with substantial power and authority by their legitimate family members so that they could better protect and advance their shared dynastic interests. As a result of this strategy, several royal bastards came to occupy prominent positions amongst the aristocratic networks and regional affinities into which they were integrated while also engaging extensively in royal service, acting as conduits of royal power in operating as proxies for the king in both military and administrative capacities. Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings were able to utilise their illegitimate relatives this way through the use of royal authority and prerogatives through which they were able to deploy and capitalise upon their illegitimate family members in a manner unavailable to other aristocratic families. The careers of several of the most contemporary prominent royal bastards, most notably Robert of Gloucester, who is the subject of a recent biography by Robert B. Patterson, have previously attracted attention within the historiography.<sup>671</sup> The comparative approach of this thesis in the examination of the position of multiple royal bastards within twelfth century aristocratic society and their deployment in

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<sup>671</sup> Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and The Chronicler*

royal dynastic strategies across the reign of multiple kings facilitates a more complete and comprehensive understanding of these roles as well as the circumstances and means through which this deliberate and conditional integration by Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings took place.

Royal bastards occupied a distinctive position in which the privileges of their potential participation within royal familial identity clearly distinguished them from other illegitimate members of aristocratic affinities. In functioning as points of connection between the royal family and prominent aristocratic affinities, as well as acting as royal deputies supporting a shared familial enterprise, twelfth century illegitimate male royal family members, in many ways, occupied a supporting role that under different dynastic circumstances could have been occupied by younger legitimate sons. Indeed, while evidently not functioning as prospective heirs in the same way as legitimate sons would, their caveated and conditional inclusion within family identity actually enhanced the utility of royal bastards to their legitimate patrons since it allowed kings to promote or ignore their illegitimate family members as it suited them. Henry I's paucity of additional legitimate heirs and the perceived need to fulfil this supporting role is almost certainly the reason the king provided his two eldest illegitimate sons, Robert and Richard, with extensive educations and lucrative engagements to heiresses while overlooking many of their younger brothers.<sup>672</sup> Similarly King Henry pursued a dynastic strategy in which his numerous illegitimate daughters were married off to create political links and connections, both with the rulers of neighbouring regions and important affinities within the Anglo-Norman hegemony, over which the king wished to exert influence in the same manner as their legitimate half-sister, Matilda's marriages to Emperor Henry V and Geoffrey le Bel. That several of Henry I's illegitimate daughters formed matches as or even more prestigious than Matilda's marriage to Geoffrey suggests that while Matilda was his heir legitimate, his illegitimate daughters occupied a very similar position within a family dynastic strategy which was heavily influenced by the political context.

Bereft of a legitimate male heir and mired in a dynastic and diplomatic crisis following the death of his heir, William Aetheling, Henry I turned to his eldest

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<sup>672</sup> Patterson, *The Earl, The Kings, and The Chronicler*, p. 11.

illegitimate son Robert, raising him to the specifically created earldom of Gloucester. Robert was established as one of the Anglo-Norman realm's premier magnates and invested with the power and authority required to support his father and protect their family's dynastic and political interests, a process which included, and was facilitated by, his integration into the developing apparatus of royal governance and the innermost circle of royal counsellors. His royally sponsored elevation within aristocratic networks, predicated as it was upon his personal and familial association with the king, further strengthened this reciprocal relationship and Robert's engagement with royal familial identity. Henry I's promotion of his eldest illegitimate son at a time of political crisis endowed the royal bastard with increased means and motivation to align himself with his legitimate family in the protection of their shared dynastic interests.

As a means of securing his position and long-term dynastic security, the king also committed himself to two important marriages. The first of these was the king's own marriage to Adeliza of Louvain, undertaken just months after the sinking of the White Ship which renewed the possibility of a legitimate male heir for the king.<sup>673</sup> In 1128, Henry exerted considerable effort in an attempt to compel the Anglo-Norman magnates to recognise the newly remarried Matilda as his chosen successor. The king clearly did not view Robert as a potential heir, irrespective of his inclusion within a familial identity and central involvement in the prosecution of royal government. The wider political connections and crucially dynastic prestige afforded by either a potential child of Queen Adeliza 'born in the purple' and through her descended from Charlemagne, or Empress Matilda whose mother was a member of the royal house of Wessex made their candidacy for the throne a more attractive and viable prospect to Henry I.<sup>674</sup> While his royal connections provided Robert with prominence within contemporary aristocratic networks and authority through his status as a royal enforcer and intermediary, his illegitimacy relegated him to a position of custodianship within royal family identity. This emphasis on the value and prestige of maternally sourced dynastic connections within eleventh and twelfth century aristocratic society is highlighted within the historiography in which Sara McDougall cogently argues the seminal

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<sup>673</sup> Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, p. 467.

<sup>674</sup> McDougall, *Royal Bastards*, p. 125.



role the aristocracy's desire for clear cut and permanent connections to maternal affinities played in the formalisation of illegitimacy. In expanding upon Kathleen Thompson's article 'Affairs of State: The Illegitimate Children of Henry I' which in part examined Henry I's known mistresses for potentially beneficially familial connections and by comparing them with Henry II mistresses, it can be seen that dynastic concerns were of a secondary consideration in the selection of royal mistresses. While Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings were in general only too happy to maintain and capitalise upon the political and familial affinities of their mistresses in order to further exert royal influence, the formation of such relationships was not in itself a political act. While the known royal mistresses of the twelfth century came from a variety of different backgrounds, including two from the great Anglo-Norman aristocratic dynasties, the majority of them came from families in the lower echelons of the aristocracy already engaged in royal service and the primary criteria for selection of royal mistresses seemed to be personal attraction and proximity.

In contrast to his grandfather, Henry II not only had comparatively fewer illegitimate children but was forced to contend with the aspirations and tensions of his legitimate sons, which he attempted to resolve by integrating them as junior members within a shared dynastic enterprise. This approach was in many ways necessitated by the hegemonic nature of Henry II's extensive and diverse domains which encompassed a number of distinct cultural and political identities. Relatively early into his reign, however, and prior his sons becoming politically active, the king raised his illegitimate half-brother, Hamelin, to the earldom of Surrey, through marriage to the earldom's widowed heiress, Isabel de Warenne.<sup>675</sup> Hamelin's empowerment and participation within royal familial political identity came at a time of political instability for the king. Hamelin was effectively substituting for a deceased legitimate relative, stepping into the role envisaged for William within the royal dynastic strategy by supporting his legitimate half-brother and drawing the aristocratic affinities of his earldom into alignment with royal interests. While certainly benefiting from his inclusion with the royal political strategy and continuing to support his royal half-brother from his position within the aristocracy,

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<sup>675</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I.*, p. 221.

Hamelin was not an engaged member of the king's inner circle and his involvement in royal government was minimal. Henry II later received considerable support from his eldest illegitimate son, Geoffrey, an acknowledged and prominent participant within the royal court and the beneficiary of a considerable personal affinity with his father.<sup>676</sup> Initially earmarked by his father for a career in the Church, this plan was made untenable as a result of complications arising from Geoffrey's illegitimate status and reluctance to engage in the role. Instead, Geoffrey was promoted directly within the apparatus of royal government, being awarded the position of Chancellor while emerging in a less formal capacity as one of his father's most prominent military deputies and proxies.

Although the lives and careers of the illegitimate children of Kings Richard and John fall largely beyond the scope of this study, their reigns are of great interests as they represent a recontextualising of the role played by existing illegitimate family members within royal governance. Geoffrey had initially come to a settlement with Richard, shortly after the latter's succession to the throne, as a result of which he was awarded the archbishopric of York. This accommodation between the two half-brothers was generous on Richard's part, given Geoffrey's previous opposition to him and status as a diehard supporter of Henry II.<sup>677</sup> However, the newly created archbishop's robust defence of his position's rights and reluctance to operate as a royal appendage eventually brought him into conflict with both of his royal half-brothers. Hamelin on the other hand, as a senior member of the Angevin royal family and the highly connected figurehead of powerful aristocratic affinities in northern England was far more engaged in royal service and governance on Richard's behalf, particularly during the reign's opening years when the king was still attempting to consolidate his authority. Following his return to England after a lengthy absence, Richard further promoted his illegitimate half-brother, William Longespée, who had been too young to participate within aristocratic society or meaningfully support his legitimate family members during their father's reign, to the earldom of Salisbury. William subsequently became a central figure in the royal government of his other royal half-brother, John,

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<sup>676</sup> Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, p. xxiv, p. 478.

<sup>677</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, IV, p. 368.

primarily as a result of his competency, friendship and personal affinity, serving as one of the king's principal deputies and military commanders.<sup>678</sup>

The notable exception to this pattern of familial support and close cooperation across the divide of legitimacy, as discussed in the introduction, was King Stephen who made only limited use of his eldest illegitimate son, Gervase, by appointing him abbot of Westminster; details on the identities and activities of other potential illegitimate children are sparse. Yet Stephen's principal rival, Empress Matilda benefited from a strong association and political affinity with several of her illegitimate half-brothers, most notably Robert of Gloucester and Reginald of Cornwall, who constituted much of the committed core of the Angevin party's powerbase within England. Matilda was ultimately unsuccessful in either securing her own coronation or displacing Stephen.<sup>679</sup> It is, however, of the foremost importance to understanding the circumstances of twelfth century illegitimate royal family members and their participation within royal governance, to appreciate that they experienced and exercised the greatest level of political authority and autonomy when their legitimate family members and allies were weakest and most embattled.

The position of illegitimate royal daughters within aristocratic society as well as the dynastic and political strategies of their legitimate royal family members is similar to that of their illegitimate male siblings in that it was heavily dependent upon the political and dynastic context of their legitimate relatives. The primary difference between the two groups of auxiliary family members were the differing, and in the daughters' case, severely limiting roles in which they could contribute to the protection and advancement of familial interest within dynastic society, which was the determining factor in the extent to which they could benefit from a shared dynastic enterprise. During the reign of Henry I, illegitimate royal daughters were permitted to participate within royal family identity and were active within the royal court. As a result of the king's severely limited number of legitimate children and political needs, his illegitimate daughters filled the same dynastic role as his

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<sup>678</sup> Robert of Torigni, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*. p. 189.

<sup>679</sup> Judith Green, 'Family Matters: Family and the Formation of the Empress' Party in South-West England', in Katharine Keats-Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 147-164 at p. 149.

legitimate daughter. The political circumstances of the king and the Anglo-Norman hegemony meant that several of his illegitimate daughters formed highly prestigious marriages despite their illegitimate status, as a result of the advantage or necessity of forming a dynastic connection with the royal family. Henry II, in contrast, had a greater supply of legitimate children and far few illegitimate daughters. As a result of this, his legitimate daughters participated within the royal dynastic strategy through prestigious and politically advantageous marriages to other European rulers and princes. Henry II's acknowledged illegitimate daughters then occupied a position similar to his illegitimate sons on the periphery of royal dynastic policy and aristocratic society. While his eldest illegitimate son, Geoffrey, as a result of his age and gender, was deemed a potentially useful member of royal family identity, the king originally intended to imbed him within the Church in a manner similar to his illegitimate half-sister, Matilda, the abbess of Barking, a position from which they could both contribute to the protection and advancement of royal political and landed interests.

Individual Anglo-Norman and Angevin royal bastards occupied positions of authority and prominence throughout the twelfth century, participating at a high level within aristocratic society and functioning as royal deputies. From their overlapping and interlinked capacities, they supported their legitimate family members in a mutually beneficial dynastic enterprise. This inclusion within royal familial identity was highly conditional and throughout this period there existed a great deal of variance in the extent to which illegitimate royal family members were permitted to participate in, and subsequently benefit from, inclusion in the familial enterprise. As a categorisation then, royal bastardy was descriptive rather than prescriptive in that it denoted an individual's close familial connection to the king and their illegitimate status but did not imply a set function or role within the royal household or wider aristocratic networks. As the twelfth century progressed, the cultural and legal bias against illegitimate individuals became increasingly formalised throughout secular society but this wider cultural trend did not prevent English kings during this time from manoeuvring their illegitimate family members into advantageous positions or integrating them into existing aristocratic

affinities.<sup>680</sup> Rather than outweighing the disadvantages and stigma of their illegitimacy, the potential value of illegitimate family members to their legitimate patrons, which was derived from their close familiar alignment and personal affinity, was actually enhanced by it. To an extent the position and role of twelfth century illegitimate royal family members within aristocratic networks and courtly society was fluidic, predicated upon the vagaries of royal patronage which was deployed in reaction to the varying political and dynastic circumstances of their legitimate family.

This is not to say, however, that those illegitimate royal family members who were permitted to participate within royal family identity and were integrated into aristocratic networks for the benefit of their legitimate family members simply functioned as royal servitors or appendages of a larger dynastic strategy. Royal bastards within the twelfth century, particularly those who had been empowered by their relatives to contribute to a shared dynastic enterprise, could and indeed did pursue their own interests and construct their own powerbases either in alignment with their relatives or separately from them. In extremis, certain illegitimate royal family members even abandoned their personal and political royal affinities in order to better secure their own position within aristocratic society. The extensive cooperation between empowered royal bastards and their legitimate patrons throughout the twelfth century is simply the result of the mutually beneficial nature of a close political alignment between family members. This relationship was, of course, inherently balanced in favour of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin kings but ultimately so were all of their political relationships, including those shared with their principal supporters within the aristocracy and other legitimate members of the royal family.

Through the survey and examination of their lives and careers it is apparent that Anglo-Norman and Angevin illegitimate royal family members served as close allies to their legitimate family members and were intimately involved in royal governance in a wide range of capacities throughout the entirety of this period. In order to effectively utilise specific illegitimate family members in the advancement

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<sup>680</sup> R.H Helmholtz., 'Bastard Litigation in Medieval England', *The American Journal of Legal History*, 13 (1969), pp.360-383 at p. 368.

and protection of their political and dynastic interests at times of crisis, twelfth century English kings integrated them into the structures of royal government and aristocratic networks through various means and mechanisms. Understanding the role of royal bastards during this period is of great importance to understanding the nature and function of kingship and aristocratic consensus in the twelfth century.

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