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**CULTURES OF CONQUEST: ROMANCING THE EAST IN MEDIEVAL
ENGLAND AND FRANCE**

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CULTURES OF CONQUEST: ROMANCING THE EAST IN MEDIEVAL

ENGLAND AND FRANCE

by

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Cultures of Conquest: Romancing the East in Medieval England and France

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Cultures of Conquest argues for the recognition of a significant and vital subcategory of medieval romance that treats the crusades as one of its primary interests, beginning at the time of the First Crusade and extending through the end of the Middle Ages. Many romances, even those not explicitly located in crusades settings, evoke and transform crusades events and figures to serve the purposes of the readers, commissioners, and authors of these texts. The prevalence of crusade images and themes in romance testifies to medieval Europe's intense preoccupation with the East in its multiple manifestations, both Christian and Muslim.

The introductory chapter situates the *Song of Roland* (c. 1100) as a hybrid epic-romance text that has long set the standard for modern thinking about medieval European attitudes toward the East. The following chapters, however, complicate the *Song of Roland*'s black-and-white portrayal of Muslims as "wrong" and Christians as "right."

Chapter Two, focusing on the Middle English romances *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, demonstrates the extreme “othering” of Muslims that occurred in medieval romance; but it also acknowledges the antagonism of other Christians (whether Eastern or European) in these texts. In Chapter Three, on romances with Saracen heroes (*Floire et Blancheflor*, the *Sowdone of Babylone*, and *Saladin*), I show how these texts reimagine the East as a desirable ally and even incorporate Saracens into European genealogies, seeking a more conciliatory relationship between East and West than is provided by the romances discussed in the previous chapter. My fourth chapter shows how gender mediates cultural contact in *Melusine* and *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*: women, as the cornerstones of important crusading families, were invested in crusading and were imagined as key to the success of the crusades.

The epilogue offers a brief reading of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (emphasizing the “Squire’s Tale” and the “Man of Law’s Tale”) within a long and varied tradition of medieval crusade romance. I argue that Chaucer works to replace a literary climate that idealizes violent conflict between East and West with one that imagines the possibility and desirability of commercial relationships with the East in England’s future.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Orientalism and Conquest: The Crusades in Medieval Romance and the <i>Chanson de Roland</i>	1
Chapter 2 Christian Heroes and the Politics of Conquest	29
Chapter 3 From Monstrous Other to Christian Brother: Romances of Saracen Heroes	90
Chapter 4 Female Crusaders and the Matrilineal Line.....	137
Epilogue Romance of the Past, Romance of the Future: Commerce as Conquest in Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i>	193
Bibliography	222
Vita	250

Chapter One

ORIENTALISM AND CONQUEST: THE CRUSADES IN MEDIEVAL ROMANCE AND THE *CHANSON DE ROLAND*

Romance Genres

The *Song of Roland* (c. 1100) is famous among readers of medieval literature for making intractable black-and-white distinctions between Christians and Saracens,¹ vilifying the latter while portraying the former as the chosen people of God. Composed close to the time of the First Crusade (1096-1099), this *chanson de geste* serves as a point of origin for my dissertation, both in that it first introduced me to medieval fiction of the crusades and in that the *chanson de geste* form gave rise to medieval romance, which gradually

¹ According to Norman Daniel, the word “Saracen” is Greek, and generally “means an unspecified residuum of Arabic-speaking Muslims. When from the twelfth century onwards there were more specific ideas of Islam, ‘Saracen’ in many contexts—in a discussion of Islam, or an account of the time of the Prophet—meant ‘Muslim’” (53). He goes on to explain that the word sometimes referred specifically to Arab Muslims (as opposed to Turks, for instance), though not necessarily; indeed, the word “Saracen” could refer to any non-Christian who was imagined to be pagan. See Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (London and New York: Longman, 1979). Elsewhere Daniel points out that Saracens, because of the Muslim occupation of Southern Europe in the early Middle Ages, were often associated with pagan antiquity; hence, in the imaginative literature of medieval Europe, they are often depicted as worshiping gods such as Apollo or Jupiter in addition to Muhammad, and often idols. See Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 141. Dorothee Metlitzki notes that the terms “Saracen” and “pagan” are often interchangeable as designations for enemies; Layamon even speaks of the pagan Saxons as worshiping “maumets,” or idols (119). See Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977). In historical sources, the term “Saracen” might be used in genuine attempts to describe adherents to Islam; in fictional literature such as romance and *chanson de geste*, however, we must remember that the word refers to fictional characters whose similarities to real Muslims were often virtually non-existent.

became the predominant vernacular genre of the European Middle Ages.² The correspondence, within a few years, of the composition of the *Chanson de Roland* with the First Crusade is not coincidental: this historical moment witnessed a solidification of the new European ideal of aggressive holy war.³ I shall return to the *Chanson de Roland* below. Before discussing the *Roland* in greater depth, however, I will contextualize my work on crusade romance—the primary interest of this dissertation—in terms of genre, history, and modern criticism.

² The *chanson de geste* is the specific medieval French form of epic poetry. In his study of romance as a genre, Fredric Jameson observes that “a positional notion of good and evil does not characterize romance alone, but also the *chanson de geste*, from which romance emerged” (160). See Jameson, “Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre,” *New Literary History* 7.1 (1975): 135-163. Lynn Tarte Ramey defines the *chanson de geste* as a “romance epic”—a work of fiction focusing much of its energy on war and the building of national identities, and which often incorporates semi-historical characters, but which nonetheless appropriates some of the romantic love story of a traditional romance. I would add that many of these texts were adapted, over the course of the Middle Ages, into crusade romances, often with very little generic distinction between the two other than that the *chanson* was generally meant to be sung, while the romance was meant to be read. See Chapter 4 of Ramey’s *Christian, Saracen and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

Daniel Poirion argues that the *chanson de geste* is actually a distinct genre from the epic—though he acknowledges many instances in which they overlap. Despite his hesitancy to equate epic and *chanson*, and the generic distinctions he makes between *chanson* and romance, one cannot help but notice how often his definitions of both epic and *chanson de geste* work for crusade romance as well. For example, he posits that “[c]e qui caractérise la chanson de geste, c’est la tendance à cristalliser autour de certaines figures de héros, autour de certains noms, les questions fondamentales qui se posent à la société de l’époque, les valeurs qui la définissent dans sa singularité, beaucoup plus qu’aux problèmes éternels de la condition humaine, tel celui du sexe et de l’amour” (15). This is equally true of most crusade romances as it is for the *chansons de geste*: *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, for instance, has long been acknowledged to tackle the ambiguous relationships—and competing values—between the monarchy and the barony in England. Likewise, many romances fulfill Poirion’s criteria for *chanson de geste*, such as featuring a legendary or semi-historical hero: *Saladin* fictionally incorporates many historical figures of the Third Crusade, while *Melusine* and *Guy of Warwick* work local legendary figures into crusade narratives, even to the extent, in the case of *Melusine*, of evoking locales, events, and character names associated with the historical Lusignan family. See Poirion, “Chanson de geste ou épopée? Remarques sur la définition d’un genre,” *Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature* 10 (1972): 7-20.

³ For a brief history of the transition of the idea of holy war from a necessary evil to a form of penance and service to the Church in the late eleventh century, see the first chapter (particularly pages 9-14) of Christopher Tyerman’s *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988). The *Chanson de Roland* clearly demonstrates the latter attitude toward holy war; its fallen heroes are considered martyrs for the faith, as Archbishop Turpin clearly articulates: “I will abolve you to save your souls. / If you die, you’ll be holy martyrs, / You’ll have seats in highest Paradise” (lines 1133-1135).

Medieval romance is, as has been well established, a highly fluid genre. Perhaps the most well known type of romance among modern readers is the romance of *fine amour*, or courtly love, exemplified by the work of Chrétien de Troyes. But one of the most popular types of romance in the high to late Middle Ages was the crusade romance, in which the love affair between the hero and his beloved is secondary to the focus on Christian war against the Saracens in the Holy Land or Spain.⁴ Indeed, in the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*, the hero's beloved provides only the most cursory incentive for knightly prowess, and is subsequently ignored.⁵ This genre draws heavily on the medieval French epic in its concentration on religious conflict and heroism in scenes of battle, often against great odds; many of the Middle English romances and later French romances are adaptations of earlier *chansons de geste* and share many of their attributes. This is particularly evident in the Anglo-Norman version of the romance *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (*Boeve de Haumtone*), which was composed in the *laissez* form typical of the

⁴ François Suard has even suggested that it may be appropriate to add a "matière de la croisade" (Matter of the Crusade) to the traditional three topics of medieval imaginative literature (The Matter of Britain, the Matter of France, and the Matter of Rome). See Suard, "Chanson de geste traditionnelle et épopée de croisade," *Chanson de geste et tradition épique au moyen âge* (Caen: Paradigme, 1994), pp. 183-206. Quoted on page 635 of Catherine M. Jones, "Les Chansons de Geste et L'Orient." *L'épopée romane: Actes du XV^e Congrès international Rencesvals, Poitiers, 21-27 août 2000* Tome II, ed. Gabriel Bianciotto et al. (Poitiers, France: Université de Poitiers Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, 2002), pp. 629-645.

⁵ Martha Driver attempts to recuperate Guy's *amie*/wife, Felice, as an important character in her own right, and succeeds to the extent that such a recuperation is possible; however, in the Middle English *Guy* romance, narrative attention to Felice is scant. Her role is to encourage Guy to prove his worth and, that accomplished, to bear him a son. Her character is minimally developed as haughty and demanding in the first half of the romance, then patient and generous in the second half, mirroring Guy's own development. See Driver, "'In her owne persone semly and bewteus': Representing Women in Stories of Guy of Warwick," *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, eds. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 133-153.

chansons.⁶ Other crusade romances impinge upon the immensely popular medieval genre of the saint's life: *Guy of Warwick*, for instance, adapts material from the *Life of St. Alexis*,⁷ while Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" reworks the Constance legend of the conversion of Britain.

W.P. Ker posits a concern with "national life" and historical figures as a key component of epic;⁸ like his epic, crusade romance often draws on history to a greater or lesser degree: for instance, the *Sowdone of Babylone* inserts itself into the semi-historical

⁶ On the *laissez* of *Boeve*, see Marianne Ailes, "Gui de Warewic in its Manuscript Context," *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, eds. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 12-26; more generally, Ailes discusses the generic overlap among history, epic, and romance in *Guy of Warwick* alongside various of its contemporary romances with similar generic bleeding. Many critics have struggled over the blurry generic lines of romance, particularly with respect to romance's relationship with epic. W.P. Ker, for example, argues that epic is interested in the heroic as opposed to the chivalric; that epic has a distinctly nationalist inflection in contrast to romance's typical focus on courtly love; that epics avoid authorial control over their characters, while romances insert narratorial commentary about their characters. Most of Ker's distinctions between romance and epic, however—such as the nationalist undertones in epic that Ker believes are missing in romance—become less tenable in the case of crusade romances, particularly when they are compared to epics of their own time period. See Ker, *Epic and Romance* (New York: Dover, 1957). Siobhain Bly Calkin very helpfully distinguishes between English and French romance: English romances, she says, "seem to embody an insular melding of French romance concerns about individual knights and their loves and deeds with French *chanson de geste* concerns about Saracen-Christian conflict, familial alliances, and dynastic duties" (21). See Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005). The definitions of epic and romance by other critics further demonstrate the difficulty—perhaps the ultimate futility—of drawing a rigid line between the two genres, especially when one considers crusade romances, which often adhere as much to the definitions of epic as of romance. For further investigation into definitions of romance and epic (though without particular consideration for the hybrid nature of crusade romance), see Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens*; Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969); a volume edited by Hans-Erich Keller, *Romance Epic: Essays on a Medieval Literary Genre* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), with particular attention to chapters by Ruth House Webber and William Kibler; D.H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150-1220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and the Encyclopedia Britannica, "epic." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 25 June 2008 (see Bibliography for full web address). I am partial to Susan Crane's attitude toward the problem: "Genre was not an important concept for medieval theorists, nor did poets restrict the term *roman/romance* to one set of characteristics" (10). See Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

⁷ On *Guy*'s indebtedness to the *Life of Saint Alexis*, see pages 20-23 of Velma Bourgeois Richmond's *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York and London: Garland, 1996).

⁸ See Ker, *Epic and Romance*.

medieval tradition of Charlemagne's Spanish campaign, while *Bevis of Hampton* evokes the historical connections between crusaders and the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia and *Melusine* places historical Lusignan rule of various crusader states within a legitimating mythic context. The late French romance *Saladin* aligns itself with history to an even greater degree, recounting the historical Muslim hero's conquests in the Levant with surprising accuracy. Along with epic, history is one of the genres most often hybridized with medieval romance, and it is important for modern audiences to remember that medieval audiences often thought of romances as historically factual.⁹ This appropriation of history by romance accomplished more than a simple lending of authority to fiction by making it seem more "truthful," however; Geraldine Heng has persuasively argued that in romance, "a resourcefully accommodating cultural medium, historical phenomena and fantasy may collide and vanish, each into the other, without explanation or apology, at the precise locations where both can be readily mined to best advantage" (2).¹⁰ Romance

⁹ Robert Allen Rouse has convincingly demonstrated that many medieval audiences did not distinguish between history and fiction in their reception of the romance *Guy of Warwick*, which seems to have been considered historically true by many medieval audiences. See Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Woodbridge, UK and Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2005). In *Legend*, Velma Richmond repeatedly reveals overlaps among the *Guy* romance, chronicle, and *chanson de geste*, and, like Rouse, shows how late medieval Earls of Warwick constructed a material history to accompany the literary history of their supposed ancestor. Matthew Morris argues that *Melusine*, which constructs a fairy origin for the Lusignan line, may have been viewed as historical, particularly since it draws on local legend that may have pre-dated Christianization. See Morris, *A Critical Edition of Couldrette's Mélusine or Le Roman de Parthenay* (Lewiston, New York and Queenston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003). The *Chanson de Roland*, likewise, was frequently viewed as an historical document, as I shall discuss in more detail below. In *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993), Gabrielle Spiegel thoroughly investigates the complicated assumptions of medieval writers, based on Classical forerunners, regarding truth and fiction in connection with the use of prose or verse; she shows how such generic markers based on prose and verse become muddled, however, when texts are translated into the vernacular and, in the late Middle Ages, when romances and other fictional genres begin to be adapted into prose.

¹⁰ Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

incorporates history in order to transform it, to remake medieval culture and society through its reorientation of the past. As literary critic and theorist Hayden White reminds us, all historical narratives are “verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invented* as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences....The events are *made* into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others” (396-397, White’s emphasis).¹¹ White’s take on the production of historical narrative is particularly useful in the study of medieval history and its considerable overlap with fiction. Romance melds the fantastic and the fictional with the historical and the legendary to form a medium through which medieval Europeans might reshape their understandings of the present through their relationships with the past. One of the most significant historical phenomena that romance engaged in this process was the crusades, on both general and specific levels—that is, romance reworks both “crusading” as a long-term effort to establish Christian dominance over the Levant and Spain and, in some cases, specific events such as the Latin¹² conquest of Constantinople in 1204 (in *Guy of Warwick*) or the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in 1187 (in *Saladin*).

One of the central projects of this dissertation is to demonstrate the prevalence and intensity of crusade themes in medieval romance throughout the high and late Middle

¹¹ See Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” *Critical Theory Since 1965*, eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1992), pp. 394-407.

¹² As Robert Bartlett notes, the term “Latin,” used by medieval writers as well as modern ones to refer to European Christians, originally stems from the identification of a community of people bound by their experience of worship in the Latin language according to the Roman rite (18-19). See Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

Ages, corresponding very closely with the period of historical crusading.¹³ The First Crusade, despite its horrendous casualties, was a glorious success for Latin Christendom that would be remembered by future generations and would inspire them to take the cross for hundreds of years to come, up to and including several campaigns against the Ottoman Turks in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Medieval romance served to memorialize the great events of the past and to spur contemporary audiences toward future conquests.

Romances often appealed to the vanity—and the obligations—of localized groups within Latin Christendom at the familial, regional, and national levels.¹⁴ Whether or not they succeeded in inspiring their patrons to launch or participate in a new crusade, these romances reached a varied audience: critics have posited that romances may have been consumed, perhaps in oral form, by the peasants, and evidence remains for ownership of romances among men and women at the mercantile, aristocratic, and royal levels as well as among the clergy.¹⁵ Though some were more popular than others, the crusade

Press, 1993). Latins are thus distinguished from Eastern Christians who practiced the Greek Orthodox rites or followed other local traditions.

¹³ If one glances quickly through a book such as Laura Hibbard's *Medieval Romance in England*, which provides brief summaries and critical background for no fewer than thirty-nine individual romances from England alone, one will discover that a remarkable proportion of them have significant Eastern episodes, each giving the reader a glimpse at how medieval audiences imagined the East and the people who lived there. See Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960).

¹⁴ Matthew Bennett, for instance, discusses Pope Urban II's rhetorical invocation of Charlemagne as an "ancestor" to inspire his audience when he preached the First Crusade at Clermont in 1095. See Bennett, "First Crusaders' Images of Muslims: The Influence of Vernacular Poetry?" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 22.2 (1986): 101-122. (See especially page 107.)

¹⁵ As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes in *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), "the *juvenes* who caused so much trouble at the courts during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries may have been a catalyst to the promulgation of romance, but the genre claimed a wide readership that cut across gender and class lines," especially as mercantile classes became more wealthy and powerful in the fourteenth century (90). *Guy of Warwick* is an excellent example of a

romances under consideration in the following chapters are representative of their genre both in their popularity—many survive in multiple manuscripts and were translated and/or adapted into several languages—and in their deep concentration on the crusades as a dominant theme. My focus on the romances of England and France is not arbitrary: the most aggressive leadership of the crusades often came from these regions which, moreover, shared many political and cultural (and literary) interests following the Norman conquest of England in 1066.¹⁶ Indeed, the Conquest, as Christopher Tyerman reminds us, produced a large number of Norman families who held lands in both England and France. Many of these brought their military expertise to the First Crusade in the company of Robert Curthose, brother of King William I of England: Ralph de Gael (and Norfolk), Roger of Montgomery's son Philip, and Eustace of Boulogne, to name a few (Tyerman 15-16).¹⁷ Linguistically and culturally linked by the families who became England's aristocracy after the Norman Conquest, England and France together demonstrate the greatest literary interest in the crusades. The romances produced in these regions were widely adapted and reproduced in Germany, Italy, Spain, Ireland, and

romance that reached a wide audience. Velma Richmond traces various audiences for the *Guy* romances in English and Anglo-Norman in *Legend*, from the lower and middle classes (53) to the Queen of England: John Talbot gave a manuscript containing the romance to Margaret of Anjou when she married King Henry VI in 1446 (122). Richmond further observes that *Guy* manuscripts were also frequently owned by monasteries (23). Timothy Shonk argues that the Auchinleck manuscript, in which the earliest extant Middle English *Guy* appears, was most likely commissioned by a wealthy bourgeois. See Shonk, "A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century," *Speculum* 60.1 (1985): 71-91.

¹⁶ The Third Crusade is perhaps most representative of the tendency of the English and French to dominate the crusades: leadership was shared between King Philip Augustus of France and King Richard of England.

¹⁷ See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*.

Scandinavia, all of which took an interest in the crusades as well.¹⁸ The selection of crusade romances I have chosen to discuss here exemplify not just the black-and-white rejection of the Muslim Other epitomized by the *Song of Roland*, but also alternative attitudes that demonstrate an eagerness to imagine East-West relations that are not defined entirely by violence.

Colonizing the Middle Ages

¹⁸ Both Germany and Italy were extremely influential in the crusades, but produced less original crusades literature than England and France.

Though critics of the early and mid-twentieth century tended to ignore, or at least to subordinate, the crusades imagery so prevalent in medieval romances, critics of the last three decades have gradually developed methodologies for excavating more of the cultural resonances embedded in romance. Fundamental to these projects has been the desire to explore how medieval Europeans constructed the Other against whom they defined their Selves.¹⁹ My own entry into this endeavor was initiated through Edward Said's classic study *Orientalism*.²⁰ Despite his too-easy binarisms between East and West and between modernity and premodernity,²¹ Said's analysis of the constructedness of Western stereotypes of Easterners—of Muslims in particular—remains useful for me as a launching point for thinking about medieval European attitudes toward Islam, the Holy Land, and holy war.²²

Said's drive to expose orientalism in Western literature and his argument that literature is never politically or historically "innocent" complements Norman Daniel and

¹⁹ Recent influential critics have approached the "postcolonial Middle Ages," as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has dubbed these studies, through various avenues. Critics such as Carolyn Dinshaw, Jacqueline de Weever, John Boswell, Steven F. Kruger, and Glenn Burger, for instance, have entered the critical conversation on medieval "Othering" through feminist and queer theories; Cohen, John Block Friedman and Sylvia Tomasch through critical race studies; Michael Uebel and Patricia Clare Ingham through psychoanalysis; and Geraldine Heng and Bruce Holsinger through subaltern studies, all with considerable overlaps that would be too complicated to detail here. Even this very abbreviated list of critics whose work has been essential to the development of medieval postcolonial studies offers one a sense of the rich diversity of viewpoints that influence and complement my own.

²⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

²¹ Though he acknowledges the "textual and contemplative" orientalism of premodern authors Aeschylus, Euripides, Dante, and the *Chanson de Roland* poet, Said contends that "administrative, economic, and even military" (*Orientalism* 210) orientalism—that is, institutionalized dominance of one society over another—is a purely modern phenomenon. Though medieval Europeans certainly lacked the technology to colonize Syria, for instance, as thoroughly as modern Britons colonized India, colonization of the Holy Land was certainly one of the goals of the crusades, as I shall discuss in greater detail below.

²² For a critique of Said's dismissal of medieval orientalism and of his reading of Dante, as well as further discussion of medieval colonialism, see Lucy K. Pick, "Edward Said, *Orientalism* and the Middle Ages," *Medieval Encounters* 5.3 (1999): 265-271.

Joshua Prawer, whose early work in medieval cultural studies has also strongly influenced me. Daniel was one of the first literary critics to take seriously the need to evaluate medieval crusade fiction from an historical perspective, thoroughly comparing and contrasting the images of Islam one finds in the literature with historical developments and with the factual evidence with which Europeans might have been familiar.²³ Just as importantly, historian Joshua Prawer established in *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* that during the crusades, Latin conquerors from Europe and Britain settled in the East with the intention to dominate the Levant and secure Christian rule there.²⁴ More than just a series of wars, the crusades resulted in the settlement of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other important crusader states by Latins, beginning with the county of Edessa in 1098 as the armies of the First Crusade made their way toward Jerusalem, which they captured in 1099. Some of the crusader states floundered: the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem struggled for existence after the reconquest of the Holy City and much of its surrounding territory by Saladin in 1187. But other of these states, such as Cyprus, flourished—or at least survived—for centuries.

Medieval orientalism, both contemplative and administrative (to borrow Said's distinction), can be seen clearly in some crusade chronicles, for example in the various

²³ As Daniel admits, there was probably a wide range of factual knowledge about Islam in the European Middle Ages. The higher echelons of the clergy would have known more than anyone who had not had personal contact with Muslims, but they were not generally the inventors of the fictional accounts. I have drawn primarily on two of Daniel's more recent books, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* and *Heroes and Saracens*. Daniel's earlier books are also excellent resources: *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960) and *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966).

²⁴ Prawer, *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972). Prawer shows that, though many crusaders intended to return to Europe

versions of Pope Urban II's historic crusade sermon at Clermont in 1095, in which the pontiff is described as portraying Muslims as savages raping Eastern Christians and their lands and also calling upon European knights to "wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves" (Peters 28).²⁵ Latin Christians were expected, throughout the duration of the crusades, to settle permanently in the East in order to protect the Holy Sepulchre from defilement and ensure safe passage for pilgrims. In 1309, Ramon Lull was still concerned with "populating" desirable Muslim-occupied territory with Christians, both Latin and Eastern, after (prospective) conquests.²⁶ As noted above, the political implications here—which did, indeed, result in the creation of Latin colonies—go far beyond the literary orientalism that Said begrudgingly grants the Middle Ages.

The most fundamental work of crusade romance, then, is to reinforce the desirability of crusading—for reasons both religious and mundane—and to glorify those who undertake this task; but individual crusade romances may reformulate what crusading means, as in *Saladin*, where Christian knights are overcome by the military superiority of the Muslim hero but succeed, in the end, in securing his conversion to Christianity through their long and patient years of service to the Sultan. Likewise, female Christian characters such as Blancheflor and the lady in *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu* may support the efforts of the crusades by infiltrating Muslim courts and

after fulfilling their vows, others sold their possessions, packed their families, and set out on crusade with the intention of settling in the East.

²⁵ See Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, second edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

²⁶ See the excerpt of Ramon Lull's *De acquisitione Terrae Sanctae*, document number 9, in Norman Housley, ed. and trans., *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274-1580* (Houndmills, England and London: MacMillan, 1996).

converting the ruler to Christianity (in the case of Blancheflor) or establishing a genealogical claim to future generations of Saracen rulers and their territories (in the case of the count's daughter). These hybrid texts, variously drawing on the conventions of epic, hagiography, and history as well as the more "traditional" gender relations of courtly romance, show the modern reader how deeply invested in the crusades medieval literature is and how the crusades are imagined as part of the process of consolidating and creating European communal and national identities.²⁷ These concerns are present in crusade literature from its very inception, not only in chronicle and history, but also in the *Song of Roland*, which exemplifies early anti-Muslim attitudes, on the one hand, but also suggests some of the developments that would mark crusade romance in the centuries to come, such as its valorization of the noble foe and its conversion of the Saracen queen Bramimonde.

The *Chanson de Roland* as Precursor to Crusade Romance

Like the crusade romances that emerged in its wake, the *Song of Roland* celebrates the achievements of legendary heroes in their struggles against the Saracen Other.²⁸ In the

²⁷ Most medievalists agree that in Europe, nations and national identities were in periods of formation during the Middle Ages, but were certainly beginning to be recognized as such. Though "national" boundaries remained fluid, groups that were culturally, ethnically, and linguistically distinct were occupying and developing connections to discrete tracts of land. Moreover, one sees in medieval literature repeated references to groups of people as "English," "Frankish," "Irish," etc. See, for instance, Diane Speed, "The Construction of the Nation in Medieval English Romance," *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994), pp. 135-157; Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray, eds., *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1995).

²⁸ The history of the *Chanson de Roland* in its medieval manuscripts and its modern criticism is well documented, and will not be rehearsed here. Modern treatment of the *chanson* has been fascinatingly

opening section of this chapter, I showed that the definitional lines between *chanson de geste* and crusade romance are, to a certain degree, arbitrary.²⁹ Providing a precedent for the romances I will discuss in greater depth throughout this dissertation, the *Roland* borrows from and transforms history in order to emphasize—indeed, to *invent*—a prehistory of crusade as far back as Charlemagne’s reign in the eighth and ninth centuries.³⁰ I open this study of romance with a brief discussion of the *Song of Roland*, then, for several reasons: first of all, because the *Song of Roland* has long been assumed to epitomize medieval European imaginative views on Islam and Christian-Muslim conflict—an assumption that I wish to dispute here; second, because there is an obvious correlation between the *Roland*’s celebration of early crusades ideals with the fact that it was composed within a few years of 1100, during or in the immediate aftermath of the First Crusade; and third, because it is crucial to recognize the fluidity of medieval

complicated by the creation of the *Roland* as France’s national epic in the nineteenth century, a designation that lasts to the present day. Andrew Taylor traces the “invention” of this *chanson* in the interests of nineteenth-century French nationalism with particular dexterity in “Was There a Song of Roland?” *Speculum* 76.1 (2001): 28-650.

²⁹ On the generic borrowings between romance and epic (and other genres) and the peculiar variation on epic evidenced by the *chansons de geste*, see William Calin, “Textes médiévaux et tradition: la chanson de geste est-elle une épopée?” *Romance Epic: Essays on a Medieval Literary Genre*, ed. Hans-Erich Keller (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), pp. 11-19.

³⁰ Citing Homi Bhabha’s theory of “double time,” Diane Speed notes that in medieval romance, “the present is always becoming the past” such that ideas and ideals that are important to high or late medieval audiences are imagined as having been continuously important, throughout intervening centuries, since the times of the nation’s founding heroes. See Speed, “The Construction of the Nation.” I will draw the reader’s attention to my use of the term “crusade” here rather than “holy war:” though the concept of holy war was current in Charlemagne’s time, the *Song of Roland* subscribes to a kind of war that better resembles the crusade of later centuries in that combatants are to be absolved of their sins in exchange for their blood and their lives and also in that Charles’s campaign is directed specifically against the infidel (contrary to historical fact). I discuss the distinction and its manifestation in the *Roland* in greater detail below. It is possible, though, that the *Song of Roland* is slightly more historically accurate than many critics realize: though it is well known that the forces who attacked Charlemagne’s rearguard were Basques, Dorothee Metlitzki cites the Arabic chronicle of Ibn al-Athir as indicating that the Basque attack may have

distinctions between fact and fiction in order to understand the impact that crusade romance may have had on its audiences and the seriousness with which its interactions with history must be taken.³¹

Despite the superficial similarities between the Christian and Saracen characters in the *Song of Roland*—that is, the apparently similar values and structure of social order, and the famous “trinity” of gods that the Saracens worship: Mahon, Apollo, and Tervagant—most critics agree that the *Roland* depicts relations between Christians and Saracens as fundamentally and inherently antagonistic.³² The only character who considers the possibility of an alliance between the two groups is Ganelon, the traitor whose driving motivation in the narrative is to destroy his stepson Roland, even if it means allying himself with the enemy to achieve his objective. Frequent repetition of

been instigated by a pair of Muslim men trying to release hostages. See Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, p. 118.

³¹ Matthew Bennett suggests that some of the chroniclers of the First Crusade may have been familiar with an earlier version of the *Chanson de Roland* and may even have used it as a model for parts of their histories of the Crusade. See Bennett, “First Crusaders’ Images of Muslims.” Stephen G. Nichols also recognizes the overlap between literature and chronicle: he contends that Oliver of Paderborn, chronicler of the Fifth Crusade, is so concerned with the literary and allegorical modes of his writing that “the narrative cannot really tell us in effect what Oliver actually *sees*”: the literary seems to outweigh the history in this ostensibly historical narrative (126, emphasis Nichols’s). See Nichols, “Poetic Places and Real Spaces: Anthropology of Space in Crusade Literature,” *Yale French Studies* 95 (1999): 111-133.

³² D.D.R. Owen is a notable exception in arguing that the theme of religious conflict is secondary at best. Owen sees the *Song of Roland*’s principal concern as the relationships among warriors and their secular lords. The point is a valuable one, but I do not believe these two *foci* are necessarily mutually exclusive: war is the *de facto* situation in which relationships between warriors matter. If the war is religious in nature, these relationships will carry particular nuances that might not be present in the literature concerning another category of war. Some of the lines that Owen analyses for their purely secular content, in fact, may be read as having distinctly religious undertones—for example, as Owen quotes, when Roland encourages his troops to uphold their duty in fighting for Charles: “Ben devuns ci ester pur nostre rei./Pur sun seignor deit hom susfrir destreiz/E endurer e granz chalz e granz freiz” (Owen 391). Explicitly, Roland talks about what a man must suffer for his liege lord (in this case Charles); but one can hardly read these lines, particularly in a *chanson* set in the middle of a bloody war between Christians and Saracens, without recognizing the religious connotations. Indeed, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II attempted to bring the meaning and purpose of knighthood and the practice of war into alignment with the

variations on the famous line “The pagans are in the wrong and the Christians are in the right” (line 1015)³³ throughout the text serves to emphasize the essential difference, based on religious orientation, between Christians and non-Christians. The religious difference is certainly the most noticeable distinction between the two sides, as we see, for example, when Saracens are praised with the formulaic “If he were a Christian, he would be a very worthy knight” (line 899 regarding an emir from Balaguer; repeated nearly word-for-word in line 3164 about Baligant, the ruler of all the Saracens); even the deaths of the Saracens are an inversion of those of the Christians, for while the angel Gabriel escorts Roland to heaven at his poignant death, the Saracen lords are escorted to hell by Satan or devils. The intractability of each side toward the other cannot be surmounted: Charles maintains that he “must bestow neither peace nor friendship on any pagan” (line 3596), though conversion would serve to erase the impossibility of compromise with the Emir Baligant.³⁴ Some critics view the Saracen queen Bramimonde’s rejection of her gods and her loss of faith in the Saracen religion as the essential moment of victory in the *Roland*: according to Ann Tukey Harrison, Bramimonde “is the sole individualized Saracen survivor, and by her baptism...she

Church’s goals and its theory of holy war, perhaps evoking Charles as an inspirational example. See Owen, “The Secular Inspiration of the *Chanson de Roland*,” *Speculum* 37.3 (1962): 390-400.

³³ All quotations from the *Song of Roland* come from the facing-page Old French/Modern English edition of Gerald J. Brault: *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition. II. Oxford Text and English Translation*, (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

³⁴ When Charles fights Baligant one-on-one in the midst of the general battle, each ruler offers the other rewards as an inducement to conversion. This brief exchange between religious enemies on the battlefield—which establishes a moral safe-guard for the Christian character to ensure that he is not about to kill a potential convert—is one of the most common tropes of crusade romance as well as of the *chansons de geste*.

embodies the primary theme of the *chanson*: the Christians are right, the pagans are wrong” (674-675).³⁵

Unlike many Saracen women in romances and *chansons de geste*, who convert to Christianity out of love for a Christian knight, Bramimonde converts because she witnesses the superiority of the Christian God through miracles on the battlefield and because she is carefully instructed in the Christian faith. This is certainly a triumphant moment in the *Song of Roland* and underlines the preeminence of religion as the discourse upon which difference is established in this text. Religion is not, however, the only marker of alterity in the *Song of Roland*.

One of the most popular images of Saracens in crusade romance and *chanson de geste* alike is that of the black giant, often specified as African or Ethiopian, whom the hero must fight and defeat. The *Roland* has its share of black Saracens, demonstrating the use of racial color as a moralizing discourse that is related to religion but also distinct from it. The most striking example in the *Roland* is the black Saracen Abisme, whose very name hints at his abysmal—or perhaps abyssal—nature:

Teches ad males e mult granz felonies,
Ne creit en Deu, le filz seinte Marie;
Issi est neirs cume peiz ki est demise.

³⁵ Sharon Kinoshita expresses a similar opinion on page 43 in *Medieval Boundaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). See Harrison, “Aude and Bramimunde: Their Importance in the *Chanson de Roland*,” *The French Review* 54.5 (1981): 672-679. Harrison maintains that Bramimonde’s conversion is an anomaly and is important because it is unique. In fact, there are references at the opening of the poem to Charles having converted Saracens to Christianity in Cordoba, which he has just conquered when the *Chanson de Roland* begins, forming a bookend to Bramimonde’s conversion in the last lines of the poem. Moreover, Bramimonde’s conversion in France is preceded by the baptism of more than 100,000 Saracens at Saragossa after Charles’ victory, though none of these are recognizable individuals who carry the symbolic weight of the Queen.

Plus aïmet il traïsun e murdrïe
Que il ne fesist trestut l'or de Galice

[There was no viler man than he in his company.
He has evil vices and has committed many great crimes,
He does not believe in God, the Son of Holy Mary;
He is as black as molten pitch.
He loves treachery and murder more
Than all the gold in Galicia]
(lines 1633-37)

Not only does Abisme not believe in God or Christianity, but he is also essentially evil, loving treachery and murder above all things. He is one of the only Saracens in the *Roland* to be singled out with such a description of moral abhorrence; it is no coincidence, I suspect, that he is also one of the few who is explicitly singled out as black (though there are regiments in Baligant's army that are almost certainly meant to be dark-skinned: the Moors, the "Nubles and Blos," and the Nigres). When Baligant's army, in all its enormity and ferocity, is described in order to demonstrate to the audience what Charles is up against when he fights to avenge the annihilation of Roland and his rearguard, it includes, among many others, the people of Misnes, who have huge heads and bristles like pigs on their backs (lines 3221-23); those from Occian le Desert, whose "skins are as tough as iron" (line 3249); and also "giants from Malprose" (line 3253). We learn that, in addition to the boarish spines of the men from Misnes, the men of Occian "bray and whinny" (line 3526), while "[t]he men from Argoille yelp like dogs" (line

3527). The Saracens thus include troops that are so different from the Christians as to be animalistic, and accordingly fierce. The resemblance of the men from Misnes to boars, like giantism and blackness, is common to descriptions of romance villains, as will become evident in my discussion of *Guy of Warwick* in Chapter Two.

The Song of Roland alienates Saracens in other ways that are not explicitly religious, having to do instead with territorial expansion. At the same time that the Saracens fear Roland because he wishes to “conquer for [Charles] all the lands from [Spain] to the Orient” (line 401), they declare their intentions to invade France and defeat Charles there. In the first part of the *Roland*, Marsile’s men promise him:

Franceis murrunt, Carles en ert dolent;
Tere Majur vos metrum en present...
L’empereor vos metrum en present.

[The French shall die, Charles shall be plunged into sorrow,
We’ll deliver the Fatherland over to you...
We’ll deliver the Emperor over to you.]
(lines 951-952 and 954)

They elaborate:

Jusqu’a un an avrum France saisie,
Gesir porrum el burc de seint Denise.

[In a year’s time we shall be masters of France,
We shall be able to rest at Saint-Denis-en-France.]
(lines 972-973)

In the second half of the *chanson*, Baligant twice repeats the claim: “I shall go to France to wage war against Charles” (line 2681; also, in slightly different words, in line 2661).³⁶ The repetition of the Saracens’ ambition to invade Europe indicates its importance to the poet who composed the *Roland*, but this poet—like the composer of the *Saladin* romance three centuries later—may also be reminding his audience that Umayyad Muslim conquerors did, in fact, occupy southern France in the eighth century.³⁷ In the *Song of Roland*, the proto-crusade is depicted as defensive as well as offensive. Not only do the Saracens intend to conquer France itself, but they have also already demonstrated the strength of their threats by conquering and committing atrocities in the Holy City of Jerusalem. Valdabrun, one of Marsile’s vassals, “took Jerusalem by treacherous means, / Violated the Temple of Solomon, / And killed the Patriarch before the fonts” (lines 1523-1525).³⁸ The Saracens’ territorial offense against the Franks is thus a double one, striking both at their national homeland and also at their spiritual center in Jerusalem.

Thus, the *Song of Roland* embodies the rejection of the Saracen Other and utilizes all the imagery available to medieval composers of *chansons de geste* and romance in order to establish the impossibility of non-violent interaction with an inherently aggressive Islam. The sermon that the warrior-archbishop Turpin addresses to the Frankish rearguard as it is about to meet the enemy in battle echoes extant accounts of

³⁶ “En France irai pur Carle guerreier” (line 2681).

³⁷ The expansion of the Umayyads into southern Europe was checked at the Battle of Poitiers (732) by Charles Martel, Charlemagne’s grandfather.

³⁸ “Jerusalem prist ja par traïsun, / Si violat le temple Salomon, / Le patriarche ocist devant les funz” (lines 1523-1525).

Pope Urban II's crusade sermon at Clermont in 1095, urging the Franks (and the audience of the *chanson*) to recognize their endeavor as part of the Church's work against the enemies of Christ. He exhorts them:

Seignurs, baruns, Carles nus laissat ci,
Pur nostre rei devum nus ben murir:
Chrestientet aidez a sustenir!
Bataille avrez, vos en estes tuz fiz,
Kar a voz oilz veez les Sarrazins.
Clamez vos culpes, si preiez Deu mercit!
Asoldrai vos pur voz anmes guarir.
Se vos murez, esterez seinz martirs,
Sieges avrez el greignor pareis.

[My lord barons, Charles left us here,
We must die well for our King:
Help sustain Christianity!
You are to fight a battle, you are all certain of that,
For you see the Saracens before your eyes.
Say your confessions and pray for God's mercy!
I will absolve you to save your souls.
If you die, you'll be holy martyrs,
You'll have seats in highest Paradise.]
(lines 1127-1135)

This rhetoric is very much that of the crusade, a set of ideas and ideals that coalesced at the end of the eleventh century in order to spark the defense of Christians against Muslims in the East and also to encourage the reconquest of Spain. As

Christopher Tyerman observes, the theory of crusade—of holy war against the infidel—as a Christian duty, as penance, and as an act that will guarantee absolution of confessed sins was a theory that was relatively new to this generation of both knights and clerics; in 1070, even wars against non-Christians that were condoned by the Pope still required those who fought in them to do penance for having killed (Tyerman 12-13).³⁹ Whether it was composed during or just after the First Crusade, the *Song of Roland* clearly participates in the creation of this new ideology of war that is not only sanctioned but desirable from the Church’s point of view; as Sharon Kinoshita argues, the *Roland* works to construct this new ideology of crusade by rejecting the processes of accommodation between Muslim and Christian that had been the norm in Spain for decades, if not centuries.⁴⁰ The *Song of Roland* rewrites the history of Charlemagne’s Spanish campaign in order to make it conform to the experiences and needs of its twelfth-century audiences: as Stephen G. Nichols notes, “all available evidence suggests that the *poetic* accounts of Charlemagne’s battle in the Pyrenees shaped the twelfth century [*sic*] awareness of the historical fact, rather than the other way around” (25).⁴¹ I hope it will become clear, in

³⁹ See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*.

⁴⁰ See Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*, chapter 1.

⁴¹ See Nichols, “Poetic Reality and Historical Illusion in the Old French Epic,” *The French Review* 43.1 (1969): 23-33. Nichols continues: “It is perhaps heretical to argue that works of imaginative literature should be treated as if they were historical documents, but the Middle Ages, which did not possess our rigid distinctions between fiction and non-fiction, treated them as such” (25). This was not always the case, of course, but was quite common. Many *chansons* and romances seem to have been composed either with the idea that they presented fact or with the intention to borrow from fact in order to make them more compelling to their audiences. As noted above, Bennett points out that the *chansons de geste* may even have influenced how chroniclers of the First Crusade depicted Latin accomplishments in the East. See Bennett, “First Crusaders’ Images of Muslims.”

the following pages, that the same may be true of romance and its shaping of medieval audiences' perceptions of their past.

By portraying a conflict between Saracens and Christians that is simply not resolvable except by violence, the *Song of Roland* ushers in a new kind of literature that takes up this premise of condoned warfare against non-Christians. This literature, in the form of *chansons de geste* or of romance, is not static, however: eventually, its authors adapt it to the changing desires of Europe's literary and knightly classes as the crusades themselves produce new needs, new goals, and new possibilities for Christian involvement in the East. I argue that the *Song of Roland* and the romances under examination in the chapters that follow respond to the crusades as one of the most important social experiences of medieval Europe;⁴² but they also, at times, respond to particular historical events such as the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187 and Richard Lionheart's attempt to retake the Holy City during the Third Crusade of 1189-1192; the Latin conquest of the Christian Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 1204; or the fall of Cilician Armenia to the Mamluks in the late fourteenth century. The crises precipitated by these events led to reevaluations and renewals of European interest in the crusades. Regional or familial groups often had particular claims to make about their roles in past crusades or their investments in future ones. Crusade romances, like *chansons de geste*, actively engage in the production of images, attitudes, even policies adopted by Europeans in relation to the East. As Susan Crane so eloquently phrases it,

“the effort to reconnect literature to history is vital for those who believe that literary texts are social communications that played a part in the lives of their first audiences” (2);⁴³ my aim here is exactly such a reconnection—or rather the recognition of a connection—between the history of the crusades and crusade romance.

From *Chanson* to Romance

Sharon Kinoshita and Andrew Taylor, among others, have convincingly argued that it is well past time that the “invention” of the *Song of Roland* as the epitome of medieval epic be revisited and questioned.⁴⁴ These critics have demonstrated ways in which the *Roland* is atypical among the *chansons de geste* and they have also shown how nineteenth-century scholars prioritized certain themes and meanings while undermining others—such as the roles of women—that critics strive to recuperate in today’s theoretical environment. Just as the *Song of Roland* was somewhat misleadingly constructed as *the* representative of medieval epic, I suggest here that it has been misleadingly codified as *the* medieval authority on Western views toward Islam. The *Roland*’s portrayal of Saracens is an extremely important one, and perhaps the best representative of medieval popular imagination about the Muslim Other at the time of the First Crusade. But it is by no means the only medieval work of fiction about Christian-Muslim conflict that is worthy of study.

⁴² Christopher Tyerman agrees that, like modern scholars, the medieval Church “cannot have been unaware of the reconfiguration of western culture caused by the occupation of the Holy Land” (167). See Tyerman, *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press (Harvard), 2006).

⁴³ See Crane, *Insular Romance*.

In my second chapter, “Christian Heroes and the Politics of Conquest,” I analyze two extremely popular Middle English romances, *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton*, each of which features a legendary Christian hero who travels to the East to fight against his Saracen enemies. In many ways, these two romances reinforce the fundamental alterity of the Saracen Other by means very similar to those of the *Song of Roland*: intractable religious difference, racialized discourses, and the reworking of crusades themes into England’s semi-mythic past. But even these romances, so like the *Song of Roland* on many levels, demonstrate complications of the Christian-Saracen binary established in the *Roland*. In *Guy of Warwick*, for instance, a third cultural-religious entity is added to the Christian-Saracen conflict in the form of Byzantine Constantinople. I suggest that the Christian Byzantine Empire is, in subtle ways, just as threatening to Guy as is the Saracen East with its monstrous opponents. Furthermore, I argue that this romance responds to one of the most distressing episodes of crusading history, when Latin crusaders detoured from Egypt to Constantinople, overthrew the Christian emperor there, and placed a European on the Byzantine throne in 1204, directly contributing to the fall of the Eastern Empire to Muslim forces. *Bevis of Hampton*, which like *Guy* pitches its titular hero into ideological conflict against the Saracen Other, also complicates the binarism of East-West conflict by fictionally exploring the relationship between the West and the kingdom of Armenia, an historically Christian kingdom that usually supported Western crusaders. This romance shows how an English knight might distinguish himself

⁴⁴ See Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*; Taylor, “Was There a Song of Roland?”

in the East, win an Eastern heiress as his bride, and ultimately settle in the East when social conditions in England fail to nurture him.

My third chapter, “From Monstrous Other to Chivalrous Brother: Romances of Saracen Heroes,” investigates three examples of a small but vital subcategory of crusade romance that feature Saracen protagonists: *The Sowdone of Babylone*, *Saladin* and *Floire et Blancheflor*. These romances offer a complex and often conciliatory reading of East-West relations during the later crusades period. While acknowledging Western desire for Eastern territory and goods, these romances also demonstrate European Christendom’s craving to be desired by the East. Eastern princes are attracted to Western women, culture, chivalry, and even religion; because of this attraction, we see a more nuanced and morally complex understanding of the Muslim Other than in the more traditional romances explored in Chapter Two. Developing mostly after the first century of the crusades, the Saracen romances may indicate a turning point in Western attitudes toward the East: as aspirations for the total defeat of Islam and conquest over the entirety of the Levant became impractical, Europeans turned toward hopes that alliances, trade, and intermarriage might gradually influence Eastern rulers and make them more amenable to Western values. In each of the Saracen romances, these hopes play out in the cohabitation of Christian and Saracen characters in historic contact zones;⁴⁵ the virtuous Saracens, who already share chivalric values with their Christian counterparts, are convinced of the righteousness of Christianity and convert. In *Floire et Blancheflor* and the *Sowdone of*

⁴⁵ For the purposes of my work, “contact zones” refer to regions where Christian and Muslim (and often Jewish) populations lived in close proximity to one another in significant enough numbers that cultural and

Babylone, the conversions of the principal characters bring about the conversions of their entire kingdoms to Christianity, a hope among missionaries of the later crusading period.

“Female Crusaders and the Matrilineal Line,” my fourth chapter, shows how gender mediates cultural contact in regulating East-West relations. The texts I consider, *Melusine* and *La Fille du Comte de Pontieu*, range from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Though the roles of women in the crusades have been under-emphasized by modern critics, these romances demonstrate ways in which cultural forms of conquest and conversion, figured through female bodies and the agency of women, are explored alongside military forms of domination. Family links between East and West were crucial to medieval Western hopes for reconquest of the Holy Land after Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187. Families such as the Lusignans, who form the fictional subject of *Melusine*, had a strong presence throughout the Crusader Kingdoms and aspired to launch new crusades well into the fifteenth century. Indeed, some versions of *Melusine* explicitly cite the need for a new crusade to recapture recently-lost Armenia, which had been under Lusignan rule for well over half a century.⁴⁶ In this chapter, I show that women, as the cornerstones of these crusading families, were invested in crusading and were imagined as key to the success of the crusades.

I suggest in the Epilogue to this project, “Romance of the Past, Romance of the Future: Commerce as Conquest in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*,” that reading Chaucer

economic interaction was virtually inevitable. During the period of the crusades, Spain, the Levant, and various pockets of the Near East were contact zones.

⁴⁶ Though Lusignan rule in Armenia was comparatively short-lived, the Lusignans in Armenia were closely related to the Lusignans of Cyprus, which was significantly more stable and was invested in the attempt to keep Armenia out of Muslim hands.

into a history of crusades literature brings new light to our understanding of his place in a long medieval tradition of writing and thinking about East-West contact. Through examination of the *Canterbury Tales*, particularly the “Man of Law’s Tale” and the “Squire’s Tale,” I conclude that Chaucer undertook a program of generic hybridization of romance with genres that were, by 1400, beginning to exert great cultural pull on literate audiences. By the time Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* at the end of the fourteenth century, reviving the former glory of the Crusader Kingdoms was an unachievable ideal. Chaucer’s exploration of the difficulty (and possible undesirability) of successful military crusade is intertwined with his examination of the limitations of medieval romance conventions and his sense that Europe was moving toward new global interconnections with the East, often centered around commerce and trade.

I contend throughout this work that the crusades formed an important *topos* in the development of medieval European identities, as evidenced by their high visibility in the most popular of vernacular literatures, the romance. Unlike most studies of romance, this work brings together texts from both sides of the English Channel that cover more than three centuries of literary production, thus offering opportunities for comparison and contrast and a nuanced reading of multiple—and sometimes conflicting—medieval attitudes. Moreover, I hope that my work will interest scholars of later European and American literatures, particularly those concerned with colonial and postcolonial studies as well as with gender studies, for in many ways the “Easts” that were invented by medieval romance still influence us today.

Chapter Two

CHRISTIAN HEROES AND THE POLITICS OF CONQUEST

Twin Heroes: Introducing Guy and Beues

In the previous chapter, the *Song of Roland* demonstrated for us how dramatically literature may rework historical events in order to imagine continuity between past and present. The *Song of Roland's* reimagining of Charlemagne's encounter with the Basques at Roncesvalles as a conflict between vast armies of Christians and Saracens has persisted into the present day. The high medieval English romances *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* also draw on a legendary past to explore the concerns of their contemporary audiences. Both *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* originated as Anglo-Norman romances composed between the end of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, and both were adapted into Middle English around 1300. Both romances were extremely popular by medieval standards, surviving in multiple manuscripts not only in Anglo-Norman and English, but in other European languages as well.⁴⁷ Both romances, moreover, enjoyed continued popularity throughout the medieval period and well into the Early Modern and Modern periods.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The Guy of Warwick legend was adapted, either from English or from French, into German, Latin, Italian, Irish, Catalan, and Castilian. See Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996), p. 107; and Laura Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), pp. 129-130. *Beues* was adapted into Welsh, Irish, Dutch, Norse, Italian, Romanian, Russian, and Yiddish as well as French and English. See Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England* (115) and Judith Weiss, "The Anglo-Norman Boeve de Haumtone: A Fragment of a New Manuscript," *The Modern Language Review* 95.2 (2000): 305-310, at p. 305, note 1.

⁴⁸ On illustrations and early print culture of *Beues* and *Guy*, see Siân Echard, "Of Dragons and Saracens: Guy and Bevis in Early Print Illustration," *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*. Eds. Alison Wiggins and

Beues and *Guy* are set in pre-Conquest England—*Guy* in the reign of King Athelstan (r. 924-939) and *Beues* in the reign of King Edgar (r. 959-975)—and feature English heroes with typical romance careers that include battling giants and monsters, long journeys in foreign lands, fighting against heathens, winning beautiful, noble heiresses as brides, protecting the integrity of England as a sovereign and honorable nation,⁴⁹ and generally proving their physical prowess and moral worth. Both romances are comparatively long for their genre: for example, the Auchinleck manuscript's Middle English *Beues* runs to over 4,600 lines and the Auchinleck *Guy* is among the longest medieval romances at over 10,500 lines before the continuation concerning his son, Reinbroun. Indeed, these romances seem to have so much in common that many critics discuss them together, either as a pair or as part of a small group: for instance, W.R.J. Barron⁵⁰ lumps *Beues* and *Guy* together as “ancestral romances,” while Crane argues that they both, on the contrary, address widespread baronial concerns rather than those of a particular event in the family into whose ancestry the hero has been incorporated;⁵¹ Robert Rouse and Thurloc Turville-Petre treat *Beues* and *Guy* together as “romances that

Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 154-168. On the long-term popularity of *Guy* into the Early Modern and modern periods, see Helen Cooper, “*Guy* as Early Modern English Hero,” *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 185-199; Velma Richmond, *Legend*. Susan Crane also discusses the various audiences and probable patrons of the Middle English *Guy* and *Beues* in *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

⁴⁹ Debates about whether medieval states may be considered “nations” are ongoing. In chapter 4 of his recent *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romances* (Woodbridge, UK and Rochester, NY: D.S. Brewer, 2005), Robert Rouse reviews the current state of criticism on this question from Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner through Diane Speed, Thorlac Turville-Petre, Geraldine Heng, Susan Crane, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and several others. Rouse adds his voice to those critics who argue that, especially by the thirteenth century, nations were, indeed, emerging in Western Europe, with England among those at the forefront of this trend.

⁵⁰ See Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London and New York: Longman, 1987).

are deeply concerned with the construction of Englishness” (Rouse 73),⁵² a sentiment shared by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, who calls them both “identity romances” (91).⁵³ Until the last couple of decades, both romances were almost universally described by critics as low-brow literature of less than mediocre quality, largely because of their episodic natures and their enthusiasm for scenes of battle and bloodshed over those of courtly discourse or *fine amour* such as one might find in the Old French romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Recently, however, critics are increasingly interested in recuperating these Middle English romances; as Susan Crane puts it, “we might well stop asking if they are aesthetically simple or subtle, or realistic or escapist, and explore instead what they did for their insular audience, how they measured the issues of their day, and what strength could be taken from them for sustaining or resisting the ideas of their time” (4).⁵⁴

Crane, as noted above, sees the “ideas of their time” that these romances sustain as the impulse to support the ideological and legal positions of the English barony against threats to its independence and power, but the method she suggests applies to the interests of this study as well. And while these romances do quite obviously sustain the interests of the barony, they also, and in conjunction, sustain ideological support for the crusades and display imitable models for ideal crusading knights. Even Crane, whose focus is on insular concerns, recognizes the investment that romances such as *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick* have in the crusades: “Boeve’s crusading fervor against pagans and

⁵¹ See Crane, *Insular Romance*.

⁵² See Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England*; Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

his imprisonment in Damascus, as they recall St. George's exploits, reflect the gradual development of England's national identity through the impact of the Crusades... To sustain the national state, a sense of pride in and commitment to it developed, expressed during the thirteenth century in antiforeign sentiment" (59-60).⁵⁵ In both *Beues* and *Guy*, "antiforeign sentiment" asserts itself most strongly as aggression toward the Saracen other.

Manuscripts and Background for *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*

Guy of Warwick is among the works of "popular" literature that people of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England and Europe found most compelling. Indeed, the romance survives in five different Middle English versions (two of which are fragmentary) and sixteen Anglo-Norman manuscripts (six of which are fragmentary).⁵⁶ The titular hero, moreover, was appropriated in works of other genres ranging from religious exemplum (the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke*, for example) to chronicle (as in the *Liber Regum Anglie* of the Auchinleck manuscript or Peter Langtoft's *Chronique d'Angleterre*) to works of art that do not include the romance itself (such as the illustrations in the Taymouth Hours or misericord carvings).⁵⁷ Evidence is strong that parts of the Guy legend were current in medieval oral performance: as Alison Wiggins notes, for instance, a "*Song of*

⁵³ Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

⁵⁴ Crane, *Insular Romance*.

⁵⁵ Crane, *Insular Romance*.

⁵⁶ Two new articles, both excellent and collected in the same volume, have made descriptions of the manuscripts of *Guy* and *Gui* more accessible than ever before: Marianne Ailes discusses the Anglo-Norman texts of *Gui* and Alison Wiggins explores the English manuscript tradition in *Guy of Warwick, Icon and Ancestor*.

⁵⁷ Richmond, *Legend*, pp. 93-95, 104-105.

Colebrond...was sung in the Prior's apartment at Winchester Cathedral in 1338 by a *joculator* named Herbert" (62).⁵⁸ The hero's legend was, moreover, incorporated into the topography of Warwickshire in the later Middle Ages with the construction of Guy's Cliff and the collection of relics purported to be Guy's armor displayed by the Beauchamps.⁵⁹ References to the romance appear in contemporary inventories and tables of contents, indicating that *Guy of Warwick* was more popular in the Middle Ages than the number of surviving manuscripts might suggest. As a romance figure, Guy is listed among the great heroes of the English—and sometimes of the world—in numerous romances and histories of the late Middle Ages. Though many of the *Guy* manuscripts, particularly the English ones, are fairly plain (indicating an owner who was financially stable enough to own books but who did not have the resources to decorate them, which was considerably more costly, as is printing photographs today), at least one of the later French-language manuscripts was commissioned for royalty.⁶⁰ *Guy of Warwick* was thus truly popular, both in the sense that a relatively large number of people seem to have had access to the story and in the sense that many of these people were members of the middle classes, whose interests might differ in many ways from those of the aristocracy.

⁵⁸ Alison Wiggins, "The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*." *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 61-80.

⁵⁹ These relics and the naming of geographical locations and the sons of earls of Warwick after Guy are discussed by Jeffrey Cohen (*Of Giants*, chapter 3), Richmond (*Legend*), and Emma Mason, "Legends of the Beauchamps' ancestors: the use of baronial propaganda in medieval England," *Journal of Medieval History* 10 (1984): 25-40.

⁶⁰ British Library MS Royal 15. E. VI was commissioned by an English Earl, John Talbot, for Margaret of Anjou when she married Henry VI of England. See John Frankis, "Taste and patronage in late medieval England as reflected in versions of *Guy of Warwick*," *Medium Aevum* 66.1 (1997): 80-93; see also Richmond, *Legend*, p. 122.

The dating of the “original” Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* continues to be a problem in studies of this romance. Critics have variously dated the romance to before 1204, 1204-1205, 1205-1215, circa 1230, and 1232-1242.⁶¹ Velma Richmond has argued that the earliest surviving *Gui* was originally part of B.L. Additional 38663, dated between 1206 and 1214, but since the original manuscript of the romance is no longer extant, we will probably never know definitively when it first appeared in written form.⁶² As with many medieval romances, it is likely that some of the Guy material had been part of oral tradition long before the Anglo-Norman romance was composed. The earliest composition dates are based on the theory that the romance was written to commemorate the marriage of Henry de Beaumont and Margery d’Oilly, but even the date of this marriage and the year of Margery’s death are disputed, which makes it difficult to date the romance based on this evidence. Any number of other events may have provided the impetus for the composition of *Gui de Warewic*; or, as Susan Crane argues, there may have been no one particular familial event to which the romance responds. Drawing on Crane’s hypothesis, it seems likely that the romance was produced in an environment that was rife with motivations, both familial and social; the legendary Guy is a worthy ancestor to be celebrated by the Earls of Warwick at any point in the early thirteenth

⁶¹ On the dating of *Gui*, see Judith Weiss, “*Gui de Warewic* at Home and Abroad,” *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 1-11 (at p. 4); Marianne Ailes, “*Gui de Warewic* in its Manuscript Context,” *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 12-26 (at p. 12); Susan Crane, *Insular Romance* (p. 21); Emma Mason, “Legends of the Beauchamps” (p. 31); Lee Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), at p. 48; Velma Richmond, *Legend* (p. 37). The first and second of these references (Weiss and Ailes), which subscribe to opposing composition dates, come from different chapters in the same volume, just published in 2007, demonstrating how pervasive and long-standing is the disagreement among scholars on this subject.

⁶² Velma Richmond, *Legend*, p. 24.

century, while the crises of the Third and Fourth Crusades provide a context, as I will argue below, for the Eastern episodes of the romance. Though it is possible that resonances with the Fourth Crusade in *Guy* are coincidental, this seems profoundly unlikely to me, and I take as a matter of course that the romance was composed no earlier than 1204, which witnessed the conclusion of the Fourth Crusade at Constantinople, and which is, in any case, very close to the earliest proposed dates of composition.

Though *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* has not been as thoroughly researched as has *Guy of Warwick* in terms of its broad cultural appeal, it clearly rivals *Guy* in popularity. *Beues* survives in six Middle English versions, though in Anglo-Norman it survives in only one full-length text of the early thirteenth century, complemented by an extant fragment and the very fortunately preserved edition of a fragment that was destroyed during World War II.⁶³ The “original” Anglo-Norman is thought to have been composed in the last decade of the twelfth century (around the time of the Third Crusade), then translated into Middle English at the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century,⁶⁴ certainly before 1330, when it appears in the Auchinleck manuscript along with *Guy of Warwick* and many other romances, didactic and historical works, and saints’ lives. Despite the relative paucity of Anglo-Norman manuscripts, however, the romance clearly enjoyed a high degree of cultural visibility: like *Guy of Warwick*, the hero appears in material culture outside of the romance tradition. Laura Hibbard refers to appearances of

⁶³ On the manuscripts and dating of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve*, see Judith Weiss, “The Date of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*,” *Medium Ævum* 55 (1986): 237-241; Weiss, “The Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*: A Fragment;” and Ivana Djordjevic, “Versification and Translation in *Sir Beves of Hampton*,” *Medium Ævum* 74.1 (2005): 41-59 (at p. 43).

Beues in such non-romance books as the Smithfield Decretals and the Taymouth Hours and such non-textual media as tapestry and stonework (115, note 1).⁶⁵

Guy's Ties to the East

Guy of Warwick's fantastic reworking of England's conflict-ridden past through its titular hero both recognizes England's historic culpabilities in its interactions with other countries and transforms these culpabilities into redeeming alternative possibilities for remembering the past and for performing the future. The historical events to which *Guy of Warwick* responds, above all others, took place during the first four crusades, upon which its composition follows very closely. While the Middle English *Guy* is clearly based on the Anglo-Norman romance, it emphasizes with greater strength the Englishness of its material and its hero, and it intensifies the ideologically-charged crusade-like conflicts in which Guy participates.⁶⁶ The Middle English *Guy* reshapes England's historical relationships with the East in order to redress its English audience's anxieties regarding these relationships.

Recent criticism on *Guy of Warwick* has emphasized, above all else, the manuscript history of the romance, its popularity among medieval and Early Modern

⁶⁴ Ivana Djordjevic, "Translating Courtesy in a Middle English Romance," *Studia Neophilologica* 76 (2004): 140-151 (at p. 140).

⁶⁵ See Hibbard, *Mediæval Romance in England*.

⁶⁶ Velma Richmond and Susan Crane each discuss in some detail the differences between the English *Guy* and its Anglo-Norman predecessors. See Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 1-17 and 66-67, and Richmond, *Legend*, pp. 37-49. More recently, Ivana Djordjevic and Rosalind Field have added new perspectives to continuing debates about *Guy's* process of transformation from Anglo-Norman to English, both in *Guy of*

audiences, and its transformation from Anglo-Norman to English. Critics such as Laura Hibbard, A. J. Bliss, Derek Pearsall, I. C. Cunningham, Timothy Shonk, John Frankis, Marianne Ailes, Rosalind Field, Ivana Djordjevic, and Alison Wiggins explore the *Guy* manuscripts and their production, while Maldwyn Mills, Julie Burton, Paul Price, Roger Dalrymple, Thorlac Turville-Petre, Susan Crane, Robert Allen Rouse, David Griffith, Martha Driver, and Velma Richmond elaborate such areas as *Guy*'s structure, its connections to hagiography and social politics, and its contemporary cousins in art and other literary genres.⁶⁷ Yet, despite their interest in the romance, critics have almost entirely ignored one of the central themes in *Guy*: the hero's domination of Eastern empires, both Christian and Saracen.⁶⁸ This neglect has limited cultural criticism of *Guy* to fairly local concerns, such as how the romance reinforces the socio-political ideals of its

Warwick: Icon and Ancestor. See Djordjevic, "Guy of Warwick as a Translation," pp. 27-43, and Field, "From *Gui* to *Guy*: The Fashioning of a Popular Romance," pp. 44-60.

⁶⁷ A few of the classic studies on the manuscript history of *Guy of Warwick* are Laura Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England*, pp. 127-139; A. J. Bliss, "Notes on the Auchinleck Manuscript," *Speculum* 26.4 (1951): 652-658; Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham, eds., *The Auchinleck Manuscript, National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS. 19.2.1*. (London: The Scolar Press, 1977); Timothy Shonk, "A study of the Auchinleck manuscript: bookmen and bookmaking in the early fourteenth century," *Speculum* 60.1 (1985): 71-91; John Frankis, "Taste and patronage." For more detailed analysis of the romance's structure, see Maldwyn Mills, "Structure and Meaning in *Guy of Warwick*," *From Medieval to Medievalism*. Ed. John Simons. (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1992), who argues for a tripartite rather than a bipartite structure to the romance; and Julie Burton, "Narrative Patterning and *Guy of Warwick*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 105-116. Susan Crane in *Insular Romance* and Velma Richmond in *Legend* both elaborate on the romance's popular appeal, and Richmond catalogues *Guy*'s appearance in other works and media. For hagiographic and biblical references, see Paul Price, "Confessions of a goddess-killer: *Guy of Warwick* and comprehensive entertainment," *Medieval Insular Romance: Translation and Innovation*. Eds. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 93-110; Roger Dalrymple, "A liturgical allusion in 'Guy of Warwick,'" *Notes and Queries* 45.1 (1998): 27-28; and Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 62-64, 92-117, 128-133. For discussions of *Guy*'s socio-political interests, see Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation* (particularly pp. 108-141), and Crane's *Insular Romance* (pp. 1-12, 62-91). The study of *Guy of Warwick* (as well as the Anglo-Norman romance and the post-medieval adaptations) has benefited tremendously with the recent publication of a collection of essays, previously cited, on the romance: *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*.

lesser noble and bourgeois English audience. Recognizing the romance's Eastern emphasis reorients modern readings of *Guy* toward a broader historical framework: the romance in fact engages wide chronological and geographical lenses that encompass several centuries of British history and a swath of territory from Ireland to Jerusalem and Egypt. The importance of the East in *Guy of Warwick* reveals itself textually in three primary ways: the structure of the romance; its historical positioning; and the ideological conflicts that pit Guy against several different Eastern antagonists.

Structurally, Guy's adventures in the East comprise the center of each half of the romance; in the first half, Guy falls in love with his lord's daughter, Felice. In order to win her affection, he sets off to fight tournaments in Europe and repeatedly emerges the champion. Guy then travels to Constantinople to protect the Christian emperor Ernis from Saracen invaders. He is again victorious, successfully repulsing both the Saracens and Ernis's attempts to marry Guy to his daughter, Clarice. Guy returns to England where he defeats an Irish dragon who is ravaging Northumberland, after which he finally marries Felice. In the second half of the romance, Guy realizes that he has neglected his spiritual duties in pursuing only his worldly desire for Felice. He once again travels through Europe to the East, this time to the Holy Land. There, Guy defends Christian interests by defeating the Saracen giant Amoraunt, ensuring a balance of power more favorable to Christian dominance in the Holy Land. Guy finally returns to England and, as in the first half of the romance, reestablishes English sovereignty at home through one-to-one

⁶⁸ Only since 2005 have more critics begun to touch seriously on the prominence of the East and crusades ideology in *Guy of Warwick*: see Robert Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England*; and Siobhain Bly

combat, this time with Colbrond, champion of the Danish invaders. In the final scenes of the romance, Guy retires from public life and dies a hermit.

The structure of the romance, particularly marked in the early Auchinleck manuscript (c. 1330),⁶⁹ in two parallel cycles—leaving England and travelling through Europe to the East, then returning through Europe back to England—emphasizes the centrality of the two long Eastern episodes.⁷⁰ This centrality is underlined by the importance of these episodes for Guy’s development as a romance hero, for in each case he wins both military and moral battles in the East that could not have occurred elsewhere. In the first cycle, Guy triumphs over the Saracens who besiege Constantinople; he also overcomes the allure of the Byzantine Emperor’s daughter and his empire, which Guy would inherit as Clarice’s husband. By conquering his foe and rejecting Clarice’s temptations, Guy proves himself worthy of returning home and

Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).

⁶⁹ The version of *Guy* in the Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates’ 19.2.1), compiled *circa* 1330 in or near London, has distinct advantages for the modern reader: it is the earliest extant version of the poem in Middle English, offers a relatively complete text, and has been edited by Julius Zupitza in *The Romance of Guy of Warwick* (London: EETS, 1883-91, Extra Series 41-43, 48-51, and 59). In addition, *Guy*’s inclusion in a large compilation manuscript allows us to study the romance in context; for a full list of the contents of the Auchinleck manuscript, see Bliss, “Notes,” pp. 652-653). The two most complete later versions of the romance in Middle English may be found in Gonville and Caius College MS 107 and Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38. The Auchinleck manuscript will be cited here as “A.”

⁷⁰ I concur with Burton (“Narrative Patterning”) that the Auchinleck *Guy* is a single romance arranged as two parallel cycles. The break between the two parts is relatively insignificant: the second cycle continues on the same page and in the same column that complete the first cycle. There is no new item number, title, or illustration, all of which are common divisions between individual works in the Auchinleck. The continuation *Reinbrun*, about Guy’s son, on the other hand, is marked as a separate romance in the Auchinleck manuscript: it has a new original item number and its own title, and it begins with a large illustration.

claiming Felice's love and her inheritance of Warwick. In the second cycle, Guy shifts from chivalric knight to knight of God, and again overcomes his foe, the giant Saracen Amoraunt. Guy also wins a moral victory for Christianity, not only in defeating a Saracen, but also by ensuring safe passage for all Christians through the kingdom of Alexandria and by freeing the Christian defenders of Jerusalem (the Earl Jonas and his sons) from captivity. Thus each Eastern victory prepares Guy for a crucial transformation in his life—in the first case, Guy returns from Constantinople ready to marry Felice and reevaluate his purpose as a knight; in the second case, the hero prepares himself to reject earthly values entirely and to dedicate his life to God as a hermit. A doubling structure is also at work within each of the two cycles, emphasizing the connection between Guy's triumphs in the East with those in England: in the first cycle, for instance, Guy fights two dragons—one near Constantinople and the other, later, in Northumberland—each of them threatening England or a symbolic representation thereof. Likewise, in the second cycle Guy takes on trials by battle with two giant African Saracens, one in Alexandria and one in England; by defeating each giant, Guy saves Christians—first Jonas and his family, then the English people—from the bonds of slavery. Each journey to the East, then, spurs Guy to victory, both in arms and spiritually, but it also leads him back home to fulfill his duties to England. Guy's conquests in Constantinople and the Holy Land reinforce not only Western stereotypes of the East, but also the sense of Englishness against which these stereotyped images appear more alien or "Other."

While the double cycle that leads Guy from England to the East and back again emerges as a way of ordering and recognizing coherence in this episodic romance, the Auchinleck version of *Guy of Warwick* offers the reader a visual clue as well: the Auchinleck manuscript changes from couplets to tail-rhyme stanzas between the two cycles and underlines this caesura with a short summary of part one before beginning part two. In fact, *Guy*'s place near the centre of the Auchinleck manuscript, both physically and thematically, replicates this sense of parallelism and continuation—each item in the codex complements *Guy*, either prefacing it or building upon it in ways too intricate to be explored here. As a whole, the collection suggests that the person or family who commissioned the book⁷¹ was interested in the East as a place for exploration, adventure, conquest, and the successful testing of Christian faith—and that such texts were widely available. This context sharpens the focus of *Guy of Warwick* as a romance that is invested in Eastern identities and histories, especially when they are in conflict with Western Christendom. Though any large collection of texts such as the Auchinleck would likely have some “Eastern” material, the Auchinleck is exceptional in its emphasis on Eastern themes: most of the other romances it contains—notably *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, *Florice and Blauncheflour*, *King Richard*, and *The King of Tars*—devote considerable attention to East-West conflict and, in some cases, fantastic resolution, while the religious

⁷¹ Timothy Shonk suggests a bourgeois patron for the Auchinleck manuscript (“A Study,” p. 90), while Turville-Petre speculates that the book was commissioned by the Beauchamp family, who claimed to be descendants of Guy of Warwick (*England the Nation*, p. 136)—a proposition called into question by Susan Crane, who argues against such specifically ancestor-driven origins for insular romances. Turville-Petre and, to a much greater extent, Siobhain Bly Calkin further discuss how *Guy* works with the rest of the Auchinleck manuscript to develop a sense of Englishness set against the Saracen Other.

material of the manuscript also tends to focus on Eastern figures and saints, such as Margaret of Antioch and Catherine of Alexandria,⁷² who are imagined in these versions as embracing open conflict with Eastern religions. *Guy of Warwick* reworks these themes into a more immediate, historical framework. Indeed, *Guy* engages not only popular misconceptions of the East that we see so often in medieval romance (and in the other items that surround *Guy* in the Auchinleck manuscript)—frequently centered on its religious and ethnic Otherness, its perversity or licentiousness, and its violent threat to the West or Christianity—but also historical events whose implications for England and Western Europe remained unresolved well into the fourteenth century.

As its hero battles Eastern foes familiar from crusade chronicles and legends and from *chansons de geste* such as the *Song of Roland*, *Guy of Warwick* reveals the West's lingering anxieties about the questionable outcomes of the crusades which, as a connected series of military and colonial endeavors, waxed and waned throughout England and Europe's later medieval period. The crusades proved difficult for the medieval West to accept fully, particularly as success became more elusive and tales of the horrors wrought on Eastern Christians and other civilians began to filter back to the homelands and enter popular knowledge and imagination.

The First Crusade (1096-1099), although successful in capturing Jerusalem from the Muslims, was disastrous for relations between the West and the Byzantine East

⁷² Antioch was one of the most important and powerful of the crusader states in the East. Alexandria was the planned destination for several crusades, and was even briefly captured by the Christian King of Cyprus, Peter I, in 1365. For the details and historical sources of Peter's campaign, see Peter Edbury, "The

because it shattered the illusion, carefully maintained despite decades of papal displeasure regarding the independent religious rites of the Eastern Church, that Eastern and Western Christianities still made up a single, unified entity called “Christendom.” The Byzantine Empire was important to the Christian West because it served as a geographical buffer zone between the West and its Muslim enemies. With Constantinople in the way, the Latin West was less vulnerable to invasion from the East.⁷³ The Byzantine Empire also helped to link the West spiritually with the Holy Land and its major shrines. While Eastern and Western Christianity remained on reasonably amicable terms, Europe and England could assume a spiritual connection between themselves and their Eastern brethren.⁷⁴ Relations between Greeks and Latins had been strained for several decades before the First Crusade, but the distrust generated between Constantinople and the Latin Crusaders in the last years of the eleventh century would negatively influence East-West contact for centuries to come.

The utter failure of the Second Crusade (1147-1149) and the ambiguous outcome of the Third Crusade (1189-1192), led by Richard Lionheart, increased Latin anxiety over

Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus and its Muslim Neighbors,” *Kingdoms of the Crusaders: From Jerusalem to Cyprus* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 223-242.

⁷³ The fear of a Muslim invasion from the East was not entirely unfounded: before the beginning of the Christian reconquest of Spain, the empire of the Umayyad caliphate reached to the very threshold of Western Europe in Provence—a disturbing fact that may have continued to haunt the medieval imagination. Several centuries later, when the Byzantine Empire finally disintegrated, the Ottoman Empire threatened Europe once again.

⁷⁴ Baldric of Dol’s version of Urban’s speech at Clermont highlights the “brotherhood” of the Eastern and Western Churches by referring to Eastern Christians as “fratrum nostrorum” and “fratribus nostris.” See Baldrici, Episcopi Dolensis in *Recueil des*

Christianity's inability to maintain control of the Holy Land. Richard's ruthlessness toward his prisoners of war, contrasted with Saladin's famous generosity toward Christians, may have caused the West to reevaluate the stereotypical monstrosity of its Muslim foe—a monstrosity that figures prominently in romances such as *Guy and Beues*, but that seems to decline somewhat in popularity in the fifteenth century and beyond. During the Third Crusade, Saladin set a precedent for this literary trend by repeatedly proving himself more chivalrous, merciful, and trustworthy than his adversary, Richard I of England.⁷⁵ The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) only confirmed the West's brutality and moral culpability: the Latin armies marched not against the infidel, but against the Christian city of Zara and then against their former Christian ally, the Byzantine Empire. Constantinople was burned and plundered of treasure and relics, and its citizens were raped and slaughtered.⁷⁶ The greed, arrogance, and poor judgment evidenced by such acts followed the Latin armies into the Fifth Crusade (1217-1221), when they captured important Egyptian territories and were offered Jerusalem during negotiations, but lost

historiens des croisades: historiens occidentaux vol. 4 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1875-1881), p. 14.

⁷⁵ Saladin's chivalry was noted not only by Western chroniclers, but also by his contemporary co-religionists; see Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*. Trans. D.S. Richards (Aldershot, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 35, 37-38, 84-85, 145, 147-148, 163, and 227. As we shall see in the following chapter, by the fifteenth century Saladin will have become a romance hero in his own right, and is compared very favorably to Richard as well as to the French king, Philip Augustus, even in a French romance.

⁷⁶ Paradoxically, such behavior is represented by both Pope Urban II, instigator of the First Crusade, and a dubious letter supposed to have been written by Alexius I (to be discussed below) as characteristic of *Muslim* atrocities against Christians. For Urban's representation of the Muslims' behavior toward Christians, see Baldric of Dol, Guibert of Nogent, and Robert of Rheims in Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, second edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 29-31, 36-37, and 27, respectively). For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens...occidentaux* vol. 4 (pp. 12-14 for Baldric and p. 140 for Guibert); and vol. 3 (p. 727-728 for

both due to immoderate demands and selfish leadership, particularly on the part of Pelagius of Albano (the papal legate). Though the Anglo-Norman *Guy* may have been composed before the Fifth Crusade, the Middle English adaptation probably had not been.

In *Guy of Warwick*, Guy's military triumphs compensate for the West's historical losses in the East, while his moral and spiritual superiority recuperates Latin atrocities against fellow Christians during the crusades. Guy defeats his Muslim enemies with skill and honor; and, perhaps more importantly, he refrains from accepting remuneration for his good deeds, much less demanding vast rewards, as did his crusading counterparts. *Guy* rewrites the history of the crusades obliquely rather than overtly; the romance does not simply embellish facts or modify major players, but instead places fictional precursors of these events in a distant past. *Guy of Warwick* ostensibly takes place not in the eleventh through fourteenth centuries of the major historical crusades, but in the mid-tenth century, during the rule of King Athelstan. By making Guy a pre-conquest hero, the romance emphasizes the purity of his Englishness—and thus his value as a representative of his people—and places the story within a much wider context of conflict, invasion, conversion, and resistance. By recalling historical events and people of the tenth century, notably toward the end of the romance when the Danes invade England, *Guy* plays on its audience's fears of external threats to national sovereignty and draws an implicit parallel between Guy's defense of his homeland and his defense of Christendom while in the East.

Robert). For the letter purportedly from Alexius I, see *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens grecs* vol. 2. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1875-1881), pp. 53-54.

The romance thus legitimizes Guy's crusade-like efforts by linking them with England's idealized past. The anachronistic setting of *Guy* in the tenth century also modifies the worst of England's recent conquests by displacing the potentially troubling events of the crusades into a long-finished and partly-forgotten history, one that has taken on a quality of legend rather than recent, stark reality. Instead of eliding the disturbing aspects of the crusades entirely, Guy retells them in a positive, if fictionalized, light. Rather than "contemporary life [being] a re-enactment of the distant past," as Turville-Petre (111) puts it, this romance makes the distant past a sanitized re-enactment of contemporary life.

My argument, then, is that at the center of each of *Guy*'s two cycles, the hero finds himself on a formative adventure in a fantastically imagined East; *Guy* devotes so much narrative attention to the East because the romance responds to and reimagines the West's conflicts with the East during the crusades. *Guy* simultaneously asserts Latin dominance in both Christian and Muslim settings and rejects one of the most controversial and morally questionable episodes of the crusades—the sack of Constantinople at the end of the Fourth Crusade—by creating an alternative outcome in which the hero chooses not to seize control of the Byzantine Empire. In this way, *Guy* both affirms the project of the crusades and rewrites those events that were deeply troubling to the Latin West, allowing its audience to reinvent its difficult past and to imagine a future of crusading that will not repeat history's mistakes.

The Christian East: Wily and Womanly

The Byzantine Empire was the gateway to the East for the armies of the First Crusade and many of their later followers. In keeping with *Guy of Warwick's* reworking of crusade themes and events, Guy's first trip to the East leads him to Constantinople, the capital of Eastern Christendom. His declared motive is to help the Emperor Ernis repel the Saracens who have besieged the city. This Guy accomplishes successfully, but his adventures in Constantinople have only just begun; Guy's Byzantine beneficiaries, as I demonstrate below, prove more dangerous than the overt Saracen threat. From the first news of the Emperor's distress, *Guy* establishes Constantinople's vulnerability and the potential rewards for the knight who bestows aid upon the city in its need. Guy hears of the siege of Constantinople through a group of merchants who have recently escaped the destruction of the Empire by the Sultan:

In Costentyn þe noble emperour Ernis
Pai han strongliche bisett, y-wis.
Castel no cite nis him non bileued,
Pat altogider þai han to-dreued,
& for-brant, and strued, y-wis.
(A lines 2819-2823)

In case Guy is not yet convinced to succor the Emperor, the merchants continue by announcing in detail the riches they have brought with them from the noble city:

Fowe & griis anouþ lade we,
Gold and siluer, & riche stones,
Pat vertu bere mani for þe nones,
Gode clopes of sikelatoun & Alisaundrinis,

Peloure of Matre, & pu[r]per & biis,
To þour wille as þe may se
(A lines 2832-2837)

These tidings from the merchants echo contemporary justifications for the First Crusade by implying that the Byzantine Empire is in desperate straits and by suggesting the likelihood of rich compensation for those willing to risk the trip eastward.⁷⁷

The leaders of the First and Fourth Crusades were encouraged to take the cross using similar rationale. At the end of the eleventh century, a forged letter, purportedly from the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I to Count Robert of Flanders, circulated in Europe and was cited by the foremost instigator of the First Crusade, Pope Urban II.⁷⁸ According to Urban and the “letter,” Alexius had invited a Latin force to Constantinople in order to help the Greeks subdue Saracen interlopers. Though there is evidence that the Emperor indeed hoped to entice European mercenaries to Constantinople for temporary military

⁷⁷ Though the romance’s focus on the merchants’ riches *suggests*, rather than explicitly *promises*, compensation for acts of knightly prowess such as rescuing the Emperor of Constantinople, Felice has conditioned Guy to expect rewards for his knightly deeds by representing herself as the ultimate “prize;” Guy rejects this dynamic in the second half of the romance. Not coincidentally, the depiction of the merchants echoes Fulcher of Chartres’s enthusiastic description of Constantinople’s riches in his chronicle of the First Crusade: “Oh, what an excellent and beautiful city! ... It is a great nuisance to recite what an opulence of all kinds of goods are found there; of gold, of silver, of many kinds of mantles, and of holy relics. In every season, merchants, in frequent sailings, bring to that place everything a man might need” (Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 62). For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens...occidentaux* vol. 3 (p. 331).

⁷⁸ In *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), John Boswell discusses this letter in terms of its depictions of the Muslim Other as sexually and ethnically deviant (p. 279). He reproduces the letter in English translation as Appendix Two (pp. 367-369). The Latin may be found in *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens grecs* vol. 2 (pp. 53-54).

aid, as he had done in the past,⁷⁹ he did not intend to spark a large-scale invasion of the East. Europe, however, found it expedient to imagine that the Eastern Empire was on the brink of collapse;⁸⁰ the “letter” was crafted to suggest this perspective:

Nearly the entire territory from Jerusalem to Greece...and many other areas...have all been invaded by [the Turks], and hardly anything remains except Constantinople, which they threaten soon to take from us unless we are speedily relieved by the help of God and the faithful Latin Christians.... We therefore implore you to lead here to help us and all Greek Christians every faithful soldier of Christ you can obtain in your lands.⁸¹

In addition to this plea for “every faithful soldier” in the West, the spurious letter promises that the Emperor will place the city of Constantinople under the jurisdiction of the Pope in Rome. Contrary to the suggestions and promises in the “letter,” however, Emperor Alexius was reportedly alarmed to learn in 1096 that the armies of the First Crusade, a teeming horde of ill-disciplined folk of varying military abilities, had arrived on the shores of the Bosphorus and descended upon Byzantium.⁸²

⁷⁹ On Alexius’s need for mercenary troops, see Martha McGinty, *Fulcher of Chartres: Chronicle of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1941), p. 15, note 1; Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 104-105, 107. Alexius had sent ambassadors to the Council of Piacenza in the spring of 1095 to request mercenary troops from Europe to help him repel the Seljuk Turks who menaced his empire—according to Christopher Tyerman, “the latest in a succession of such requests” (61). See Tyerman, *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press (Harvard), 2006).

⁸⁰ For Urban’s use of the “call for help” from Constantinople, see the *Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres*, Book I:III in Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 52. For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens des croisades: historiens occidentaux* vol. 3, p. 323.

⁸¹ Boswell, *Christianity*, p. 368.

⁸² See *The Alexiad of the Princess Anna Comnena*. Trans. Elizabeth A.S. Dawes (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1928), p. 248-249.

A century later, the armies of the Fourth Crusade were to receive another request for relief from the Byzantine Empire. In 1202, Prince Alexius Angelus of Constantinople visited his kinsman Philip of Germany proposing that the crusaders help him dethrone his uncle, Emperor Alexius III, who had in turn usurped power from Prince Alexius's father Isaac. To make the request more attractive, the young prince offered to submit the Eastern Church to the authority of Rome and to repay the crusaders with large quantities of money and supplies as well as adding ten thousand of his own troops to the effort to conquer Egypt,⁸³ which was the explicit object of the Fourth Crusade. The Latins were eager to aid the supposedly helpless Eastern Empire and to gain valuable rewards and political influence in the region. But when Prince Alexius, now Alexius IV, failed to fulfill all the terms of his agreement, the crusaders attacked Constantinople in retribution. Far from conquering Egypt and establishing a solid Christian dominance in the Near East, the Fourth Crusade did not advance beyond the borders of Christendom; it ended, instead, with the Latin conquest and pillage of Constantinople in 1204, when a Latin emperor, Count Baldwin of Flanders, was established for the first time on the throne of the Byzantine Empire.

As in the historical Fourth Crusade, the enemy during Guy's sojourn in Constantinople quickly shifts from Saracen to Greek. Despite Emperor Ernisi's warm welcome of Guy's help in destroying the Saracens, the Emperor's steward, Morgadour, is

⁸³ For the terms of Prince Alexius's agreement with the leaders of the Fourth Crusade, see Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 50. For the French, see Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople* vol. 1. Ed. Edmond Faral (Paris: Belles Lettres,

less friendly. Jealous of the attention (and the promise of the princess's hand in marriage) Guy receives from the Emperor, Morgadour treacherously plots against him. He encourages the hero to visit the princess, unsupervised, in her chambers, trying to incite the Emperor to turn on Guy; when the Emperor remains unconcerned for his daughter's chastity, Morgadour succeeds in convincing Guy that the Emperor plans to kill him. On the verge of leaving his host to join the Emperor's Saracen enemies, Guy encounters Ernias and resolves their misunderstanding; the fact remains, however, that Guy is prepared to defect to the infidel camp and attack Constantinople, the very city for which he had recently sacrificed the lives of many of his companions.

This incident recalls the tensions between historical crusaders and Byzantine emperors, whose "natural" Christian alliance against the Turks was undermined by mutual mistrust. Beginning with the First Crusade, many European armies feared that the Eastern Christians would turn on them: stereotypes of the "treacherous Greek" persisted throughout the centuries of chronicles and literature written in response to the crusades. One of the first events that seemed to support Latin suspicion of the Greeks occurred early in the campaigns of the First Crusade, when Alexius I, concerned for the stability of his Empire, negotiated a surrender of the city of Nicaea to the Greeks under the nose of the Latin army, who had hoped to plunder the city for its wealth.⁸⁴ Alexius's failure to

1938-39), pp. 92, 94. See also the *Historia Constantinopolitana* of Gunther of Pairis in Arthur Winfield Hodgman, "The Fourth Crusade," *The Classical Journal* 43.4 (1948): 225-228.

⁸⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the capture of Nicaea and the so-called treachery of Alexius, see Runciman, *History of the Crusades* vol. 1, pp. 175-182. These incidents all occurred before the initial arrival of the European crusaders at Jerusalem. The Latin armies had not yet realized the occasional need for diplomacy in dealing with one's enemies, though alliances with Muslims would emerge as Western Christians settled in the East and learned the politics of their adopted lands.

aid the besieged and starving crusaders after their capture of Antioch in 1098⁸⁵ and the Emperor's intercepted letters to the Egyptian Fatimids⁸⁶ further established the crusaders' distrust of the Greeks.⁸⁷ Likewise, in the romance, Guy is easily persuaded of the Emperor's duplicity and his evil intentions. Thus the hero betrays the Greeks before he can, as he thinks, be betrayed by them. In this instance, however, Guy is mistaken in his mistrust of the Emperor; the real danger in this scenario is not that the Emperor plots against him, but that the Emperor has no control over members of his own court, rendering him ineffective against internal as well as external threats. The Emperor's crime is incompetence rather than malevolence.

⁸⁵ On Alexius's abandonment of the crusaders at Antioch, see Runciman, *History of the Crusades* vol. 1, pp. 239-240; *The Alexiad*, pp. 280, 283; Dana Munro, *The Kingdom of the Crusaders* (New York and London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), p. 51.

⁸⁶ Runciman, *History of the Crusades* vol. 1, pp. 272-273. Alexius was in negotiations with the Fatimids in hopes of gaining their support against their mutual enemy, the Seljuks. Among the crusaders, however, such inter-faith alliances had not yet gained acceptance.

⁸⁷ The motif of the "treacherous Greek" is repeated in histories of the crusades well beyond the end of the First Crusade. According to Runciman in *History of the Crusades* vol. 2, the Latins blamed Alexius when they were attacked by the Turks and when they ran short of food and water during the Crusade of 1101 (pp. 25, 28). Over the course of the Second Crusade (1147-1149), the Greeks were again accused of various treacheries, including killing Frederick Barbarossa and not following through on offers of monetary assistance (Munro, *Kingdom*, pp. 136, 141, 198). In Ambroise's *Estoire de la Guerre Sainte*, edited by Gaston Paris (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1897), the Greeks are characterized as "faus" (line 740), as "gent colverte" and worse than Saracens (lines 1434-1435), and they attempt to kill the titular hero, Richard, with poison arrows (lines 1925-1926). References to the treachery of the Greeks in literature of the Fourth Crusade (1199-1204), during which Constantinople was taken by the Latins, are numerous: see, for example, Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles*, pp. 80 and 115, and pp. 44 and 84 for internal treason; the French may be found in Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Jean Dufournet (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), pp. 87, 127, 91, and 44, respectively; Edward Peters, *Christian Society and the Crusades, 1198-1229* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 13-14, and p. 9 for treason within the Byzantine Empire; Robert de Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*. Trans. Edgar Holmes McNeal (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), pp. 83-86; for the French, see Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1956), pp. 59-62. See also, for example, a letter from Baldwin of Flanders to Pope Innocent III in Alfred J. Andrea, *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade* (Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 2000), p. 100.

Guy's near defection to the Saracen camp suggests that the hero has been lured off course by the wily Greeks. As well as making the hasty and condemnable, though at last averted, decision to fight alongside Saracens against Christians, Guy has been diverted from his service to Felice and his goal of returning to England victorious to claim her hand. The fact that Guy considers changing his loyalties implies that he has lingered away from home for too long, allowing his primarily military role at Constantinople to blur into desire for power and leaving England vulnerable to foreign attack. Guy is not yet the mature knight he will become later in the romance; he has, by this time, become contaminated by his lengthy stay at Constantinople. Guy allows his contact with the Greeks to poison him with unorthodox ideas and values. Indeed, poisoning is an unmanly tactic for which the Greeks were notorious among Latin Christians. Greeks were thought to operate not through strength or skill, but through cunning. Anna Comnena, princess of Byzantium, recognizes the crusaders' suspicion of poisoning at the beginning of the First Crusade when Bohemond (later of Antioch) arrives at the Imperial court: served both raw and cooked meat, the crusader chooses to have the raw food prepared for him by one of his own men, admitting that he "was afraid that [Alexius I] would perhaps arrange [his] death by mixing poison with [his] food."⁸⁸ Such a characterization of Greeks is neatly represented in the romance by the figure of Morgadour, who, in fact, poisons Guy's reputation, threatening his honor and his life. Though *Guy of Warwick* does not underline the steward's intentions with a literal attempt at poisoning, the romance clearly draws on

⁸⁸ *The Alexiad*, p. 265.

the popular image of Greeks as treacherous and underhanded, an image that was particularly prominent in crusade chronicles (see note 41, above).

The history of the First and Fourth Crusades is particularly important to the present discussion because *Guy* incorporates elements of the historical events of the previous two centuries, reworking them to appeal to its contemporary audiences and revising historical outcomes into “happy endings.” *Guy of Warwick*, like the architects of the crusades, fantasizes about rescuing a vulnerable Constantinople from the infidel and from the Byzantines’ own internal moral corruption and incompetence. Echoing Alexius I’s “letter” and Alexius IV’s plea to Germany, as discussed above, the romance creates the illusion of an Eastern Empire complicit in its own conquest by the West—a figurative damsel-in-distress who will marry and submit to her rescuer. Constantinople, however, is not the only vulnerable woman in this segment of the romance. By conjuring Clarice, the Emperor’s heir, as a flesh-and-blood lady who must marry in order to secure the future of the Byzantine Empire, *Guy* reimagines the politics of conquering the rescued territories and establishing a Western emperor there—a solution that, in the romance, the Byzantine Emperor himself suggests. Ernis draws the audience’s attention to the parallel positions of his daughter and his Empire by promising to reward Guy’s defeat of the Saracens with Clarice’s hand and half of his territory as a package deal:

ȝif þou miȝt me of hem wreke,
& þe felouns out of mi lond do reke,
Mine feyr douhter þou schalt habbe,
& half mi lond, wiþ-ouen gabbe.

(A lines 2885-2888)

The romance's conflation of Clarice and Constantinople plays once again on familiar crusade imagery: Pope Urban II, for instance, may have evoked the damsel-in-distress image during his crusading address at Clermont, in which he encouraged the West to embark on the First Crusade: "Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above all others, like another paradise of delights....She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated, and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid."⁸⁹ The image is taken up again by Philip of Mézières in his account of Peter I of Cyprus's attack on Alexandria in 1365. Philip records a letter sent to the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor by Peter Thomas, urging them to support the new crusade: "Free the holy city of Jerusalem which has been a slave-girl for such a long lime. She calls, calls, calls to you, and her cry reaches the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" (pages 88-89).⁹⁰ By portraying Clarice and Constantinople as two halves—the literal and the figurative—of the same feminine trope, then, *Guy* connects the hero's goal with that of the crusades.⁹¹

⁸⁹ The quote is taken from Robert of Rheims's version of Urban's Clermont address, translated by Dana Munro in *Urban and the Crusaders* and reprinted in Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 28. For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens...occidentaux* vol. 3, p. 729.

⁹⁰ From document 26 in Norman Housley, ed., *Documents on the Later Crusades, 1274-1580* (Houndmills, England and London: MacMillan, 1996).

⁹¹ Contrary to Pope Innocent III's direction for the Fourth Crusade, the romance seems to replace Jerusalem with Constantinople as a legitimate destination for Guy's crusade. Imagery of Jerusalem and Constantinople sometimes overlaps or becomes confused in crusade literature, so that Constantinople may be seen as a land of milk and honey. Written after the miserable experiences of the crusaders on the desert march from Constantinople to Jerusalem, Fulcher of Chartres, for instance, describes both cities in his chronicle. His description of Constantinople corresponds nicely with Urban II's descriptions of Jerusalem, an earthly paradise overflowing with riches and wonderful sights. Fulcher's impression of Jerusalem, however, is moderate, drawing the reader's attention to the rocky terrain, the lack of reliable natural water sources, and the modest size of the city. For Fulcher on Constantinople, see Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 62. For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens...occidentaux* vol. 3, pp. 331-332. For Fulcher's description of Jerusalem, see Peters, *The First Crusade*, pp. 87-89. For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens...occidentaux* vol. 3, pp. 355-357.

By the thirteenth century, however, Constantinople had been ravished of its riches by the Fourth Crusade, leaving the Latins morally compromised by the destruction and carnage they left in their wake.⁹² *Guy* imagines Constantinople in all its glory, before “her” deflowering by the West, though the imminence of this deflowering may be alluded to by the sexual availability of Clarice, who could bring Guy all the riches of Byzantium through the more legitimate means of a conjugal union rather than military force.⁹³ Such a reimagining of the circumstances that led to the Western conquest of Constantinople invites the romance’s audience to reconsider the terrible outcome of the historical Fourth Crusade, suggesting that the East was not only part of its own downfall, but even desirous of its conquest.

Honored by Ernis’s flattery and enticed by the lovely Clarice, Guy initially accepts the Emperor’s invitation to marry his daughter and lingers in Constantinople for a time. He even goes to church to marry Clarice, but suddenly falls ill with a malady that signals the untenability of his acceptance of the Emperor’s offer. Guy recognizes that his illness is symbolic, sensing that his marriage to Clarice would make him culpable for deserting his true English love, Felice. Guy is thus threatened not only by the infamous treachery of the Greeks as figured in *Morgadour*, but also by their “feminine wiles” in the

⁹² Pope Innocent III was devastated by reports of the crusaders’ behavior in Constantinople and upbraided its leaders accordingly. For instance, see the Pope’s letter to his legate in the summer of 1205, in which the sack of Constantinople is described as a “perversion” that brought “grief and shame” to the Church (166). See Andrea, *Contemporary Sources*, pp. 162-168.

⁹³ I use the deflowering metaphor here to emphasize not only Clarice’s sexual availability through marriage, but also to the crimes perpetrated upon the women of Constantinople when that city fell to the Latins in 1204. See Runciman, *History of the Crusades* vol. 3, p. 123; Pope Innocent III in Andrea, *Contemporary Sources*, p. 166.

character of Clarice.⁹⁴ The East's allure is a feminine, sexual presence—unsuspected, but all the more dangerous because of its subtle appeal to the hero's emotions and vanity rather than his honor and military skill.

The temptation to marry Clarice and inherit her father's empire nearly causes Guy to break his oath to Felice and desert his homeland, but the greater threat to Guy in this situation is the danger of reenacting an event that many modern critics (as well as Pope Innocent III at the time) consider one of the greatest calamities of the crusades: the Latin conquest of Constantinople. For the crusaders who took Constantinople at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the rewards were clear: for the nobles, the possibility of lands and titles as well as reunification of the Greek and Latin churches. More importantly, and for the majority of the crusaders, the glory of Constantinople lay in its riches—monetary, cultural, and reliquary treasure. Of all the atrocities committed by crusaders during the Middle Ages, the sack of Constantinople in 1204 was arguably the most horrifying to Rome and its other medieval detractors because of the brutality it inflicted not on the infidel, but on fellow Christians who had been their allies. As it became clear that this conquest would not resolve the schism between the Eastern and Latin churches nor ensure the safety of overland routes to the Holy Land, initial justifications for it waned. *Guy of*

⁹⁴ In "Cannibalism, the First Crusade, and the Genesis of Medieval Romance," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.1 (1998): 98-174, Geraldine Heng argues that the "Romani" referred to as "womanish" by Geoffrey of Monmouth are, in fact, Greeks, who called themselves "Romans." See *The Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth I: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 568*, ed. Neil Wright (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), pp. 128-129. Here Geoffrey explicitly links the Greeks with femininity or effeminacy. On the Byzantines as "Romans," see also Tyerman, *God's War*, p. 127.

Warwick replays the choice the crusaders faced in 1204: to accept the losses of war and turn the other cheek on real or imagined acts of betrayal on the part of the Greeks, or to stay in Constantinople and take control of the richest city in Christendom. The crusaders chose to capture the city; in order to recuperate the West, however, the romance hero must reject the obvious appeals of becoming, like Baldwin of Flanders, the first Latin Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. Unlike Baldwin and the other crusaders, Guy recognizes that the Greeks would not accept him as their Emperor, even if Ernis would; if he were to marry Clarice, he tells the Emperor,

Pan wold þi men [say] anon,
Pat wonderful be mani on,
Pat seggen wiþ deshonour
Pou haddest made a pouer man emperour
(A lines 4435-4444)⁹⁵

If Guy's illness on his wedding day is not enough to convince him of the threat the Byzantine East poses for him morally, another symbolic incident reveals to him the dangers of remaining in Constantinople. After defeating the Saracens, Guy goes out to explore the country, only to discover a dragon attacking a lion in the woods. In a scene that symbolically parallels Guy's victory over the Saracens, the hero saves the lion by stabbing the dragon through the throat and beheading it, much as he killed the Sultan

⁹⁵ Guy has not yet married Felice and so is not wealthy.

besieging Constantinople.⁹⁶ If one did not know the adversary in this scene was a dragon, one might mistake it for one of the giant Saracens Guy slays:

Gij bar his spere oꝛaines him anon:
In-to his þrote he it þrest wiþ strengþe;
In his bodi was alle his schaft lengþe,
Pat ded to grounde he feld him þo...
He smot of þe heued, & went oway
(A lines 4136-4139, 4141)cc

The lion, grateful for Guy's service, becomes the hero's faithful companion, recalling Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yvain*). In medieval European literature, lions traditionally symbolize Christ; in an English romance, they may be associated as well with the three lions on the standard of England, King Richard Lionheart's battle flag. Indeed, Guy is compared to a "lyoun" repeatedly throughout the romance, alluding to his Englishness and his inherent nobility of spirit through connection with England's favorite "king of the beasts" as well as its favorite crusader king, Richard. Guy and his lion become inseparable after the incident in the forest, but one day Guy becomes distracted by the entertainments offered by the Emperor's court—eating with the Emperor, sitting with him and "pley[ing] in compeynie" (A 4299-4302)—and allows his lion to wander off. Guy returns to his lodgings without the lion, which is attacked and

⁹⁶ Significantly, Saint George also slew a dragon, often associated with the serpent of Genesis and the Fall from Eden. Saint George was invoked as patron and protector of England's crusaders.

mortally wounded by the treacherous Morgadour.⁹⁷ Guy's English identity and his Christian morality have thus been compromised through his dalliance at Constantinople.

When Guy forgets about his duties to his faith and his country, represented by the lion, preferring instead the luxuries of the Eastern court, he risks both loyal companionship and his own moral integrity. He also puts England at risk, bereaving his homeland of its best champion—for while Guy lingers in Byzantium, an Irish dragon threatens to ravish Northumbria. The subtle allure of the East, combined with its murderous treachery, threatens Guy's English identity and his very soul. Though Guy avenges the death of his lion by killing Morgadour, he cannot save the faithful beast; like his decision to side with the Saracens against Ernis and his temptation to marry Clarice, this incident implies a weakness on Guy's part, indicating that Guy's reputation and his faith have been tainted by the attraction of the monetary, territorial, and sensual wealth the East has to offer. Guy tries to shift his guilt to Ernis by admonishing him,

Sepþe þou no miȝt nouȝt waranti me,
Whar-to schuld y servi þe,
On oncouþe man in thi lond,
When þou no dost him bot schond?
(A lines 4415-4418)

⁹⁷ This episode, in which Guy's lion is killed by a Greek traitor, seems to invert a historical event of the Crusade of 1101: According to Runciman, the crusaders killed Alexius I's pet lion during their brief riot in Constantinople (*History of the Crusades* vol. 2, p. 20). If the killing of Guy's lion is symbolic of his temporary separation from Christ, the death of Alexius's lion may also be read, from a Latin perspective, as evidence of his problematic relations with the Roman Church.

But the death of the lion forces Guy to realize that Constantinople is a dangerous place for an outsider such as himself, spiritually as well as physically. Guy decides,

Harm me is, & michel misdo;
Per-fore ichil fram þe go,
& in oþer cuntres serue y wile,
Per men wille þeld me mi while.

(A lines 4419-4422)

He takes leave of the Emperor, none too soon.

When Guy leaves Constantinople, refusing to marry Clarice and exposing the treachery within the Byzantine court, he enacts a fantasy of rejection in response to Greek invitations. Both Guy and the Latin leaders of the Fourth Crusade go to Constantinople, at least explicitly, to help a disempowered emperor. But the romance responds to the West's ambivalence—even horror—about the conquest of Constantinople by rejecting the material and sensual rewards that both Alexius Angelus and Ernis offer in compensation.

Guy's experiences in Constantinople generate a clear set of traits that distinguish the Near East from the other lands he has visited. Together, these traits combine to form an identity that characterizes the Eastern Empire; this Eastern identity infuses nearly everyone and every situation that Guy encounters there. The Christian East is ambiguous and friendly, but treacherous. It is feminine, sumptuous, luxurious; it has sexual appeal and the promise of great power and riches. Constantinople is vulnerable and desires Guy's protection, evoking the "damsel-in-distress" trope of chivalric romance, making Guy's would-be marriage to Clarice appear, at least on the surface, a justifiable

possibility. Despite all the East has to offer, however, Guy's sojourn there—like the conquest effected by the Fourth Crusade—is a dangerous diversion that threatens to lure him away from his goals and obligations in England as well as to the Roman Church. By purposefully and frivolously remaining on Eastern soil well beyond his defeat of the Saracens, Guy risks succumbing to the representative characteristics that the Byzantine East exemplifies and engenders.

“He semes as it were a fende:” The Saracen Giants of *Guy*

If the collective identity of the *Christian* East is feminine, seductive and subtle, the *Muslim* East is masculine: threatening, militaristic, and physically overwhelming. In the second half of the romance, after he has married Felice, Guy makes his way to the Holy Land as a pilgrim-knight to seek God's forgiveness for the worldly goals that spurred his chivalrous deeds in the first half of the romance. Here the threat of treachery is present, but minimal; Guy must worry instead about the super-human physical force of the enemy. The Muslim East is also racialized in a way that the Christian East was not. In Constantinople, the Greeks are distinguished by their flawed morality, different because they do not share Guy's English sense of honor—a code that includes models for both knightly behavior, exemplified by Guy's trusty companion Herhaud, and female modesty, as we see in Felice. Even the Saracens at Constantinople, when we see them, perform not so much as racial or ideological Others, but as a collective army against which Guy must wage battle because it has attacked his ally. When individuals are singled out of

this army, usually because of their rank, Guy dispatches them quickly, with little dialogue that might suggest a conflict beyond the politics of the battlefield. The Saracens Guy encounters in the Christian East seem no more or less honorable or threatening than the Greeks he meets there.

The Saracens in the Constantinople episode are a military enemy, not primarily a spiritual one. Once Guy becomes God's knight, however, his conflict with the Saracens gains deeper significance, and the enemy is portrayed as physically and ethnically as well as spiritually alien. Guy's primary adventure in the Holy Land occurs when he encounters Earl Jonas of Durras who, with his fifteen sons, has been captured while driving the Saracen enemy away from Jerusalem and into Alexandria, their "owhen lond" (A stanza 52, line 3).⁹⁸ Jonas's captor, King Triamour of Alexandria, in turn displeases the Sultan, who requires that Triamour find a champion to fight for him against Amoraunt, the gigantic, black, fiendish Saracen of Egypt. Triamour delegates this task to Jonas, who, at the time Guy meets him, has spent the last year searching for the English hero. Guy has concealed his identity since becoming a poor pilgrim, but offers to fight Amoraunt in order to save Jonas and his family from certain death.

Though Guy technically fights for Triamour, the text explicitly qualifies this action by stating that Guy takes up the challenge for Jonas's sake. Having heard of Jonas's plight, Guy tells him, "Y schal for þe take þe fiȝt, / & help þe at þis nede" (A

⁹⁸ As noted above, the Auchinleck manuscript's *Guy* romance offers the reader a distinct impression of having two parallel parts that mirror one another, the first of which depicts Guy's early adulthood while he is proving his chivalric worth in order to win Fenice, and the second of which follows Guy's conversion to a "knight of God," when his goals become spiritual. The break is marked by a shift to a stanzaic form.

stanza 74, lines 11-12); while negotiating with Triamour, Guy demands that “first perlonas & his sones / Schal be deliuerd out of prisonnes” (A stanza 86, lines 7-8) before he will fight Amoraunt. Because Jonas is a Christian and a defender of Jerusalem, this is indeed a noble cause for a knight of God. Moreover, Triamour promises to free all his Christian captives and grant safe passage through his lands for all Christians if Guy wins. Like the Emperor of Constantinople’s invitation and his offer to make Guy his heir, this scenario echoes a widespread crusader fantasy; ostensibly, the First Crusade was launched in part because pilgrims were being killed and robbed on their way to and from the Holy Land.⁹⁹ Later crusades were aimed at capturing Egypt, which was a military stronghold of the Muslim world and considered crucial to the fate of Jerusalem from the Third Crusade onward.¹⁰⁰ Since in the romance the Christians already tenuously control Jerusalem,¹⁰¹ a diplomatic understanding with—and guarantee of safe passage from—the King of Alexandria would be a strategically brilliant move on Guy’s part.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Both Pope Urban and the false letter of Alexius I (Boswell, *Christianity*, pp. 367-369) cite the difficulty, even the horror, of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land as a reason for the West to venture East and “liberate” Jerusalem as well as persecuted Christians, both Eastern and European. See, for instance, Guibert of Nogent’s version of Urban’s address in Peters, *The First Crusade*, pp. 36-37. For the Latin, see *Recueil des historiens...occidentaux* vol. 4, pp. 139-140. See also Runciman, *History of the Crusades* vol. 1, pp. 78-79, 98. Other contemporary romances also deal with this problem of waylaid pilgrims, including, for example, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, which shares many themes with *Guy*; in the following chapters I will show that both *Floire et Blancheflor* and *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu* invoke the trope as well.

¹⁰⁰ For the importance of Egypt in the crusades, see Runciman, *History of the Crusades* vol. 3, pp. 110-111, 151.

¹⁰¹ In reality, Christians had not held Jerusalem since Saladin recaptured the Holy City for the Muslims in 1187. With the exception of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II’s brief negotiated control over Jerusalem beginning in 1229, Christians were never to regain direct rule of the Holy City. In the tenth century, which is the temporal setting of the romance, Christians were still over a century away from taking Jerusalem for the first time.

¹⁰² In some versions of the Guy legend, particularly in the Anglo-Norman romance, Triamour agrees to convert when Guy defeats Amoraunt in battle. The Auchinleck manuscript omits this detail.

Before such an alliance is assured, of course, Guy must defeat Amoraunt. The descriptions of the giant are vivid, and they are emphasized by repetition—the audience learns of Amoraunt’s physical appearance both when Jonas tells Guy of his troubles, and again when Guy encounters his adversary first hand. The first description, which introduces Amoraunt as a “blac” Saracen, focuses on his intimidating physical presence:

Michel & griselich was þat gome
Wiþ ani god man to duelle.
He is so michel & unrede,
Of his siȝt a man may drede,
Wiþ tong as y þe telle.
As blac he is as brodes brend;
He semes as it were a fende,
Pat comen were out of helle.

(A stanza 62, lines 5-12)

When Guy comes face to face with his opponent, the giant no longer merely *seems* like a fiend; Guy’s judgment is definitive: “‘It is,’ sayd Gij, ‘no mannes sone: / It is a deuel fram helle is come’” (A stanza 95, lines 10-11). The text focuses on three features that lead Guy to conclude that Amoraunt must be a devil: his religion (“Saracen”), his color (black), and his impressive size. Amoraunt does, like Morgadour, play an unfair trick on Guy—he convinces Guy to let him have respite to drink from the river, then refuses to allow Guy to do the same—but treachery is not the giant’s dominant trait. Rather, the giant is dangerous because of the superiority of his physical strength and his sheer determination. He hates Guy not simply because the hero is on the other side of a military conflict, but

also because he is “Inglis” and “Cristen,” a proven enemy of his Saracen clan.¹⁰³ This clash, then, is characterized not so much as a territorial dispute, but as an ideological battle between right and wrong, between Christian and Muslim. The fact that Amoraunt focuses on Guy’s identity as an Englishman suggests that this episode tests Guy not only as an individual, but also as a representative of England and English identity.

Unlike the Saracens whom Guy fought in the Christian East, Amoraunt is recognizably different from an English man. His size is abnormal, and the text repeatedly emphasizes the blackness of his skin and eyes. Already alien because of his religion, Amoraunt’s size and color mark him as racially and ethnically *not English* in a physical way that religion alone can not.¹⁰⁴ Here we see a blurring of the boundaries among ethnic, racial, territorial, and national identities that suggests that Amoraunt is a representative, if extreme, example of the non-English, non-Christian, Eastern “race.”¹⁰⁵ His personality, like the people and place he represents, is aggressive and physically domineering.

My contention that Amoraunt is representative of an Eastern identity type is supported by the fact that he has a double; later in the romance this double appears as Colbrond, to whom the text links Amoraunt through verbal repetition. Having defeated Amoraunt and helped a friend in need in Germany, Guy returns to England, hoping to end

¹⁰³ Amoraunt presents himself as a relative of the Sultan whom Guy killed at Constantinople, thus associating himself explicitly with the threat against Eastern Christianity.

¹⁰⁴ Though Geraldine Heng has argued (*Empire*, p. 14) that religious status functions in a similar way as race in medieval literature, there are no examples in which religion itself acts as a physical marker in *Guy of Warwick* as it does in the *King of Tars*, for instance, which also appears in the Auchinleck manuscript. The *King of Tars* features Saracen characters (the titular king and his son) who physically change in color and form upon their baptism.

his days peacefully as a hermit. Before he retires from his public life, however, Guy must fight one last foe: Colbrond, champion of the invading Danes. Colbrond is like Amoraunt in almost every way: he is from Africa, part of the Muslim Empire (the Auchinleck specifies that Amoraunt is from Egypt, while the Caius Manuscript agrees that both are from “ynd,” which was sometimes associated with the horn of Africa in the Middle Ages), a giant with black skin, and a Saracen. The two episodes are structurally similar as well: Colbrond is described twice, once when Guy learns about the giant’s existence and the need for a champion to fight him, and again when Guy faces him in battle:

He was so michel & so vnrede,
Pat non hors miȝt him lede....
Al his armour was blac as piche.
Wel foule he was & lopliche,
A grisely gom to fede.

(A stanza 255, lines 4-5 and stanza 257, lines 7-9)

Between the two descriptions in each case, Guy is enlisted as the giant’s opponent, and the leaders of each side agree to terms that will dictate what the winners will gain and the losers will lose. The battle between Guy and Colbrond develops parallel to the encounter with Amoraunt, including Guy’s horse being struck from under him and the giant calling for Guy’s surrender; Guy even kills the two heathens in much the same way, striking off the arm or arms of each opponent, then beheading him.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of “ethnic nationalism” in medieval England, see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 16-17. Turville-Petre devotes an entire chapter to expressions of nationalism in the Auchinleck manuscript, including *Guy of Warwick*.

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen theorizes on the importance of the beheading of giants in medieval romance in *Of Giants*, especially in chapter 3. Cohen recognizes the importance of Colbrond as a bridge between the

Amoraunt and Colbrond, then, appear to be virtually the same foe. The significant difference between them is that Guy fights the former in the East, while he battles the latter on his own home soil. In the East, Amoraunt represents an Eastern identity that may threaten Guy personally, but which does not threaten his ethnic/racial/national identity. Guy can leave Amoraunt and the East behind and return to his homeland, the place of his ethnic roots. But as a representative of the East in England itself, Colbrond poses a greater threat. This episode of *Guy of Warwick*, of course, recalls the Danish invasion of King Athelstan's England in the tenth century, the temporal setting of the romance. Colbrond, along with the Danes for whom he fights, would replace English identity with another, foreign identity by making the English subjects of Denmark, a domination expressed by the English King Athelstan as "þraldom" (A stanza 239, line 11)—servitude or reduction to unfree status. In Alexandria, Guy fought Amoraunt to preserve the most fundamental identity—life—of a group of captives, Jonas and his sons; in England, Guy likewise fights for a fundamental identity—the freedom of his people, threatened with becoming captives and thralls in their own land.¹⁰⁷

In light of these struggles to preserve the right and the ability to maintain distinct proto-national identities and freedoms, the racial and ethnic affiliations that are contested or affirmed in *Guy of Warwick* become even more important. Unlike the squabbles for

Anglo-Saxon past as portrayed in chronicles (where Guy's fight with the giant sometimes appears) and the Anglo-Norman "present" of the romance (pp. 89-90).

¹⁰⁷ Guy's repulsion of the Danes helps to deny England's long history of invasion; the romance seems to favor an unchanging and homogeneous view of English identity that does not acknowledge the many waves of settlement by Scandinavians, Germans, and Normans that, historically, contributed to the formation of "England" and the English nation.

land one finds in many Middle English romances, the conflicts involved when Guy faces his Eastern opponents (especially Colbrond) are not internal skirmishes between Englishmen; they are the expressions of ethnic difference and the desire to maintain that difference, that spatial separation from the Other. The writers of the English *Guy* romance were careful to provide their audience with the imaginative tools to visualize and conceptualize Guy's adversaries as fundamentally different, both in appearance and in character, from the English hero.

Sir Beues of Hamtoun: Conflict and Compromise

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* demonstrates obvious similarities to *Guy of Warwick* in many aspects of its focus. Like *Guy*, *Beues* represents a Christian hero's adventures in the Near East, finding there both friend and foe. Many of Beues's adversaries are Saracens, some of whom demonstrate animosity toward Beues because he is Christian: for instance, when he is fifteen, Beues (who has grown up in Saracen Armenia since the age of seven) is provoked into a slaughter of Saracens when they goad him about not knowing the date—Christmas—and then attack him after his insolent reply:

And were ich also stiþ in plas,
Ase ever Gii, me fader was,
Ich wolde for me Lordes love,
Pat sit hiȝ in hevene above,
Fiȝte wiþ ȝow everichon,
Er þan ich wolde hennes gon!

(lines 613-618)¹⁰⁸

This incident provides Beues with his first opportunity to prove himself in armed combat and will result in his being knighted, as befits a young man of his age and station. In many cases of inter-religious conflict, the jibe “heathen hound” is used to add insult to the discourse between Christian and Muslim combatants. Indeed, Beues is so discourteous as to use the term in reference to Josian, King Ermin of Armenia’s daughter and his constant advocate, when she declares her love for him: Beues cannot tolerate even the consideration of a romantic attachment to Josian until she promises to convert to Christianity.

Aside from such (relatively) mild invocations of religious difference and even antagonism, however, this romance is remarkably more tolerant of positive Christian-Muslim interaction than is *Guy of Warwick*. From a purely story-driven perspective, this makes sense because Beues is raised from childhood by the Saracen King Ermin: he would, naturally, be more amenable to coexistence and social intercourse with Saracens than would a character such as Guy, whose first interaction with Saracens is as a defender against an invading Saracen army. But, while remaining true to the traditional image of the adventuring Christian knight who kills the enemies of Christ,¹⁰⁹ *Beues* tempers this

¹⁰⁸ All *Beues* quotations are from Eugen Kölbing, ed. *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. EETS Extra Series 46 (London: EETS, 1885. Reprinted by Kraus Reprint Co., no date).

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Schmandt observes that the armies of the Fourth Crusade, in avenging perceived wrongs against the Venetians (at Zara) and Alexius Angelus and his father (at Constantinople), become “a roving commission to correct injustices wherever encountered,” which “betrays an extremely liberal interpretation of the duties of crusaders” (210), whom the Pope had explicitly ordered to move as quickly as possible to the Levant. See Schmandt, “The Fourth Crusade and the Just-War Theory,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 61.2 (1975): 191-221. In this respect, the crusaders behaved more like romance heroes such as Guy or Beues than like men who had taken the cross and the vows associated therewith. Though he focuses on Oliver of Paderborn’s chronicle of the Fifth Crusade, Stephen Nichols laments the difficulty that some

role with an acknowledgement that, in fact, Muslims might not always be the enemies of Christians—or at least not the most obvious enemies at any given time. The romance’s rendering of this possibility is ambiguous: on one hand, Beues is repeatedly betrayed by Saracen characters in whom he places confidence—as when his foster-father, Ermin, sends him to his rival Brademond bearing a letter ordering his own execution,¹¹⁰ or when the giant Ascopart betrays him and abducts Beues’s bride during her recovery from childbirth. On the other hand, the romance points to instances of inter-religious contact that clearly benefit the Christian and offer hope for productive relationships with the Muslim Other: Beues’s alliance with the giant Ascopart is quite beneficial to both of them while it lasts. Moreover, Josian’s conversion to Christianity so that she may marry Beues leads to the conversion of all Armenia, which was, historically, one of the most important allies of the crusaders and the Latin states in the East during the period of the crusades.¹¹¹ The family relationship between the Saracen king Ermin and his Christian grandson and heir Gii (the son of Beues and Josian) is accepted as a natural one, despite the fact that Ermin never converts to Christianity.

participants had distinguishing between their own activities and those extolled in literary texts. See Nichols, “Poetic Places and Real Spaces: Anthropology of Space in Crusade Literature,” *Yale French Studies* 95 (1999): 111-133.

¹¹⁰ The literary trope of the messenger who carries letters ordering his own death will, of course, be picked up by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* three centuries later.

¹¹¹ In the last years of the thirteenth century or the first years of the fourteenth, a new crusade plan was developed, perhaps by Otho de Grandson (a member of the household of Edward I of England) to whom it was attributed, that would use Cilician Armenia as its base of operations. See Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 120-121 and Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095-1588* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p 238. Glenn Burger details much Armenian support for the crusades, particularly the First and the Third Crusades, in “Cilician Armenian Métissage and Hetoum’s *La*

Christians and Saracens: Mutual Understanding and Values

Many literary critics have cited the tendency of medieval European *romanciers* to create Saracens in the image of Christians: they are sometimes portrayed as having an “unholy trinity” of sorts, in which the chief god is generally called Mahoun or some variation thereof.¹¹² They are sometimes depicted as having saints and sometimes even perversions of the Eucharist, as when Saracens drink “beestes bloode” (lines 684 and 1007) in the *Sultan of Babylon*, discussed in the following chapter. More important than the mimicry of Christian religious institutions, however, is the frequent assumption of a shared cultural value system determined by *chevalerie* and *courtoisie*. The code of ethics and manners represented by these terms and their approximate English equivalents, chivalry and courtesy, may be understood by both sides of the religious divide in many medieval romances. This is best exemplified by the romances with Saracen heroes, to which I turn in the next chapter, but even in *Beues* we see a set of values that are common to Christian and Saracen alike: the giant Ascopart, for instance, recognizes his duty to protect the heroine Josian, who has converted to Christianity, in Cologne while Beues is avenging the murder of his father and reclaiming his inheritance in England. Though Ascopart is duped into leaving Josian (by a false letter claiming that Beues requires his assistance), the giant clearly assumes that the lady’s safety is his responsibility and helps to recover

Fleur des Histoires de la Terre d’Orient,” *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York and Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 67-83.

¹¹² Norman Daniel goes into great detail on the portrayal of the Saracen religion as an inversion of Christianity in *Heroes and Saracens: A Re-interpretation of the Chansons de Geste* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1984). Though Daniel is particularly interested in the epic, he frequently cites works that incorporate aspects of both romance and *chanson de geste*, such as the Anglo-Norman predecessor to *Sir Beues of*

her when he discovers his error. Likewise, the Saracen king Brademond spares Beues's life in spite of Ernis's orders to kill the hero because Beues had spared Brademond's life after overcoming him in battle earlier in the romance. Brademond explains that

ʒif þow me naddest wonne wiþ fiʒt,
I nolde for noþing hit be-leve,
Pat þow schost be hanged er eve
(lines 1412-1414)

The two characters acknowledge a mutually intelligible understanding of that part of the chivalric code requiring that mercy be granted to a deserving opponent. Indeed, when Beues chooses to spare Brademond, he tells him to swear his fealty to Ermin "vpon þe lay" (line 1053), translated as "by the law" or "by the faith," implying a common notion of what "the law" or "the faith" means.¹¹³ Josian, like the male characters, shares in this universal language of chivalry: when Beues refuses to speak to her after she has declared her love for him, she appeals to Beues's knightly obligation to hear her: "Lemman, for þe corteisie, / Spek wiþ me a word or tweie!" (lines 1183-1184). This appeal seems all the more compelling given that Beues, in his conflict with his murderous stepfather the

Hamtoun (*Boeve de Hamtoun*) and the French *Fierabras* (an English version of which is discussed in the following chapter under the title *The Sowdone of Babylone*).

¹¹³ Despite the greater similarity to the modern English word "law," "lay" has a religious connotation such that it is sometimes better translated as "religion" or "faith;" in this case, such a translation would indicate an even more ambiguous reading in which either Beues expects Brademond to swear by Beues's faith or, more likely, by Brademond's Saracen faith. The implication here would be that Christians and Saracens have a deep enough understanding of one another's faith that they can assume that swearing will have similar significance regardless of which faith is evoked in the oath. Susan Crane investigates the importance of this romance's concern with lawfulness and righteousness in great depth in her *Insular Romance*, though she does not discuss the overlapping values of the Christian and Saracen characters. Corinne Saunders also discusses *Beues* as a romance obsessed with "right," though she understands this in a semi-hagiographical context. See Saunders, "Desire, Will and Intention in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*," *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance*, ed. Phillipa Hardman (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002), pp. 29-42.

Emperor of Germany, repeatedly calls upon “right” and “law” to back up his case.¹¹⁴ Like Beues and his mentor Saber, Josian is concerned with lawfulness, proper conduct, and justice. When her father is quick to judge Beues based on incompletely reported information about his fight with the Saracens who taunted him on Christmas day, Josian moderates the situation and calls for temperance:

Whan þe child, þat is so bold,
His owene tale haþ itolde,
And þow wite þe soþ, apliȝt,
Who haþ þe wrong, who haþ riȝt,¹¹⁵
ȝef him his dom, þat he schel haue,
Whaþer þow wilt him slen or saue!
(lines 665-670)

The fact that both Christians and Saracens acknowledge the same set of social expectations for knightly behavior does not mean that they live up to those expectations, in either case. Failure to match the ideal is rampant among Saracens and Christians alike: among the former, Ascopart is fickle in his devotion to Beues and too cowardly to fight a dragon, leaving Beues to accomplish the feat alone; Ermin is quick to jump to false conclusions and easily convinced to betray Beues. On the Christian side, however, King Edgar of England disinherits Robaunt, Saber’s heir, for no reason other than, apparently, his father’s association with the exiled Beues—an act that is described in the romance as

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, lines 305-306 when Beues upbraids his mother for her treachery, or lines 371-374, where Saber swears to help Beues “gete þe riȝt” (his rightful inheritance).

¹¹⁵ Josian’s claim that her father must investigate “who is in the wrong and who is in the right” between the Christian and the Saracens before judging Beues underlines, for the modern reader, the greater ambivalence of this text toward the Saracen Other than we saw in the *Song of Roland*, where “right” and “wrong” are always already predetermined.

“nouȝt feir!” (line 4267)—while the Christian king’s son is a thief who tries to steal Beues’s horse, and the king’s steward is a liar who slanders Beues, accusing him of attempting to overthrow Edgar. The princess of Scotland, Beues’s mother, plans the murder of her first husband, and Earl Miles of Cologne forces Josian to marry him against her will. Overall, the Christians are at least as likely to fall short of chivalric ideals of justice, mercy, and generosity as are the Saracen characters.

Alongside this balance between the perfidy of the Saracen characters and the treachery of the Christian characters in *Beues*, one will notice that many of the most serious threats to the hero’s wellbeing come not from outside his own community, but from within it. In contrast to *Guy of Warwick*, in which nearly every threat comes from someplace else—the Saracens from the East, the dragon from Ireland, the giants from Africa or India—*Sir Beues of Hamtoun* explores a world in which the hero’s very home and country are fraught with peril. His mother plots the murder of his father, and then plans to have Beues himself killed when Beues attempts to drive off her lover and claim his rightful inheritance. From this first confrontation with treachery to the final conflict of the romance, in which Beues and his small group of supporters must defeat an English mob incited to violence by the slander of King Edgar’s steward, Beues must overcome threats that stem from problems within his family, England, and Christendom, all groups that ought to nurture rather than oppose him. The fact that Beues must assert his prowess and defend his legal rights within England has led Susan Crane to place *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* among the “baronial” romances that she discusses in *Insular Romance*, arguing

that many romances with English heroes highlight the concerns of the barony over all others.¹¹⁶

But the implications of Beues's major obstacles coming from within his own community extend beyond those that Crane so adeptly examines. Because of the threats to him in England, Beues spends most of his life in the East, beginning at the tender age of seven. There he grows up, is knighted by a Saracen king, proves his valor, finds his bride, and wins the kingdom of Mombraunt, where he lives out his adult years and dies of old age. Though the romance certainly pits baron against king in England, as Crane emphasizes, in doing so it posits the East as a place for the baron to find succor and prosperity. If there is treachery there, it is no greater treachery than that to which the hero has been subjected in England. While *Guy of Warwick* frames its hero's exploits in the East fairly explicitly in crusading terms and in order to evoke crusading ideals, *Beues* paints the appeal of travel to the East with a more subtle brush. The audience will recognize Beues's East as a place of danger and adventure and opportunity to fight the heathen; but it will also imagine the East as a place where exotic princesses are easily won; where a man might find a kingdom to rule by defeating a knight in single combat; and where the glorious achievement of converting Saracen lands to Christianity might be accomplished with no more effort than it takes to describe in two or three short lines of

¹¹⁶ In *Insular Romance*, Susan Crane demonstrates that the "baronial romances" that were so popular in fourteenth-century England often pit the barony against the monarchy, implicitly arguing against increased royal power over local lords. Similarly, Gabrielle Spiegel's assessment of the rise of vernacular historiography in France provides insight into how the lower nobility used literature as a tool to support its political agendas against the centralizing power of the monarchy. See Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993).

verse. In this respect, perhaps *Beues* is the perfect complement to *Guy of Warwick*, for it presents a more personal side of conquest and suggests the tempting possibility of a rich and peaceful retirement in the East among friends, family, and enemies who are not, after all, any worse than one's English neighbors or rulers.

Indeed, if one compares the most formidable of Eastern enemies—giants—in the Auchinleck manuscript's *Beues* with those in the Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick*, one is inevitably struck by the mildness of *Beues*'s portrayal of the Eastern foes. *Beues*'s most prominent giant, Ascopart, is not, in fact, among the least sympathetic characters in the romance, though he certainly is not among the brightest, either. Despite its relative brevity in comparison with *Guy of Warwick*, *Beues* grants several lines to an initial description of Ascopart. While traveling with Josian, Beues meets a giant

Wip a lōpeliche semlaunt.
He was wonderliche strong,
Rome pretti fote long;
His berd was boþe gret & rowe;
A space of fot be-twene is browe;
His clob was, to þeve a strok,
A lite bodi of an ok.
(lines 2506-2512)

Though Ascopart may have a “loathly” appearance and a rather unkempt beard, his description does not invite dread nor trigger a sense of absolute Otherness as do the descriptions of Colbrond and Amoraunt in *Guy* (whose conflicts with the hero can end only in death), with their black skins and tusks like a boar's. And unlike the giants in *Guy*, Ascopart yields when he finds himself defeated in battle, and begs for mercy, which

Beues begrudgingly grants at the request of Josian. Though he refuses to be christened,¹¹⁷ Ascopart serves Beues and Josian faithfully through several episodes of difficulty, procuring them a boat when they are being pursued and helping to rescue Josian after he has unwittingly left her in the hands of the cunning, Christian Earl Miles, who is an enemy despite being European.¹¹⁸ In the Auchinleck version of *Beues*, Ascopart takes part in Beues's battle against the Emperor of Germany, who killed the hero's father and usurped his lands; Ascopart even kills the King of Scotland, who fights in support of the Emperor. After all his service, the modern reader, at least, may be tempted to sympathize with Ascopart when Beues passes him over for promotion to the status of squire:

Beues lep on is rounci
And made is swein Terri,
Pat Saber is sone is;
And whan Ascopard wiste þis,
Whiche wei hii wolde take,
Aʒen to Mombraunt he gan schake,
To be-traie Beues, as ʒe mai se,
For he was falle in poverte
(lines 3586-3593)

¹¹⁷ Even Ascopart's refusal to be christened is uniquely lacking in religious connotation: the giant argues that he is too large to be baptized in the font, eschewing this opportunity to declaim Christianity in favor of Mahoun. In some versions of the *Beues* romance, the giant actually does submit to baptism, as discussed by Linda Marie Zaerr in her conference presentation on "Altering Sir Bevis: Precipitating Otherness in Medieval Romance" at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, on May 10, 2008.

¹¹⁸ Earl Miles of Cologne continues the tradition of antagonism between England and Germany in this romance, which originates with Beues's stepfather. Like Guy's problems with the Lombards in *Guy of Warwick*, internal European political conflicts emerge in these romances. These characters might remind one of the treacherous Ganelon in the *Roland* and its descendants.

These lines leave much open to interpretation in defining Ascopart's motives for renouncing his service to Beues. On the one hand, we are told that Ascopart leaves Beues because he has fallen upon hard times, a pretext that seems unlikely given the circumstances through which Ascopart has endured with his master and mistress. Rather, the text seems to imply that Ascopart's decision is at least partly instigated by the fact that Beues makes Tirri, Saber's son, his squire. The text is ambiguous here, for the "this" at the end of our fourth line may refer either to the fact that Tirri has been made squire or to the fact that Beues has decided to leave England in exile rather than hand over his loyal steed, Arondel, to the King of England for execution. Despite the ambiguity of the text, the positioning of Tirri's promotion immediately alongside Ascopart's defection is suggestive of a connection between the two events. When Ascopart does leave Beues, he returns to his original lord, King Yvor of Mombraunt. Ascopart's great betrayal, foreshadowed in the passage cited just above, is to return Josian to Yvor, who is her first husband (though, as the romance tells us, the marriage was never consummated due to Josian's magical ring). Whereas many romance giants would threaten Josian out of sheer evilness, Ascopart simply returns her to a husband who misses her and whose claim to her is at least partly legitimate.¹¹⁹

Beues in Armenia: Between East and West, "Then" and "Now"

Sir Beues of Hamtoun is similar to *Guy of Warwick* in its use of English history to establish a sense of Englishness that links Anglo-Norman England to its Saxon past. As

¹¹⁹ Giants abducting maidens is one of the best-known tropes of medieval literature; see, for instance, Geraldine Heng's discussion of the cannibal-rapist giant of the Mont-St.-Michel in Geoffrey of

Guy is set in the reign of King Athelstan (r. 924-939), *Beues* is set in the reign of King Edgar (r. 959-975), who is known for having unified England under his relatively benign rule. The romance's King Edgar, however, is negligent, fickle, and unjust: not only does he fail to intervene on behalf of the orphaned Beues when his father is murdered by the usurping German Emperor, but he blames Beues and his horse Arundel when the latter kills the prince in self defense and, even more egregiously, deprives Saber's son of his rightful inheritance, apparently out of spite. Despite the fascinating questions about how this reworking of King Edgar may have supported the baronial interests of the readers of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* three or four centuries after his reign, we must also remember that a significant part of the romance takes place in the East, particularly in Armenia, where the hero spends most of his life. The reign of King Edgar in England corresponds nearly exactly with that of Ashot III in Armenia, one of the great Armenian kings during one of the most successful and prosperous eras in the history of Greater Armenia. Though the romance portrays Armenia as a Saracen land, Armenia had been predominantly Christian for several hundred years by the second half of the tenth century, the ostensible setting of *Beues*. Indeed, Ashot III's reign marked an era of renewed independence for Armenia, which had been heavily invaded by the Arabs in the previous two centuries but had, by this time, reasserted itself as a sovereign power in the Near East. Caught in the geographical middle of a perpetual struggle between the Byzantines at Constantinople and various Muslim regimes to the East, Armenia under Ashot III managed to balance the

Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* (*Empire of Magic*, chapter 1) and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's analysis of giant abductors in chapter 3 of his *Of Giants*.

two great powers against one another well enough to avoid the serious compromises to its independence that had passed and were to follow.¹²⁰

By the time the Anglo-Norman romance *Boeve de Haumtone* was composed in the late twelfth century,¹²¹ Greater Armenia (in the historic lands of the Armenian Plateau) had mostly fallen out of the control of ethnic Armenian rulers, much of the area having been taken over by the Byzantine Empire and the Muslim Seljuks. A strong contingent of Armenians resettled in Cilicia, however, which was to become officially recognized by the Byzantine and Holy Roman Empires as a new kingdom of Armenia—often referred to as Lesser Armenia or Cilician Armenia—in 1198 (Payaslian 84). This resurgence of Armenian independence and importance in the political geography of the East coincides with a reinvigorated crusade movement beginning in the reigns of Richard Lionheart in England and Philip Augustus in France. As in the past, Armenian interests in the region frequently (though not always) corresponded with those of the crusaders, who wished to conquer territory from the Muslims—but who needed alliances with permanent residents in the region in order to maintain control of these conquests—as well as to keep the Byzantine Empire, whom the crusaders generally mistrusted, at arm’s length. For the Armenians, the crusaders and the crusader states were potential allies against both Muslim and Byzantine incursions, but they rarely became powerful enough to pose a

¹²⁰ For a more detailed historical account of medieval Armenia, upon which the summary here is based, see in particular Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia* (New York and Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2007); and also Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2006).

¹²¹ W.R.J. Barron dates the Anglo-Norman *Boeve* to circa 1154-76 in *English Medieval Romance*, p. 75, though Susan Crane dates it to “probably not long after 1200” in *Insular Romance*, p. 55. Recent scholarship in general seems to lean toward a late twelfth- or very early thirteenth-century composition.

serious threat. Indeed, many Armenian rulers initiated familial ties with crusaders through intermarriage. According to Alan Murray, the “first three counts of Edessa, two of whom later became kings of Jerusalem, married Armenian wives, an example which was followed by other Frankish vassals in the county” (63).¹²² Glenn Burger demonstrates that this trend, even at the highest social levels, of intermarriage between native Armenians and Latins in the crusader states continued fruitfully at least well into the thirteenth century.¹²³ In the context of this mutually beneficial relationship between Armenia and the crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the close ties that Beues develops with the King of Armenia and his daughter, Josian, in the romance pay homage to historical alliances and also demonstrate the desirability of Armenia’s cooperation with the West.

But *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* does more than simply pay homage to the alliances between crusaders and Armenians. This romance supports the practical necessities of successful crusade, such as building alliances with local peoples and also establishing a long-term Latin presence in the East. *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* is highly unusual in portraying a Christian protagonist who ultimately settles, not in his English homeland, but rather in the East, in the realm of Mombraunt, “þer he was king” (line 4574; repeated in line 4586). Mombraunt, though apparently fictional, is located in the romance to the

¹²² Alan V. Murray, “Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States: The Frankish Race and the Settlement of Outremer,” *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, eds. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1995), pp. 59-73.

¹²³ Burger, “Cilician Armenian Métissage.”

north as Beues makes his way between Jerusalem and Armenia, while still remaining in Saracen-controlled territory, for it is

a riche cite,
In al þe londe of Sarsine
Nis þer non þer to iliche
Ne be fele parti so riche.
(lines 2045-2048)¹²⁴

Beues spends not only his youth and most of his adulthood in Armenia and the East, he also spends the last twenty years of his life there and dies there as well, along with his wife Josian and his trusty steed, Arundel (in the romance, a character in his own right). This is exactly the kind of permanent residence that Latin colonists struggled to maintain in the East from the Second Crusade (1147-1149) onward.¹²⁵ When Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade at Clermont in 1095, he explicitly encouraged the pilgrims of the army to conquer and settle the lands surrounding Jerusalem in order to defend the land that Christ bequeathed to his followers when he spilled his blood for them.¹²⁶ The long-term occupation of land affiliated with the crusades and the crusader states by settlers from Western Europe was extremely important to the functioning of these states.

¹²⁴ No critic that I know of has postulated a reasonable and precise geographical situation for Mombraunt. The text gives some clues as to its general location, such as the reference to “north” above; we are also told that it is a four days’ ride from “Dabilent” or “Diablent,” which Dorothee Metlitzki identifies as “Dabil, the capital of Muslim Greater Armenia,” making Mombraunt “one of the northern Seljuk emirates” (132). See Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977). It is by no means impossible that the name of the city of Mombraunt is simply made up or that it is so thorough a corruption of an actual place-name that it is no longer possible to trace it.

¹²⁵ For a brief overview of the effects that too little manpower and not enough immigration from Europe had on the fate of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, see Joshua Prawer’s third chapter on “Conquest and Establishment” in *The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972).

That they were constantly underpopulated by Latin knights and their families is certainly among the several reasons why the later crusades were not more successful, particularly when paired with the fact that many of the Europeans who did settle in the East fought amongst themselves as much as they fought against the Muslims. One of the ideological projects of *Beues*, then, is to entice permanent settlers and to demonstrate the moral rectitude of such settlement along with the potential for territorial gains.

Along with the difficulty in maintaining adequate numbers of Christians knights in the East, one problem faced by permanent residents in the crusader states was one of providing solid, Christian, male administration through marriage when one of these realms was inherited by a woman—especially a young, unmarried woman. The Kingdom of Jerusalem was famously plagued with heiresses who either had difficulty finding an appropriate husband to their liking or who married men not skilled in the art of governance, as did Sibylla of Jerusalem when she married Guy de Lusignan in 1180.¹²⁷ A knight like *Beues* would have been an impressive catch for just such an heiress, in the romance represented by *Josian*. In Armenia, historically, the problem was less one of finding a suitable husband for the daughters of the ruling elite than it was of constant invasion by successive regimes of Muslim enemies and the political turmoil that ensued. Under such circumstances, Christian women were often forced into marriage with Muslims or chose to marry Muslims in order to protect themselves and their families. Such marriages even touched the upper echelons of Armenian society: in 898, the

¹²⁶ See this incitement reiterated in versions by Robert (“the Monk”) of Rheims, Baldric of Dol, and Fulcher of Chartres of Pope Urban’s sermon at Clermont in Peters, *The First Crusade*.

Christian Armenian king Smbat I was forced to give his niece in marriage to the invading Sajid emir Muhammad Afshin (Payaslian 57); in 1064 the Seljuk sultan Alp Aslan demanded and received the hand of the daughter of Armenian King Kyuriké (Payaslian 75), whom he had decidedly defeated.

There is no reason to believe that the crusaders knew about specific instances of coerced marriages between Armenian Christian women and Muslim conquerors, particularly when those involved were long dead; however, by the time of the romance's composition, the fact of interfaith marriages—not all of them for love—in the East had undoubtedly seeped into the cultural memory of the West.¹²⁸ When Beues rescues Josian from being forcibly married to the Saracen Brademond, not only does he defend her honor as a romance hero, but he also places himself in the role of protector of Armenia and its lineage. The romance inverts the historical problem of Christian princesses marrying Muslim conquerors, as Josian is a Saracen to begin with; moreover, Beues is not a martial conqueror in Armenia, but an exile from England and a guest of the king. But, inversion or no, the threat of Brademond, the unwanted Saracen suitor who is so common in medieval romance, must serve to remind the audience of *Beues* of the dangers that come with underpopulated and inadequately protected Christian states in the East and a lack of Christian men to marry the heiresses to kingdoms, counties, and principalities. Here, again, Beues serves as a role model who, though the romance is set in the past,

¹²⁷ Guy de Lusignan is frequently blamed for the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187.

¹²⁸ Dorothee Metlitzki notes that in general “intermarriage and conversion were not infrequent” between Christians and Muslims in “frontier principalities”—the contact zones of the Near East and the Levant (*Matter of Araby*, 161).

fulfills real, dire needs in the crusader states, which were suffering greatly or disintegrating during the period of the romance's composition.

It is possible that the romance's author(s), if not politically well-informed, was unaware that Armenia had been a predominantly Christian state since the early centuries A.D.—indeed, there is little indication that those who composed/adapted *Beues* based as much of the story on historical or geographical facts related to the Christian East as did the authors of *Guy of Warwick* or *Saladin* (as we shall see in Chapter Three). But the English nobility, common consumers of romances such as *Beues*, would at least have recognized Armenia as an ally in the crusades. It is thus more probable, given Armenia's well-established and familial links to the Latin crusaders and given that Armenia appears as a Christian ally in many crusade romances, that the creators of *Beues* were fully aware of Armenia's long tradition as a Christian state and that this is part of the reason that Armenia was chosen as Beues's haven during his exile from England. *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* serves as an imaginary, Western "origin story" for Armenia as a Christian state, emphasizing the potential impact both of the crusades and of individual knights in support of spreading Christianity in the Levant and defending the Holy Land against the infidel. The conversion of Armenia in the romance occurs in two stages: first, the conversion of Josian, the heir to the kingdom, to Christianity because of her love for Beues, which leads to the establishment of a native Christian king on the throne when Josian and Beues's son Gii inherits the realm; this first stage, as we have seen, is a domestic one, free of violence. The second stage occurs after the death of Josian's father Ermin, when

sire Beues and Sire Gii,
Al þe londe of Ermony
Hii made cristen wiþ dent of swerd,
ʒong and elde, lewed and lered.
(lines 4017-4020)

The romance thus creates opportunities for both diplomatic and military methods for the Christian conquest of the East that it implicitly advocates; furthermore, it is likely that one of the reasons that this romance does imagine the possibility for conversion and assimilation of the East through personal rather than martial contacts is the very fact that Armenia is a long-term proven success-story for the sustainability of Christendom in the East.¹²⁹ As we shall see in later chapters, *romanciers* tended, not without exception, but certainly frequently, to portray peaceful conversions to Christianity as possible in regions that had in fact been Christianized at the time that the romance was conceived, as in *Floire et Blancheflor* (Spain), *The Sultan of Babylon* (Spain), and Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" (Syria).

Conclusion

Though *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* provides an exception in its establishment of an imaginative origin for the Christianization of Armenia, the romances of Christian heroes

¹²⁹ As Glenn Burger notes in "Cilician Armenian Métissage," part of the reason that Armenia was able to survive as a relatively independent Christian state is that its rulers were often willing to compromise and form alliances with their Muslim neighbors and conquerors. In the late thirteenth century, for example, Hetoum I agreed to pay homage to the Mongols instead of seeing his kingdom destroyed by them. From an ideological perspective, such compromise was antithetical to the project of crusading, but in reality the most successful Latin rulers in the East learned the political wisdom of openness to compromise with Muslim powers. Such compromise was lucrative as well as politically expedient: on the importance of trade

are overwhelmingly violent in their treatment of the Saracen Other. In *Guy of Warwick*, every Saracen character is an enemy to be dismembered in combat, whether in a large-scale battle or one-on-one. Religious and national differences in *Guy* simply cannot be overcome: Saracens will not convert when given the opportunity, even if it would save their lives; the foes with whom Guy fights single him out by his “Englishness” as part of the mutual threat that they pose to one another; and even Eastern Christians, indebted to Guy for providing his invaluable military assistance in a time of crisis, will betray him without provocation. For the most part, *Beues* agrees with the ultimate Otherness of Saracens, poignantly demonstrated by the giant Ascopart who becomes the hero’s companion but who, in the end, proves treacherous. Like the giants in *Guy*, Ascopart pays for his treachery by being dismembered, hewn “alle to pices smale” (line 3888). While more tolerant of the idea of conversion of the infidel (when history has proven its success in Armenia) than we see in the case of *Guy of Warwick*, *Beues* also takes greater interest in the alternative: conversion by the sword. While *Guy* is uninterested in conversion as a tactic for establishing dominance, preferring black-and-white portrayals of Christian-Muslim conflict, *Beues* establishes mass forced conversion as a viable—though bloody—means of conquest.

In both romances, Saracens are always threatening, even when they appear to be allied with the hero. In *Guy*, Saracens are literally the ultimate threat: Guy’s final act as a knight is to kill the giant Saracen Colbrond, who threatens the very sovereignty of

to the survival of the crusader state of Cyprus, for instance, see Edbury, “The Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus.”

England. In *Beues*, we see Ermin, the Saracen king of Armenia, as a figure of mixed benevolence and persecution, sometimes rewarding Beues but also attempting to send him to his death. Even Josian, who is Beues's constant advocate, is treated by the hero with suspicion and revulsion before her promise to convert to Christianity. Josian, as an "enamored Saracen princess,"¹³⁰ is one of a wide and glorious array of typical romance characters, and the one concession that there is a little shade of grey between the black-and-white dichotomy of the Christian-Muslim conflict. The romance uses this concession to full effect as part of its implicit call to renew the crusades and to strengthen the Latin Christian presence in the Levant. The Saracen princess, along with her male counterpart (the virtuous Saracen knight) will be examined in greater depth in the following chapters.

¹³⁰ Jacqueline de Weever thoroughly examines the trope of the enamored Saracen princess in *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York: Garland, 1998).

Chapter Three

FROM MONSTROUS OTHER TO CHIVALROUS BROTHER: ROMANCES OF SARACEN HEROES

Introduction: When the Christians are Wrong and the Pagans are Right

In the previous chapter, I discussed ways in which the typical Middle English romances *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* deploy Christian heroes whose conflict against the Saracen Other is nearly absolute and certainly violent in the most fundamental way. As one of the most significant determiners of medieval individual and social identities, religious affiliation is frequently referenced in medieval romances as a marker for distinguishing the “bad guys” from the “good guys,” those with whom audience members are supposed to sympathize from those whom they are supposed to reject. Some crusade romances, however, defy the conventions of their genre, subverting the common tale of the Christian hero who goes to the East seeking glory in battle against the Saracens. In this chapter, I turn to three romances, *Floire et Blancheflor*, *The Sowdone of Babylone*, and *Saladin*, which differ widely in their approaches to the Saracen hero and his relationships with the Christian characters he encounters; but each of these romances offers alternatives to the homogeneous “Pagans are wrong and Christians are right” view expressed in the *Song of Roland* (line 1015) and in the romances discussed in Chapter Two. They demonstrate the inherent complexity of medieval European thought about relationships with the East and the peoples who lived there, relationships that were based not only on the violent conflict of the crusades, but also on the more peaceful contacts

made through trade, pilgrimage, and travel, as well as a shared Classical heritage and early Biblical history as Peoples of the Book. These romances work against the kind of militant “orientalism” we see in the traditional romances with Christian heroes, but they also introduce other kinds of orientalism, particularly a fantasy of Saracen subservience to Europeans and a willing adoption of Christianity by the Saracen Other. Indeed, the romances with Saracen heroes begin to appear only after the Second Crusade, which failed to accomplish anything noteworthy on the Christian side; they became more popular throughout the Middle Ages, as failed crusades continued to accumulate in the recent history of medieval Europe.

The world created by these romances is one in which Christians and Muslims form alliances and feudal relationships, cohabitate, marry, and also share values and worldviews. Generally shunning (or relegating to a small subplot) the trope of the monstrous or giant Saracen enemy that so many medieval romances employ to alienate Muslims from Christians, these romances intentionally elide divisions in favor of scenes of mutual understanding, trust, and even kinship. These romances are, moreover, invested in exploring the opportunities created by a narrative space in which Christian and Muslim can live and work together and, perhaps most importantly, in which the Christian and Saracen faiths are viewed as malleable and permeable identifications.¹³¹

¹³¹ Factual knowledge of Islam among Europeans during the Middle Ages is difficult to track. In *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), John Tolan demonstrates that among the higher echelons of the clergy, enough was known to foster debates about the nature of Islam—whether it was a heresy or a distinct religion—and books were written to combat conversion from Christianity to Islam that addressed realistic problems such as Muslim veneration of the Virgin Mary. The Qur’an was translated into Latin for Peter the Venerable in 1143 in order to facilitate these efforts. See particularly Tolan’s chapters 1-4 and 7. Focusing more on history than

Recognizing the unique imagined societies¹³² of these “Saracen romances” and the ideological opportunities they create is not the same, however, as arguing that they represent a utopian world of *convivencia*.¹³³ These romances do not ignore or negate violent Christian-Muslim conflict; rather, they employ the familiar reality of religious and cultural conflict to imagine ends that are different from those found in the romances discussed in the previous chapter. Instead of utter intolerance of all non-Christian, non-Western peoples, these romances propose to their audiences the possibility of routing Christendom’s enemies through cultural exchange and conversion: indeed, conversion is

on fiction, Steven Kruger explores the “simultaneous susceptibility and resistance to conversion” (165) imagined among Jews, Saracens, and homosexuals in medieval Europe in “Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories,” *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* eds. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Romance speaks to both the resistance and the susceptibility of the Other in terms of European desire to violently overcome or to seductively convert the Saracen. Both of these desires are demonstrated in romance, sometimes side by side and sometimes in conflict with one another.

¹³² I do not use the term “imagined societies” here in the way that Benedict Anderson defines modern nations as “imagined communities,” but rather as the entirely fictional societies of the Saracens as invented by medieval Western authors. Anderson’s theory of nations as communities solidified because of a collective imagination of them as such does, however, apply to medieval nations to a greater degree than Anderson recognized in his influential work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991). For an adaptation of Anderson’s concept of the nation for medieval England, see, for instance, Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 99.

¹³³ *Convivencia* is a term widely applied to the intermingling and cohabitation of Muslims, Jews, and Christians in medieval Iberia, particularly under comparatively tolerant Islamic rule. Under Islamic law, Christians and Jews are guaranteed protection as “Peoples of the Book,” acknowledging their common Biblical heritage. Some critics, however, have idealized this phenomenon, ignoring the conflicts that remained, both on large military scales and within small communities. Norman Daniel’s discussion of the “Martyrs of Cordova” in the second half of the ninth century illustrates both the degree to which Christians could live in harmony with Muslims under tolerant Islamic rule and also the fact that this *convivencia* was profoundly troubling to some fanatical Christians, who believed that it was better to be martyred than to acclimate to Iberian Muslim culture. See Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* (London and New York: Longman, 1979), chapter 2. For a reading of *Floire et Blancheflor* that highlights the *convivencia* of medieval Spain and its influence on southern France, see Marla Segol, “Medieval Cosmopolitanism and the Saracen-Christian Ethos,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture: A WWWeb Journal* 6.2 (June 2004).

one of the characteristics common to Saracen heroes of medieval romance.¹³⁴ Instead of destroying the enemy, they argue for the desirability of turning the enemy into a friend and ally. Indeed, each of these romances creates openings in the ontological barrier between Christian and Saracen in order to facilitate the conversion of the protagonist: *Floire et Blancheflor* has a Christian woman raise the Saracen hero and elides religious distinction between him and the Christian characters in the romance almost entirely; *Saladin* portrays its hero as naturally curious about French culture and Christian religion, going so far as to have himself dubbed a knight; and Ferumbras in the *Sowdone of Babylone* is converted to Christianity when he is miraculously defeated in battle by the severely wounded Oliver, who thus becomes his liege lord. In both *Floire et Blancheflor* and the *Sowdone of Babylone*, these conversions of the heroes lead directly to the conversion of the populace of Spain, one of the most important battle zones in the conflict between Islam and Christianity in the Middle Ages, and one of the few in which Christians enjoyed consistent success beginning in the eleventh century. Thus, the romances suggest that converting Islam's secular leaders is a viable first step in winning the struggle for ideological and territorial supremacy and in regaining control of the Holy Land. The romances explored in this chapter suggest multiple ways of gaining access to

¹³⁴ Norman Daniel cites one *chanson de geste* Saracen hero, Carahuel, in the *Chevalerie Ogier* who "is unique in being allowed in spite of his prominence to stay loyal to his religion" (45). See Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1984). In *Sons of Ishmael* John Tolan notes various analogues to the *Saladin* romance in which Saladin does not convert, for example in the epic *Chrétienté Corbaran* and in an Italian tale of the *Novellino* (p. 77 and p. 182, note 80, respectively). These analogues are, however, more or less peripheral to the romance tradition, though Tolan suggests a blurring of genres in the *Chrétienté Corbaran* when the narrative turns to the adventures and "merveilleux of romance" (74) during some episodes.

Muslim leaders and multiple avenues through which conversion may be accomplished, from intermarriage to single combat to long-term cohabitation as a result of capture.

Despite the varied paths to conversion that these romances advocate, each is grounded in the same fundamental assumption that Christians and Saracens share similar values—the values of the European militant aristocracy. These romances go beyond the equation of Saracen heroes with Christian knights, however. The Saracens embody the very essence of chivalry. In *Floire et Blancheflor*, for example the hero proves his worth by rescuing his beloved, who has been sold into slavery and is to be married to a murderous emir. In *Saladin*, the hero explicitly contrasts the inadequate treatment of beggars in Christian society with the generosity toward the poor—particularly religious men who have taken vows of poverty—mandated by Islam and demonstrated by Saladin himself.¹³⁵ This episode bears extensive quotation because it is indicative of the romance’s use of its Saracen protagonist to critique Christian society: while at a court dinner during his visit to Paris, Saladin asks his Christian companion Jehan about the significance of twelve poor men sitting at another table. Jehan replies that they are “messagiers de Jhesu Crist” and explains their symbolism, representing the twelve apostles. Shocked, Saladin cries,

“Messagiers!” fet il; “sont il en ce point receux en l’ostel d’un grand seigneur?...Je ne voy rien porter devant eulx se non ce qui demoure devant

¹³⁵ Tolan briefly discusses an analogous episode in the *Novellino*, in which Saladin decides not to convert to Christianity because the poor eat scraps while the rich eat at sumptuous feasts nearby (*Sons of Ishmael*, p. 182, note 80). The giving of alms is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, one of the five duties of every able Muslim. Saladin’s remark on the pitiful treatment of the poor in the romance may indicate a relatively high degree of knowledge about Islam on the part of the author.

les serviteurs, par quoy m'est advis que chose que m'ayés cy dicte ne vault rien. Et ne doibt l'en avoir foy a vostre loy, qui dittes que les biens que vous avés et dont vous vivés viennent du dieu ouquel vous croés, et a ses menistres, serviteurs es messagez ne donnés que ce qui vous puet demourer ou quy jamais ne vous peult servir. Et pour tant dy je que c'est ja faulte trouvee en vostre loy" (Crist, *Saladin*, pp. 81-82).

[“Messengers!” he said; “Is this how they are received in the home of a great lord?...I see nothing served to them except what is left from the servants, and because of this I think that what you have told me means nothing. And so one cannot have faith in your religion, which says that the goods which you have and by which you live come from God in whom you believe, and to His ministers, servants, and messengers you give nothing except that which is left over or which can never be of service to you. And for this I say that it is ever a fault found in your religion.”]¹³⁶

The lack of generosity demonstrated toward the poor at the French royal court contrasts sharply with the generosity that Saladin exhibits throughout the romance to slave and noble alike.¹³⁷ Indeed, as we shall see, Saladin is proved more chivalrous than the kings of either England or France. These Saracen heroes are thus posited as exempla for Christian knights, worthy of emulation, and cleansers of the Christian faith.

To medieval Europeans, the Islamic cultures encountered in Iberia and the Holy Land must indeed have seemed worthy of emulation: the civic, scientific, and medical

¹³⁶ *Saladin* was never adapted into English during the Middle Ages, and it is not yet available in modern English translation. Therefore, all translations are mine. I extend my gratitude to William Kibler for checking and correcting my translations of these passages into English.

¹³⁷ For further examples of Saladin's legendary generosity from his own time and culture, see Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. D.S. Richards (Aldershot, England and

accomplishments of the Arabs, stemming from a common Classical heritage that Europe had preserved less thoroughly than the Islamic states after the decline of the Roman Empire, shone brightly in comparison to European technologies. Claiming these noble Saracens as their own—Europe’s own and Christendom’s own—is, in this sense, a reclaiming of Europe’s Greco-Roman heritage; to absorb them and convert them may be seen as a *translatio* by which Rome’s imperial glory and achievements could be transferred, within a new Christian context, to the West.¹³⁸ The genealogical allegory of *translatio*—of a transmittance of cultural memory and prowess from one people to another through time—plays out subtly in the romances as actual, blood genealogies that establish European links to desired territories. In *Floire et Blancheflor*, the hero and heroine are figured as the ancestors of Charlemagne, while in *Saladin* the hero is inserted into the bloodline of the counts of Ponthieu, one of the most important families of medieval France and one that produced many crusaders. Even in the *Sowdone of Babylone*, in which the genealogical theme is more subdued, a link from Charlemagne to Spain is forged through Guy of Burgundy’s marriage to the converted heiress Floripas. The natural inclination of the Saracen heroes toward Christianity in these romances thus

Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 35, 37-38, 84-85, 145, 147-148, 163, and 227. See also note 40, below.

¹³⁸ On the importance of the concept of *translatio* to medieval Europeans, see Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993), pages 100-102. Spiegel notes that “*chevalerie* and *clergie*—chivalry and learning—were themselves translated from Greece to Rome and came finally to rest in France” (100). While many romances (as well as most historiographies such as Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* and its progeny) elide the fact that much of this transfer of knowledge and culture occurred through the medium of Islamic states—particularly in Spain, where the proximity of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish cultures provided a fruitful ground for translation of Classical works—I would argue that the romances discussed in this chapter seek to redress this elision by incorporating Islamic chivalry and learning into Christian culture.

parallels the westward pull of cultural achievement and chivalry from Greece to France (or England) according to the theory of *translatio* and also the establishment of Latin rule over the Levant, which Europeans inherit, both genealogically and culturally, from these same Saracen heroes.

Ultimately, while these romances of Saracen heroes are not as numerous as those featuring Christian heroes who defeat evil Saracens, the romances under scrutiny here demonstrate that the common claim that medieval European perception of Islam was “at best a heresy, at worst a demonic religion” and that this perception was “virtually unanimous” is an oversimplification (Armour 60).¹³⁹ The very popularity of these romances indicates that their alternative views appealed to a wide range of European consumers. These audiences were eager to imagine the possibility that Muslims, with their remarkable cultural and scientific achievements, could be successfully integrated into Christianity, securing the Holy Land, Christ’s patrimony, for Christians. Converted Saracens, not the invading Christian forces, affect widespread change in favor of Christendom by instituting policies of forced conversion among their own people. Thus, these Saracen heroes procure remedies to a “crisis of chivalry” that arose from the inability of European Christians to overcome their Eastern foes decisively through military force, particularly after the initial success of the First Crusade.¹⁴⁰ The Saracens

¹³⁹ Rollin Armour, *Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

¹⁴⁰ The term “crisis of chivalry” was coined by Maurice Keen in *Nobles, Knights, and Men-At-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1996). Keen uses the phrase specifically to denote a waning of chivalric values and appropriate behavior among knights of the fourteenth century whose training and aggressive energies were not being put to productive use in foreign wars and who, consequently, often turned violently on their own people. I modify Keen’s use of the phrase to include the

in these tales offer to the knight errant valid targets not only for aggression, but also for conversion, which the romances propose as the inevitable consequence of prolonged exposure of noble Saracens to Christianity. These romances also offer the Christian knight models for behavior—they are exempla for how to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity through the ideals of chivalry: generosity, protection of the poor and the weak, fairness, and mercy. Either way, the institution of chivalry—and with it, all of Christendom—benefits from cultural contact and conflict between Christians and Saracens in these romances.

Manuscripts and Background of the Saracen Romances

Floire et Blancheflor

Floire et Blancheflor is an early French romance dating to the middle of the twelfth century.¹⁴¹ Marla Segol assumes that the romance was originally composed in the Occitan language in Provence, though the earliest existing manuscripts are in Picard-influenced Old French (indicating a scribe from the northwest of France) and Anglo-Norman. A Provençal—or southern French—origin for the romance is certainly possible, based on the story's familiarity with certain aspects of Iberian culture, most notably in the

frustrations of knights whose efforts against Islam in the East led to failure after failure, precipitating an implicit questioning of the necessity of knights fighting in Eastern wars.

¹⁴¹ Most critics date the romance to 1150-1160. As discussed below, Huguette Legros considers a slightly later date possible. See *La Rose et le Lys: Etude Littéraire du Conte de Floire et Blancheflor* (Aix-en-Provence, France: Centre Universitaire d'Etudes et de Recherches Médiévales d'Aix (CUER MA), 1992). Segol identifies the Spanish *Cronica* of Alfonso el Sabio as the oldest known European source for the romance in "Floire et Blancheflor: Courtly Hagiography or Radical Romance?" *Alif* 23 (2003): 233-275.

descriptions of gardens, as Segol has demonstrated.¹⁴² But it is clear that *Floire et Blancheflor* was a popular text well outside of this geographical region: in addition to four extant manuscripts of the “courtly” version (or “conte”) and one of the “popular” version (or “roman”) in Old French,¹⁴³ the story survives in four English manuscripts and was translated into most medieval European languages as well.¹⁴⁴

Considering the modern critical debate on the circumstances surrounding the text’s composition, Huguette Legros has narrowed down the probable provenance of the earliest, courtly (or “A manuscript”) version of the text to two periods and places: at the French court of King Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine, after the Second Crusade but before the dissolution of their marriage (roughly 1150), which corresponds to the most commonly accepted date range; or, alternatively, the court of Eleanor’s daughter Marie of Champagne, possibly in the mid-1180s.¹⁴⁵ Though these suggestions of times and places of composition are pure speculation—there are no clear textual indications of patronage—Legros’s analysis does attempt to account for historical contexts by pointing

¹⁴² Segol, “Medieval Cosmopolitanism.” In this article Segol focuses, in particular, on the automata of the gardens and on the likenesses of the gardens to Islamic depictions of Paradise. She argues that these features of Iberian aesthetics would have been known in southern France because of the proximity to Spain, a contact zone where medieval Christians were in constant contact with Islamic architecture and landscaping as well as other cultural and scientific achievements. A Muslim colony had, in fact, been established in Provence in the late ninth and tenth centuries, but it does not appear to have had a significant long-term impact on the area. See Daniel, *The Arabs*, p. 55.

¹⁴³ Huguette Legros details the Old French versions of *Floire* in *La Rose et le Lys*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ See W.R.J Barron, *English Medieval Romance* (London and New York: Longman, 1987), p. 183. Barron suggests that the French story was adapted into English around 1250. In the introduction to his edition of *Le Conte de Floire et Blancheflor* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1980), Jean-Luc Leclanche more thoroughly discusses the translations (into Norwegian, German, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Czech, and Yiddish as well as English) and dialects of the tale and their relationships with one another.

¹⁴⁵ Segol argues that the version of *Floire et Blancheflor* under consideration here (the “courtly” version, which was the first of the French versions of the romance) demonstrates evidence of having been composed

out that Eleanor and her family's pervasive interests in the East (through crusade and marriage ties to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and Antioch) and the "feminist" sensibilities of Eleanor and her daughter could both lead one to imagine *Floire et Blancheflor* being composed (or adapted) under the patronage of one of these formidable medieval women. Though Legros may not have considered all the possible options in her desire to associate *Floire et Blancheflor* with Eleanor and/or Marie, critics agree that it was first written in France during the second or third quarter of the twelfth century, most probably for someone with literary tastes and an interest in the East.¹⁴⁶ Possibly predating even the earliest works of Chrétien de Troyes, the story of Floire and Blancheflor is particularly interesting because it represents a very early example of crusade romance, from a time when the conventions of this genre were still very much in development and the vogue for the themes of courtly love still heavily dominated the romance genre.

The Sowdone of Babylone

The Sowdone of Babylone forms part of a group of particularly popular romances that originated in the Old French *chanson de geste* *Fierabras*, first written in verse sometime around 1190, the time of the Third Crusade.¹⁴⁷ It was translated into Anglo-Norman (as

in the cultural milieu of the Albigensian Crusade against the heretics of Southern France. See Segol, "*Floire et Blancheflor*."

¹⁴⁶ One of the Middle English translations of *Floire et Blancheflor*, for instance, survives in the famous Auchinleck manuscript, a large codex from c. 1330 that contains many other romances and works of a didactic or religious nature; as I discussed in the previous chapter—and as has been noted more thoroughly by Siobhain Bly Calkin and Thorlac Turville-Petre, among others—this book demonstrates an intense interest in the East and crusading on the part of its commissioner. See Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005) and Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

¹⁴⁷ In the introduction to his edition of the Old French *Fierabras* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), Marc Le Person argues convincingly for a composition date close to Saladin's recapture of Jerusalem in 1187 and

well as several other European languages) and then into English beginning in the late fourteenth century.¹⁴⁸ The Fierabras material—so called after the Saracen hero, Fierabras (in French, or Firumbras/Ferumbras in English)—was adapted into English in various dialects and poetic forms, underlining the widespread appeal of the romance. The *Sowdone of Babylone*, written in an East Midlands dialect in the first half of the fifteenth century, is one of the latest and most distinctive of the Middle English Fierabras group: as W. R. J. Barron observes, its scribe took significant liberties with his adaptation in content, style, and meter. He accentuates the drama of the action and the strong personalities of the characters, particularly Floripas, the hero's sister, and their impetuous father, the Sultan; meanwhile, he accelerates the plot by reducing or eliminating the descriptive passages and much of the dialogue that one finds in other versions of the poem.

One reason for my choice to focus on the *Sowdone of Babylone* rather than another version of the Fierabras material is that it draws more explicitly on a long history of conflict and conquest in the Mediterranean and is thus most pertinent to my subject

the subsequent Third Crusade, 1190-1192: see pages 139-144. M. J. Ailes preceded Le Person in the argument for a late composition date for *Fierabras*: see Ailes, "The Date of the Chanson de Geste *Fierabras*," *Olifant* 19. 3-4 (1994-5): 245-271. The *chanson de geste Fierabras* survived into modern times in fourteen French-language manuscripts (including Anglo-Norman), two of which have been lost or destroyed, and several of which are fragmentary. For a full discussion of the French manuscripts, see Le Person, pp. 23-56. There are three surviving manuscripts of the Middle English Fierabras romances in English (one of which is fragmentary) as well as an early printed edition by Caxton (Le Person 13-14).

¹⁴⁸ Le Person lists Latin, Irish, Italian, and Dutch as languages into which the romance was translated in the Middle Ages; it was adapted into Spanish in the early sixteenth century and eventually made its way to the New World (13-19). The extant Middle English *Sir Ferumbras* romance has been dated to approximately 1380. Alan Lupack and W. R. J. Barron agree that the *Sowdone of Babylone* must be dated somewhat later because it displays knowledge of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale." See Barron p. 100 and Lupack, "The Sultan of Babylon: Introduction," *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances* (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 1990).

here. Barron notes that the romance “celebrate[s] the role of the French in relieving Rome from the Saracen invasion of 846” (100),¹⁴⁹ an incident that sets the scene for the main action of the romance in lines 84-722 (from the Sultan’s vow to avenge the death of his merchants at the hands of the Romans to the Sultan’s victorious return to Spain with the Holy Relics stolen from Rome).¹⁵⁰ Thus the romance references a Muslim attack on Rome, but quickly diverts the setting to Spain, where Christians were increasingly dominant during the period of the English adaptations of *Fierabras*, in contrast to their diminishing strength in the Levant.

Saladin

According to editor Larry Crist, *Saladin* comprises, along with *Jehan d’Avesnes* and *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*, the final part of the Second Cycle of the Crusade.¹⁵¹ Though his claim is not widely recognized among scholars of Old French literature, the text clearly builds upon the characters and events of the Second Crusades Cycle, particularly in its adoption of the Bastard de Bouillon as a major character in the first quarter of the romance. Indeed, Alfred Foulet suggests that the romance was based on a fourteenth-

See Bibliography for full electronic source information). Barron suggests a date range of 1400-1450 for the *Sowdone* redaction.

¹⁴⁹ G. A. Knott has argued that the romance draws on historical material from the Norman sack of Rome in 1083-84 and Belasarius’s siege of Palermo in 536 as well as the Muslim attack on Rome in 846. See Knott, “The Historical Sources of ‘Fierabras.’” *Modern Language Review* 52 (1957): 504-509. Daniel, citing a host of Italian chroniclers, shows that these incursions of Arabs into Italy left an impression of terror and devastation that was remembered for many generations (*The Arabs* pp. 55-62).

¹⁵⁰ The events of the Saracen attack on Rome are omitted in some versions of the romance/*chanson*, and in others are broken off as a separate text (*The Destruction of Rome*) that nevertheless serves as a prologue to the *Fierabras* material proper.

¹⁵¹ The Old French Crusades Cycles (First and Second) are epic works that combine historical material with invented, often fabulous episodes. They recount the deeds of French heroes of the crusades and establish fantastic origins for their illustrious families. For example, *Le Chevalier au Cygne*, or the *Knight*

century poem, now lost, that was a continuation of the *Bâtard de Bouillon* (115).¹⁵² Like the other medieval French “cycles” that assert family origins and histories for famous crusaders, *Saladin* and its sister texts (*Jehan* and *La Fille*), which appear together in the fifteenth-century manuscripts, combine historical fact with imaginative fantasy. More firmly based in history than many romances but demonstrating fanciful episodes that distinguish it from chronicles, *Saladin* best resembles a category that we would call “historical fiction” in today’s literary climate.¹⁵³ Many of its characters are based upon real people: Philip Augustus of France, Richard I of England, André de Chavigny, Baldwin IV of Jerusalem, and, of course, the titular character are just a few examples of the figures culled from medieval history who appear in the text. Many of the settings for the action are likewise recognizable locales, whether in France, England, or Syria. One or more of the composers of the story was familiar enough with contemporary history and geography to incorporate a high level of detail into the tale; for instance, he knew that Jerusalem was unfortified in the late twelfth century, making it necessary for Muslim armies to transfer important Christian captives to a more secure city such as Damascus.

In the introduction to his 1972 edition of *Saladin*, Larry Crist lists three surviving fifteenth-century versions of the narrative¹⁵⁴ in addition to at least three other parallel

of the Swan, proposes that the first Latin King of Jerusalem and one of the leaders of the First Crusade, Godfrey of Bouillon, was descended from the legendary Swan Knight.

¹⁵² Foulet, “The Epic Cycle of the Crusades,” *The Impact of the Crusades on Europe*, eds. N.P. Zacour and H.W. Hazard (Madison, WI and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

¹⁵³ Norman Daniel (*Heroes* 63) labels *Saladin* a romance, which agrees with my assessment despite its strong connections to epic and historiography.

¹⁵⁴ The surviving manuscripts of *Saladin* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972), according to Crist, are A, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal 5208 (from the household of Charles de Croy, count of Chimay); and B, BNF 12572 (from the household of Philip the Good). A third version, by La Gogue, survives only as a copy of a

texts that recount small portions of the story. *Saladin* is built upon the foundation laid by *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*, a prequel with origins in the thirteenth century that recounts Saladin's family history as the great-grandson of a French countess, the daughter of the Count of Ponthieu mentioned in the title above. Of the two manuscripts that Crist describes, he explains that Arsenal 5208 was copied by Jan du Quesne, the scribe of Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy, for Charles de Croy, Count of Chimay, while BN 12572 was copied for Philip (III) the Good of Burgundy (1396-1467),¹⁵⁵ one of the wealthiest and most highly cultivated members of the French aristocracy during his lifetime as well as a member of the royal Valois family both by blood and through his marriage to Princess Michelle, daughter of Charles VI of France.¹⁵⁶

The Proximity of the Other: Making Christians of Saracens

In his psychoanalytical study of the gendered relationship between the hero and heroine of *Floire et Blancheflor*, William Kibler remarks that "in order to become whole, to avoid

copy of the manuscript, which is now lost (Crist, *Saladin*, pp. 10-13). Based on my own research, there may be a fourth, earlier manuscript of *Saladin* in BNF 12203, but further in-library research will be required in order to confirm this possibility: the Saladin material in this manuscript may instead be one of the analogues to which Crist refers in the introduction to his edition.

¹⁵⁵ Philip held many other titles connected to the lands he inherited or won through combat; he was, for instance, heir to Saint Pol, one of the most important cities in Picardy, which figures in both *La Fille* and *Saladin* as part of the Ponthieu family's domains. Saint Pol also has crusade connections—for instance, Hugh, Count of Saint Pol, went on the Fourth Crusade (with Baldwin IX of Flanders) in 1202 (Spiegel 41).

¹⁵⁶ Philip allied himself at various times with the kings of both England and France, but ultimately retained the greatest possible degree of independence from each. This program of distancing Burgundy (which was consistently tied to Ponthieu through marriages, the two counties often coming under control of the same heir in the Middle Ages) from royal authority is evident in the *Saladin* romance, which stresses the fictional family connection to Saladin (through Ponthieu) rather than either of the Christian monarchs. Philip came from a long line of crusaders and, indeed, took the cross himself, though his vow was never fulfilled ("Philip the Good." *Encyclopedia of World Biography* vol. 12, second edition (Detroit: Gale, 2004). See Bibliography for full citation of electronic source).

neuroses, we must come to terms with the ‘other’ within us” (12).¹⁵⁷ Though Kibler is arguing that Floire must struggle to bring the feminine and masculine sides of his psyche into harmony—symbolized by his quest to find Blancheflor—thus allowing him to move from childhood to adulthood, the Saracen romances I discuss here work to integrate an entirely different kind of “other” into the “self” of Christendom. Islam, which was so often viewed by the medieval Church as a heretical form of Christianity and thus separated from the body of Christendom to which it belonged, also divided Western Christendom from its point of origin: Jerusalem, “the navel of the world,” as Pope Urban II described it in 1095.¹⁵⁸ These romances do not attempt to integrate Islam into Christianity theologically, as did many churchmen;¹⁵⁹ rather, they create fantasies through which Saracens are converted to Christianity through various means consistent with the vocabulary of romance: through the practice of chivalry, the conquest of land, and the triumph of love. In this section, I will show that the Saracen heroes in *Floire et Blancheflor*, the *Sowdone of Babylone*, and *Saladin* are constructed as virtually Christian even before they formally convert, thus demonstrating to the audience how easy it can be to convert Saracens to Christianity. In this respect, these romances support the idea that missionary work among Muslims may be more efficacious than armed crusade.

¹⁵⁷ Kibler, “Archetypal Imagery in *Floire et Blancheflor*,” *Romance Quarterly* 35.1 (1988): 11-20.

¹⁵⁸ From the account of Urban’s crusade sermon at Clermont as told by Robert of Rheims. See Edward Peters, ed. *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, second edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), p. 28.

¹⁵⁹ For an excellent selection of theological approaches to Islam and their differences from fictional depictions in medieval Europe, see John Tolan’s *Sons of Ishmael*. See also Philip Krey, “Nicholas of Lyra and Paul of Burgos on Islam,” *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*, ed. John Victor

In *Floire et Blancheflor*, differences between Saracen and Christian are elided almost entirely, despite the violence that bookends the tale (to which I will return below). The similarities between Christian and Saracen are figured literally on the bodies of the titular protagonists, who look so alike that the characters Floire meets during his quest to rescue Blancheflor recognize him based on their resemblance. His first host, for instance, notes Floire's pensiveness at dinner and comments that

Autretel vi jou l'autre jor
de damoisele Blanceflor
(ensi se noma ele a moi);
el vos resanle, en moie foi,
bien pöés estre d'un eage,
si vos resanle du visage.
(lines 1291-1296)¹⁶⁰

[The other day I saw the same
Behavior in a girl. Her name
Was Blanchefleur. She resembled you
So much. Upon my faith it's true.
She might be the same age. You are
In face and features similar.]¹⁶¹

Tolan (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 153-174 on Paul of Burgos's very realistic (though critical) conception of Islam (55).

¹⁶⁰ All Old French quotations of *Floire* come from Robert d'Orbigny, *Le Conte de Floire et Blanchefleur*, ed. Jean-Luc Leclanche (Paris: Champion Classiques, 2003). In this new edition—based on his excellent 1980 edition of the text—Leclanche has identified Robert d'Orbigny as the probable author of this version of the story, and has granted him authorial recognition.

¹⁶¹ English translations of *Floire* come from Merton Jerome Hubert, trans. *The Romance of Floire and Blanchefleur: A French Idyllic Poem of the Twelfth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

(lines 1096-1101)

When Floire and Blancheflor are discovered in the Emir's tower, the servant believes he sees Blancheflor and her friend Gloris in bed together, for Floire looks so much like a girl:

K'a face n'a menton n'avoit
barbe, ne grenons n'i paroit:
en la tor n'avoit damoisele
qui de visage fust plus bele.
(lines 2599-2602)

[For there was not a trace
Of beard or mustache on Floire's face.
In all the tower there was in truth
No maiden fairer than this youth.]
(lines 2384-2387)

Though Saracen women are often portrayed as white and blond in medieval romance, here we have a twisting of the convention to make the Iberian Saracen character look like his Christian lover, emphasizing not just their sameness, but *his* likeness to *her*.

Floire et Blancheflor also elides difference between the protagonists in expressions of religious faith. Indeed, the romance dispenses with the common romance trope of Saracens as polytheists, preferring instead to have Floire swear on multiple occasions "par Dieu," as would a Christian. One of Floire's more elaborate prayers, as he contemplates suicide due to grief over the loss of Blancheflor, is clearly based on

Press, 1966). Hubert omits some lines from a manuscript that Leclanche includes in his edition, causing a discrepancy in line numbers between the Old French and the English translation here and elsewhere.

Christian theology, with no evidence of a typical Saracen or pseudo-Muslim religious view (such as praying to Mahoun or to idols):

Damedieus, pères souverains
qui as tote cose en tes mains,
home fesis a ta sanlance,
après li donas habondance
del fruit que avoies plenté;
tout mesis en sa volenté
fors seulement, sire, la pome;
icele deffendis a home.
Il en manga par son pechié,
par coi nos somes engignié.
Par çou somes en tenebror!
(lines 911-921)

[Lord God, Sovereign Father,
Who has all things in your hands,
You made man in your image
And gave to him the abundance
Of all the fruit you had planted.
You put all at his disposal
Save only, Lord, the apple.
This you prohibited to man.
He ate it in sin.
Thus we were deceived
And for this we are cast in shadows.]¹⁶²

¹⁶² These lines come from a different manuscript than the one upon which Hubert based his English translation. Translation of this passage is mine.

Though he does not explicitly appeal to Christ, Floire's prayer could hardly sound more Christian; yet his conversion at the end of the romance is a long way off. He seems simply to have a natural Christian understanding of the world and his place in it.

Even more surprisingly, the elision of religious difference in this romance is not isolated to Floire's character. In the scene in which his parents discuss what is to be done about the developing attachment between Floire and Blanche-flor, their primary concern is not that Blanche-flor is Christian, but that she is a slave: his father's initial reference to her, in his discussion with the Queen his wife, is as "Blanceflour, / cele fille vostre kaitive" (lines 292-93) [Blanche-flor, / our captive's daughter] (lines 290-291). It is not until later in the conversation that she is called "la crestiine Blanceflor" (line 329). While not irrelevant, then, the fact that Blanche-flor is of a different faith appears secondary to her social status. Furthermore, when Floire attempts suicide after Blanche-flor's disappearance and supposed death, his mother warns him,

Fius, mort soffrir ce n'est pas gas.
Se vos ensi vous ociés,
en Camp Flori ja n'enterrés
ne vos ne verrés Blanceflor:
cil cans ne reçoit pecheor.
Infer son calenge i metroit:
la irés, biaux fius, orendoit.
(lines 1020-26).

[To suffer death, son, is no joke.
If now you die by your own hand

You'll go to no sweet-flowering land¹⁶³
Nor see Blanchefleur. You must beware:
Sinners are not admitted there.
Hell will assert claims none can flout,
And there you'll go, son, beyond doubt.]
(lines 819-825)

Floire's mother, here, expresses concern for her son in the afterlife, for Heaven cannot accept the soul of a suicide, a concern very important to Christianity. Not only do Floire's religious sentiments match those of Christianity, then, but those of his family do as well. And yet, this conflation of the Christian and Saracen faiths does not seem to be a result of ignorance on the part of the poet, whose depiction of the Emir's tower, complete with harem and running water up to the third storey, evokes a certain knowledge of the architectural capabilities of Islamic culture. Moreover, the romance cites a detail of Floire's religion that clearly aligns it with historical Islamic law: though Blanchefleur's mother raises the two children together, even placing them in the same bed as infants, in this version of the romance she is not allowed to nurse the Saracen Floire.¹⁶⁴ The romance explains, "Une paiienne l'alaitoit, / car lor lois l'autre refusoit" (lines 183-84)

¹⁶³ The "flowering fields" are most likely borrowed from the Elysian Fields of Classical mythology, though they evoke images of Paradise common to Christian and Muslim traditions as well.

¹⁶⁴ Marla Segol notes that in some redactions, Blanchefleur's mother does nurse Floire, perhaps imbuing him with Christian sensibilities in the process. See Segol, "*Floire et Blanchefleur*." This redaction seems to acknowledge widespread (though not universal) Muslim prohibitions against non-Muslim wet-nurses. In his thorough study of medieval Muslim nursing practices and beliefs, Avner Giladi cites physicians such as Muhammad bin Zakariyya al-Razi (865-923), who suggested that "[t]he moral character of a nursling resembles that of its nurse and it becomes like her" (50), thus arguing against the adoption of wet nurses of a different faith. See Giladi, *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses: Medieval Islamic Views on Breastfeeding and Their Social Implications* (Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 1999). Jeffrey Jerome Cohen cites a similar theory of how milk affects nurslings in Gerald of Wales's *Itinerarium Cambriae* (91) in "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages* (New York and Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 85-104.

[A paynim nursed him; this was done / By rule of their religion.] (lines 181-183). These demonstrations of at least a superficial knowledge of Islam highlight the obviously conscious attempt to make Floire resemble Christians (physically and theologically) not just after conversion, but from the very beginning of the romance, so that the transition from Saracen to Christian when Floire converts seems absolutely natural.¹⁶⁵

The Sowdone of Babylone employs a different approach toward bridging the gap between Christianity and the Saracen religion. Instead of ignoring difference, this romance uses a system of distinct but parallel representation to bring the two religious and cultural groups closer together: it shows the Saracen religion as an approximation of Christianity and it presents a homosocial culture in which noble knights of both faiths share common values. At the beginning of the romance, Christians and Saracens are depicted as committing atrocious acts of violence against one another: the plot is precipitated by a Roman attack on Babylonian merchants, after which the Sultan of Babylon in turn besieges Rome, burning it, murdering its inhabitants, and stealing the holy relics housed there.¹⁶⁶ When Charlemagne and his army follow the Sultan to Spain in order to exact revenge, Ferumbras—the Sultan’s son and king of Alexandria as well as the greatest champion of the Saracens—issues a challenge to Charlemagne’s peers. Oliver, though wounded, miraculously triumphs over his formidable foe, causing

¹⁶⁵ In “Medieval Cosmopolitanism,” Marla Segol elaborates on the romance’s use of Islamic aesthetics in the gardens of *Floire et Blancheflor*, creating a romanticized hybrid culture in which the boundaries between Christianity and Islam dissolve.

¹⁶⁶ *Sir Ferumbras*, a slightly earlier English redaction (c. 1380) of the French sources, is even more inflammatory in its treatment of the sacking of Rome, including the raping and murdering of nuns and the killing of the Pope and other religious men by the Saracen invaders (lines 59-63). *The Sowdone of*

Ferumbras to convert to Christianity and become Oliver's vassal. When the Sultan captures Oliver and the peers, Ferumbras helps Charlemagne succor them from outside the Sultan's fortress while his sister Floripas aids them from within. At the end of the romance, Christian rule is established in Spain and the Sultan's kingdom is divided between Ferumbras and Sir Guy, who has married the converted Floripas.

The *Sowdone of Babylone* presents four basic types of Saracens: the ignorant and parodic figure of the Sultan; the monstrous Saracen giants whom Charles must defeat in order to reach the Sultan's castle; Ferumbras, the ideal chivalric knight who is sympathetic to the virtues of Christianity; and the princess Floripas who, like her brother, is converted to Christianity through the workings of conventional romantic chivalric codes that are recognized, in this romance, by those of noble heart on both sides of the religious divide. The ease with which these characters transition from Islam to Christianity is, of course, a literary convention;¹⁶⁷ but it also points to an implicit acceptance that such conversions are not only possible, but also desirable, and that they may be negotiated with a minimum of complication.

Also conventional in this romance is the representation of Islam as a pagan approximation of Christianity.¹⁶⁸ Despite the worship of idols,¹⁶⁹ the likeness of the

Babylone, in contrast, shows the Saracen hero Ferumbras refusing to kill the Pope and chiding him for being martially involved in the battle.

¹⁶⁷ Though Ferumbras and Floripas both convert willingly, at their own instigation, the romance demonstrates a greater respect for Christian tradition than do many others: both brother and sister must be formally baptized before being considered Christian, while in some romances (such as *Saladin*) no such official ceremony is necessary.

¹⁶⁸ In the context of *chansons de geste*, Norman Daniel discusses this common trope extensively in his *Heroes and Saracens*.

Saracen religion to Christianity is much better developed in this romance than in many others: Saracens, like Christians, have bishops (as in lines 2511 and 2775, for instance) and priests who may absolve sin (line 2453); they forbid sexual intercourse with members of the opposing religion, a prohibition expressed both by the Sultan Laban and by Roland (in lines 232-233 and 2750-2754 respectively).¹⁷⁰ Saracen funeral rites are imagined as including the same institutional accoutrements as those of Christians when Laban buries King Mersadage of Barbarye after he falls in battle: the Saracens even have a Bible, the “Alkaron” or Qur’an, from which they sing a hymn:

He did carye [Mersadage] to his tente,
And beryed him by right of Sarsenye
With brennyng fire and riche oynemente,
And songe the Dirige of Alkaron,
That bibill is of here laye
(lines 2268-2272)¹⁷¹

Mahoun, the fictionalized Muhammad¹⁷² “gewith man foode” (line 425), a reminder of Christian images of Christ as provider, and even has spiritual agency in one striking incident when the giant Estragot is killed: “Mahounde toke his soule to him / And broght

¹⁶⁹ Norman Daniel notes the irony of the portrayal of Saracens as idolatrous; not only did Muslims shun the worship of images of any kind, but they considered the Christian practice of praying before images “impure” (Daniel, *The Arabs*, 31). Steven Runciman cites an example of Saladin calling Christians “polytheists” (vol. III, 190).

¹⁷⁰ The prohibition against sexual relations with Saracens is expressed also by the princess of Antioch in the Castle of Ladies episode in *Saladin*; this does not, however, stop Saladin from carrying on an amorous affair with the Queen of France, who has qualms about loving a Muslim, but overcomes them because of her desire for the Sultan and his evident chivalry.

¹⁷¹ All quotations come from Emil Hausknecht, ed., *The Romaunce of The Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbas his Sone who conquerede Rome* (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1881. Reprinted 1969).

it to his blis” (lines 447-448).¹⁷³ Saracens also drink “beestes bloode” (lines 684 and 1007) in a bizarre evocation of the Eucharist.¹⁷⁴ As in many romances, the Saracen religion is full of deities and saints culled from historical, biblical, Classical, and conventional romance traditions: Mahoun, Sathanas, Mars, Apollo, Jupiter, Ascarot, and Termagante. The romance thus encodes its imagined Islam as familiar enough to facilitate a smooth transition for Saracens who wish to become Christians.

As does the hero in *Floire et Blancheflor*, Ferumbras in the *Sowdone of Babylone* displays a precocious tendency to behave according to Christian chivalric values well before his conversion to Christianity, thus giving the audience an impression of sameness between noble Saracens and noble Christians. For instance, when a Roman traitor barter the keys to the gates of Rome for his freedom, enabling Ferumbras and his army to enter and begin their slaughter of the Christian inhabitants, Ferumbras kills the man rather than rewarding him: a traitor is a traitor, regardless of whose side he is on. Indeed, Ferumbras’s acute sense of righteousness stands in stark contrast to that of the traitorous Frenchman Ganelon, who attempts to leave Charles and fifteen of his knights trapped in a Saracen town, but is foiled by Ferumbras, who berates him and rouses the army to his

¹⁷² John Tolan observes that “[i]f one casts Muhammad in the role of Antichrist, one imagines that he occupies the same role in Islam that Christ occupies in Christianity” (*Sons*, 22), a common, though misguided, assumption in most romances.

¹⁷³ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (in “Hybrids”) reads this line, in which Mahoun claims the giant’s soul, as a joke through which the audience is encouraged to take pleasure in Estragot’s pain. On the other hand, the reader might wonder what produces “bliss” among the Saracens. The possibility that the line is to be read literally seems to be reinforced when the peers kill Lucafer by throwing him in the fire: “he were rosted to colis ilkadele. / His soule hade his god Mahoun” (lines 2016-17). Though the incident preceding these lines is comic, there is no hint that we should interpret “Mahoun had his soul” ironically.

¹⁷⁴ Geraldine Heng discusses the symbolic importance of consumption in “Cannibalism, the First Crusade, and the Genesis of Medieval Romance,” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10.1 (1998): 98-174.

aid: ““God gyf the an yvel falle!” he cries to Ganelon, ““Turne agayne, thou traytoure! / And helpe to reskowe thy lorde. / And ye, sires, alle for your honour!”” (lines 2990-2993). It is only through Ferumbras’s intervention and leadership that Ganelon’s plan to usurp Charles’s throne is thwarted.

Meanwhile, in the Sultan’s fortress, the romance explores another aspect of Christian-Saracen conflict: the opportunities for cultural exchange created when Christian prisoners of war are allowed to associate with their captors. For example, while trying to intimidate information about Charles and his potential weaknesses out of the peers during their captivity, the Sultan’s vassal Lucafere (or Lucifer) of Baghdad also asks about French customs:

But saye me, felowe, what is your vse,
To do in contr aftyr the none.
And what is the custome of your hous,
Tille men to souper shalle gone?

Sir Nymes obliges:

Sir, somme men iouste with sper and shelde,
And somme men Carol and singe gode songes,
Some shote with dartis in the feelde,
And somme play at Chesse amonge.
(lines 1987-1994)

Though this moment of cultural connection ultimately breaks down into violence, the romance hints at the possibilities for genuine mutual understanding between Saracen and Christian. Moreover, this incident posits the Saracen as inherently curious about Christian customs.

The idea of cultural exchange (primarily in the West-to-East direction) as a means of exporting European interests is more fully developed in *Saladin*. Despite the violence that permeates the first several sections of this romance, which relate Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem,¹⁷⁵ from the moment Saladin takes his (unwitting) kinsman Jehan of Ponthieu and another noble Christian, Huon de Tabarie, as prisoners of war, he befriends them and makes them his close advisors. On top of his fascination with Jehan, who represents the maternal side of his family which he has never known, Saladin greatly admires the Christians for their valor and honor, so much that he asks Huon to “me monstrés comment on fait chevaliers a la loy crestienne” (73) [show me how one is made a knight in the Christian faith]. Though he is initially hesitant, Huon takes Saladin through the elaborate dubbing ritual, complete with Christian vows.¹⁷⁶ The fact that

¹⁷⁵ The romance relates how Saladin negotiates the ransom of prisoners with Balian of Ibelin at Jerusalem. Despite its fictionalization, the narrative remains true to the historical facts in portraying Saladin as unusually generous in his treatment of Christian prisoners. In contrast to the bloodbath suffered by Muslim and Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem when the armies of the First Crusade conquered it in 1099, Saladin was well known and greatly admired for his merciful treatment of Christians in 1187. Though one of the best known of Saladin's acts of mercy toward Christians, the ransom of Jerusalem is hardly the only one. Saladin made a habit of chivalrous behavior toward women and children, in particular. Saladin's biographer, Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, notes many instances in which Christians are treated generously by the Sultan; on one occasion, for instance, Baha al-Din recounts how an infant is stolen from a Christian camp by Muslim raiders. The desperate mother comes to the Muslim camp to beg for her child. Saladin buys the child from its new owners and restores it to its mother, then sends her and her baby back to their camp on horseback (*Rare and Excellent History*, 147-148). Both Christian and Muslim sources agree that such an act of mercy was completely in character for Saladin.

¹⁷⁶ According to the medieval chronicler Richard of Holy Trinity, Saladin was, indeed, knighted: “when his years were matured and he was fit for military service, he came to Enfrid of Tours, the illustrious prince of Palestine, to be mantled, and after the manner of the Franks, received from him the belt of knighthood” (7). See Richard of Holy Trinity, *Itinerary of Richard I and others to the Holy Land (formerly ascribed to Geoffrey de Vinsauf)* (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2001. See Bibliography for full citation of electronic source). Though the tale may, certainly, be spurious, it seems to have stuck in the medieval imagination as important that Saladin was somehow “officially” a knight who had taken Christian vows. There does, however, seem to be some historical basis for such a claim. Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, a contemporary biographer of Saladin and a member of his entourage, notes that exceptionally friendly relationships had developed between Muslims and Richard I of England during the Third Crusade:

Saladin is not Christian is explicitly noted in the romance, particularly in this episode in which Huon initially declines to knight the hero because “n’estez pas ydone ne habille a si noble ordre recepvoir a cause que n’estez pas crestien” (73) [it is not suitable or appropriate for so noble an order to receive [you] because you are not Christian]. And yet, the romance declines to employ to any significant degree the traditional polytheistic and idolatrous stereotypes against the Sultan; it *says* that Saladin is a Saracen, but repeatedly undermines this fact through Saladin’s interest in Christianity.

Eventually, Saladin determines to tour France, anonymously, in order to learn about French culture, customs, and religion; he justifies his decision to Jehan and Huon thus:

puisque je suis chevalier, que j’ay desir d’aler en France a la court du roy a Paris veoir l’estat et la noblesse de par dela et le maintien dez crestiens, affin que, comme aultrefois vous ay dit, se je voy en leur loy et la vostre aparance de plus grand bien qu’il n’a en la loy Mahon, je pourray par adventure, selon que congnoissance me admonestera, delaisser l’une pour l’autre prendre et mettre en certaineté ce qui m’est en grand doubte” (Crist 78-79).

[since I became a knight, I have wished to go to France to the court of the king at Paris in order to see the state and the nobility there, and the manners of the Christians, at the end of which, as I have told you before, if I see in their faith and yours the appearance of greater good than is in the faith of Mahon, I may, perchance, according to how knowledge guides

“[Richard] had made friends with several of the elite mamlukes and had knighted some of them” (*Rare and Excellent History*, 223).

me, leave the one to take the other and make certain of that of which I now
have great doubt]

On his own initiative, the Sultan suggests that he might convert to Christianity, given
great enough exposure to French culture and Christian learning.

Ironically, Saladin surpasses the French Christians in living up to their own ideals.
In the introductory section of this chapter I addressed Saladin's poignant criticism of the
treatment of the poor at the French court, but the romance comments also upon the
inadequacy of the French judicial system, which the hero rectifies. During his trip to
France, Saladin hears of the trial of Suzanne de Ponthieu, Jehan's sister and the hero's
cousin, who has been falsely accused of trying to poison King Philip and is in imminent
danger of execution. The accuser is Lambert de Berry, a knight so intimidating that no
one dares to act as champion for Suzanne in judicial combat—until Saladin steps in.
King Philip's inability to dispense justice without the last-minute intervention of a
foreigner compares poorly with Saladin's determination to defend the life of his
kinswoman. In this idealized, romance zone of cultural expression, contact with the
chivalrous Saracen is depicted as an opportunity for Christian reform: his assimilation
will improve the whole of Christendom.

Thus, in Saladin's exemplary chivalric behavior that puts European monarchs to
shame, in Ferumbras's faithfulness to Charlemagne (in contrast to the treachery of
Ganelon), and in Floire's resemblance, both physical and spiritual, to his beloved
Blancheflor, we see Saracen heroes who embody the chivalric virtues that are usually
associated with Christianity. Aside from the specifics of their institutionalized religion,

there is no need for these heroes to convert: they already live in accordance with Western cultural values and have an inherent, naturalized grasp of the chivalric code as it would have been understood by a European audience. Along side this “natural” chivalry, these characters are depicted as naturally inclined toward Christianity. In each of these romances, there appears to be a cyclical system of justification in which the virtuous Saracen is seen as naturally tolerant—even desirous—of contact with Christians; this contact, which he seeks, leads him toward converting to Christianity. These two elements—the Saracen hero’s chivalric tolerance of Christians and his “natural” draw toward Christianity—reinforce each other to make chivalry and Christianity virtually inseparable, even in a Muslim.

The Mechanics of Colonization: Capture, Conversion, and Genealogy

In the previous section I have been concerned with showing how *Floire*, *Sowdone*, and *Saladin* set up their Saracen heroes for conversion from the outset by underlining their inherent understanding of Christian chivalric values. In this section, I demonstrate that the conversion of these characters is fundamentally linked to a program of colonization through genealogy. This will involve a closer look at some of the mechanics of the conversions of the individual heroes as well as a brief exploration of historical contexts that provide a framework for the genealogical work being accomplished in these narratives. Moreover, I will show that the historically common phenomenon of Christians being captured by Muslims while on pilgrimage or crusade provides the excuse for the intermingling of Saracen and Christian bloodlines in these romances.

The opening of *Floire and Blancheflor* takes place in northern Spain, with the capture of Blancheflor's pregnant mother, a pilgrim headed for St. James of Compostela, one of the most popular of medieval European pilgrimage destinations. The pilgrimage to Compostela would likely be of particular interest to an audience in southern France, the most likely provenance of this romance, through which pilgrims from northern and western Europe would have to pass. Indeed, southern France was an area that benefited culturally from proximity to Islamic Iberia's superiority in areas such as medicine, astronomy, architecture, and Classical studies; but it was also more vulnerable to incursions by Muslim raiders. Such raids had all but ceased by the time of this romance's composition in the mid-twelfth century, but the cultural memory of Muslim raids and occupation remained strong, as demonstrated by such poems as the *Song of Roland* and the introductory material to many of the *Fierabras* texts. Regardless of how unlikely the renewal of Muslim raids into southern France may have been in the twelfth century, Charles François has thoroughly documented the very real threat of Muslim attacks on European pilgrims in Spain.¹⁷⁷ The capture of Blancheflor's mother, while romanticized by her inclusion in the royal court as the Queen's personal lady-in-waiting, is based on historical reality.

In this historical setting, one of the most striking aspects of this inter-religious love story is the juxtaposition of Floire's peaceful, voluntary conversion to Christianity against the violence of the forced conversion of his subjects. The vast majority of *Floire*

¹⁷⁷ See François, "'Floire et Blancheflor': Du Chemin de Compostelle au Chemin de la Mecque," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire/Belgische Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 44.3 (1966): 833-

et Blancheflor paints an idyllic picture of *convivencia*, the peaceful mingling of Muslim and Christian (and, implicitly, Jewish) cultures in early medieval Spain. Neither Blancheflor nor her mother is ever even propositioned with conversion, much less threatened. Indeed, by the end of the romance the conversion to Christianity of Floire out of love for Blancheflor¹⁷⁸ seems about to be repeated by the Emir of Babylon, in whose tower Blancheflor had been held captive, and whom Blancheflor has convinced to give up his practice of killing his wives after a year of marriage. Having sworn off this practice—perhaps a corruption of the allowance for multiple wives in Islam—he marries Blancheflor’s friend Gloris, the Christian daughter of a German duke.¹⁷⁹ In medieval European romance, the marriage of a Saracen to a Christian is nearly always associated with the conversion of the Saracen to Christianity.¹⁸⁰

Despite the peaceful conversion of Floire and perhaps, implicitly, the Emir, however, we must not lose sight of the mass violence that bookends the romance. The very premise of the romance—the conversion of Muslim Iberia to Christianity through

858.

¹⁷⁸ The romance explains Floire’s conversion thus: “Sa corone li aporerent, / par la flor d’or li presenterent. / Flores se fait crestiener / et après a roi coroner. / Por Blanceflor, la soie amie, / mena puis crestiienne vie” (lines 3307-3310) [His coronet with ornament / Of golden flower they now present / To him, and crown him king, and he / Embraces Christianity. / He had decided, for the sake / Of Blanchefleur, his loved one, to take / The Christian way of life] (lines 3004-3010).

¹⁷⁹ The Emir’s annual decapitation of his current wife in order to take another suggests a parallel with the frame story for the *Arabian Nights*. Indeed, several critics have noted *Arabian Nights* analogues for much of *Floire et Blancheflor*. See, for instance, Legros, *La Rose et le Lys* (pp. 20-23, 29; p. 163, note 4), who offers a review of other critics interested in the Oriental analogues for *Floire*.

¹⁸⁰ I will explore one of the very few exceptions to this rule, *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*, in the following chapter. I cited one example of the Saracen conversion trope in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, and will further explore the conversion of Floripas in the *Sowdone of Babylone*, below. Further examples may be found in the *King of Tars* and Chaucer’s “Man of Law’s Tale.” Instances of the Saracen princess’s conversion out of love for a Christian knight are too numerous to list here, but Jacqueline de Weever

religious intermarriage—relies on the initial bloody attack by Saracens on the Christian pilgrims to St. James of Compostela, in which Blanche-flor's maternal grandfather is killed and her mother enslaved. This romance fantasizes that Christian slaves such as the heroine's mother, instead of suffering religious persecution and a life of misery, might instead bring about a bloodless Reconquest. The deaths of the other pilgrims to Compostela, however, must have helped link Spain to the East in the perceptions of the romance's Western audience:¹⁸¹ Muslim attacks on pilgrims were among the most common justifications for crusade beginning with Pope Urban II's crusade address in 1095. As one of the most sacred shrines in medieval Europe as well as one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations, Compostela bears a heavy rhetorical weight: pilgrims being killed *en route* to Compostela would be as great a provocation for crusade as pilgrims being killed on the way to Jerusalem, just as the defense of Christianity in Spain was usually considered on par with crusades to the East by Pope Urban II and his successors.¹⁸² In *Floire et Blanche-flor*, the wrong suffered by the French victims of the Spanish raid is avenged, ultimately, with the blood of those of Floire's subjects who refuse to convert with him to Christianity in the closing lines of the romance.

Though Floire's conversion is not achieved until the final lines of the romance, the audience has expected it since the opening lines, when we are told that

explores the subject in great detail in *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York: Garland, 1998).

¹⁸¹ In fact, Spain was often associated with the East because of the strong Islamic presence there. See Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁸² See Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia and London: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 18-20 and 132; and Norman Daniel, *The Arabs*, p. 87.

çou est du roi Flore l'enfant
et de Blanceflor le vaillant,
[de cui Berte as grans piés fu nee;
puis fu en France mariée.
Berte fu mere Charlemaine,
qui puis tint France et tot le Maine.
(lines 7-12)

[‘Tis of the young Prince Floire I tell
And Blanchefleur the good demoiselle.
‘Twas Bertha Broadfoot, born of them,
Who in France wore the queen’s diadem
As noble Pepin’s queen. In turn
To them the great King Charles was born.
Bertha was dam of Charlemagne
Who was to rule o’er France and Maine.]
(lines 7-15)

The insertion of Floire, the Saracen-born King of Spain, into the genealogy of France’s most illustrious king and Holy Roman Emperor cements Christendom’s claim to Spain in the romance. This genealogical colonization of Spain is possible, as I have noted, only because of the capture of Floire’s mother by the Saracen king. This theme of crusade-by-capture will recur in both of the other two romances discussed in this chapter, the *Sowdone of Babylone* and *Saladin*.

As the reader may have noted in the quotation above, Floire, representing the Saracen half of Charlemagne’s genealogy, is infantilized in these opening lines of the romance, whereas Blancheflor, who is exactly his age—fourteen, at the end of the

romance—is literally valorized as “Blanceflor le vaillant.” We have already seen how Floire is made to resemble Blanceflor by the erasure of all marks of masculinity from his body. Here we seem to have an intentional prioritizing of the maternal line, which is also the pure Christian line, in the construction of Charlemagne’s fictional genealogy: the romance wishes to claim a Saracen heritage for Charlemagne, but it also seeks to limit the impact of Saracen blood on the Emperor’s character by emphasizing Blanceflor’s importance, a fact that will be implicitly underlined when the Saracen king and queen object to Floire being nursed by a Christian.¹⁸³

This feminization of Floire, the Saracen hero who converts for love, is not surprising, perhaps, given that the conversion-through-love trope is usually reserved for Saracen *women* in medieval romance. Jacqueline de Weever has examined this topic in great detail in *Sheba’s Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic*. According to de Weever, Saracen women in romance fall into two basic categories: the dark, menacing, often giant wife or mother of a Saracen foe; or, alternatively, the white, beautiful, unmarried daughter or sister of a sultan or emir.¹⁸⁴ The former is doomed to death at the hands of a Christian knight; the latter is destined to marry a noble Christian invader to whom she will give her kingdom.

Floire et Blanceflor hints at another category of Saracen women, as yet virtually unexplored by critics: the invisible Saracen princess. As we know, the Emir who holds

¹⁸³ See note 34 on the medieval link between breast milk and the character of a nursling.

¹⁸⁴ As we saw in Chapter One, Bramimonde in the *Song of Roland* is an exception to the rule. Though she is a Saracen queen and she does convert to Christianity, she does so not because of love for a knight, but through learning and revelation. In some respects this conversion resembles a more masculine romance

Blancheflor captive in his tower holds many other maidens as well, and each year he chooses one of them as his new wife after having the former wife decapitated. During the whole time that she is with the Emir, though we know that Blancheflor is to be his *next* wife, no reference is ever made to her predecessor. In order for the Emir to marry Blancheflor as he intends—or in order for him to marry Gloris, as comes to pass—another young woman must die. The very fact that we never see or hear of the Emir’s most recent victim attests that, from the point of view of the romance’s author, she is invisible and irrelevant. She could not possibly be Christian, for then she would be a martyr, demanding comment; she must, then be a Saracen woman from the chaste harem of girls that he keeps locked in his tower. Indeed, the only one of these girls we ever explicitly see, other than Blancheflor, is Gloris who, like the heroine, is remarkable because she is European and Christian. The Saracen woman, then, is visible only when she serves a distinct purpose—either as a foe to be overcome or as a convert to Christianity— to further Western interests in the East. Otherwise, she is utterly and chillingly dispensable.

Unlike the invisible Saracen woman in *Floire et Blancheflor*, the Saracen woman who converts to Christianity for love of a Christian knight, as does Floripas in the *Sowdone*, is often developed as a main character. She is a fictional ideal, portrayed as a beautiful ambassador between two cultures. Her natural nobility of spirit and blood draw

pattern—conversion through a miracle sent by God—as we see, for instance, in the “Man of Law’s Tale” or in the *King of Tars*.

her to the Christian prince or knight, through whom her native land will be overcome and Christianized, whether by coercion or by the sword.

Though Saracen men are most often converted through homosocial contact with their Christian counterparts, the Saracen woman of medieval romance, including Floripas, converts almost exclusively because of her idealized love for a Christian man. The union between man and woman is seen here as a viable method of conquest; symbolically, conquest is depicted as the occupation of the female body and of the land over which she is sovereign (after the inevitable death of any male relatives who will not convert with her, especially those with strong claims to the throne). Concurrent—and mutually enforcing—conquest of female bodies and feminized territories will be all too familiar to the scholar of modern colonial-era literatures, of which medieval romance may be seen as an ancestor.¹⁸⁵

In the *Sowdone of Babylone*, the conversion and colonization of Spain is twofold: the kingdom is divided between the converted Ferumbras, who will impose Christianity upon his subjects by use of the sword, and Sir Guy, the Frankish husband of Floripas. As in *Floire et Blancheflor*, these conversions are made possible through the trope of capture: Ferumbras is overcome in battle by Oliver and captured by Charlemagne, who has him baptized at the Saracen's request; meanwhile, Floripas is converted through contact with her Christian prisoners after she falls in love with Sir Guy. Whether as

¹⁸⁵ An interesting image of the colonized female body may be seen in the baptism of Floripas in *Fierabras*, the *chanson de geste* upon which the English romance is based. Her white, naked body is described as she stands before the baptismal font, while all of Charlemagne's barons regard her with desire; even the old king himself cannot help looking at her appreciatively. See Le Person, *Fierabras*, lines 6188-6195.

victors or as prisoners, the Christians make the most of captivity as an opportunity through which to insinuate Christianity into the ruling family of their Saracen enemy.

The importance of captivity as a crusade theme in medieval romance has not been acknowledged fully by critics. In the *Sowdone*, during the captivity of Charlemagne's peers in the Sultan's castle, for instance, the knights encounter the perpetual problem of the besieged: having won the castle and expelled the Sultan, they face a food shortage. Though deprivation may be a problem for defenders under siege in any time or place, the evidence provided by crusade chronicles indicates that it was a frequent, sometimes traumatic, and often devastating predicament for crusaders for the duration of the period,¹⁸⁶ due partly to arid climates, partly to the unpredictability of investitures as a result of sieges or attacks, and partly to the difficulty of arranging for the delivery of provisions in unknown or hostile territory. The near-starvation of the peers and Floripas's maidens during the Sultan's siege of the castle echoes crusade chronicles such as that of Fulcher of Chartres when he describes the defense of Antioch by the Franks during the First Crusade, during which much of the ill-prepared army died of starvation.¹⁸⁷

In another important Middle English version of the Fierabras story, *Sir Ferumbras*, the analogy is further developed, if only implicitly: on the brink of starvation, the peers display the relics of the Passion to the besieging Saracen army, which has begun to scale the walls of the fortress; terrified of the power of the relics, the Saracens lose

¹⁸⁶ Geraldine Heng discusses one of the most extreme and traumatic responses to hunger during the First Crusade, when Christians resorted to eating the rotting flesh of fallen enemies. See Heng, "Cannibalism."

¹⁸⁷ For Fulcher's description of the crusaders' hunger at Antioch, see Peters, *The First Crusade*, pp. 77-78.

their hold on the walls and tumble to their deaths. This scene brings to mind the legendary First Crusade siege of Antioch, during which the crusaders, dying of starvation but inspired by the (dubious) discovery of the Holy Lance under the floor of St. Peter's, made a final sortie to face the enemy, who apparently fled at the sight of the Lance at the head of the host. The more likely explanation, as many historians have noted, is that dissension among the Muslim factions of the besiegers caused the retreat of the Muslim army, but the event was interpreted by many medieval chroniclers as a miracle made possible through the agency of the Lance.¹⁸⁸ The reworking of crusade events such as the siege of Antioch into episodes of romance may be subtle—indeed, they may not always be clearly recognizable—but they occur in great enough density that it behooves us to take notice and to investigate the possible connections among historical events, chronicles, and romance.¹⁸⁹

Of the three romances discussed in this chapter, *Saladin* most thoroughly draws on historical crusade events and develops the genealogical links between Europe and the East. *Saladin* is also the latest of the romances I explore in this dissertation, though it draws on material that had been in circulation since the late twelfth century, when chroniclers first documented the Third Crusade. It is not coincidental, I argue, that later romances such as this one emphasize conversion as a method of conquest: by the

¹⁸⁸ Marianne Ailes discusses the roles of relics in the Old French *Fierabras*; see especially page 129 in “Faith in *Fierabras*,” *Charlemagne in the North: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Société Rencesvales. Edinburgh 4th to 11th August 1991*. Eds. Philip E. Bennett, Anne Elizabeth Cobby, and Graham A. Runnalls. Edinburgh: Société Rencesvales British Branch, 1993. 125-133.

¹⁸⁹ This is particularly true when manuscript contents or other textual clues suggest a dedicated interest in the East or in the crusades.

fifteenth century, not only had crusading in the East produced only failure for several generations, but even defensive crusades against the spread of the Ottoman Empire were repeatedly thwarted. The overwhelming efficiency of the Ottomans is perhaps reflected in the romance's portrayal of Saladin, who, despite his gestures of chivalry and mercy, was nevertheless a brilliant military strategist, uniting Arab Islam and completely turning the tide of European expansionism in the East. Recognizing the impossibility of Christian victory against such a foe, this romance, rather than vilifying Saladin, instead presents a fantasy of bringing him into the Christian fold not only through conversion, but also more intimately, through blood ties, by endowing him with a French ancestor.

The first section of the romance, in addition to following Saladin's conquests in the Holy Land, recounts the end of *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*, to which it forms a sequel in this romance crusade cycle. In *La Fille*, the French Countess of Ponthieu spends several years in Aumarie as the wife of the Sultan before returning to her homeland and Christian family. While there, she bears two children. Her Saracen daughter remains with the Sultan and is married to a Syrian prince, eventually becoming grandmother to Saladin. In this way, Saladin is incorporated into the Ponthieu family bloodline, establishing a naturalized connection between East and West and between Saracen and Christian. It is upon this family connection that the main action of the romance relies as it reunites the divided bloodline: when Jehan de Ponthieu becomes Saladin's prisoner of war, Saladin begins the journey toward conversion to Christianity that his French blood makes natural, even inevitable.

The two middle sections of the narrative, during which Saladin makes two journeys to Europe—first to France as a visitor, then to England as a would-be conqueror—are significantly less based in historical reality than are the sections on Saladin’s military campaigns in the Levant. Though Saladin may have entertained dreams of invading Western Europe,¹⁹⁰ the plot devices that bring the sultan to England in the romance are clearly fictional. Saladin’s invasion does serve a purpose, however, that must have been obvious to the late medieval audience: the threat of invasion draws Europe together, even—indeed, particularly—the greatest of rivals, England and France. When King Richard shares his knowledge of the impending attack with Philip of France, Philip draws on all his resources to send the best European knights to Richard’s aid. The alliance proves fruitful, for it is Chavigny, the French champion, who ultimately saves England, and all Europe, from Saladin’s armies. The romance *Saladin* thus creates a fantasy version of the situation at the beginning of the Third Crusade, when the historical Richard Lionheart and Philip Augustus of France briefly laid aside their differences to campaign together in the Holy Land for the benefit of all Christendom.

As was the case during the Third Crusade, however, relations between the English and French kings in the romance become tense. Historically, Philip left Richard in the Holy Land when it became clear that Jerusalem could not be retaken. The French text demonstrates an obvious bias in its reworking of events; in *Saladin*, it is Richard, not

¹⁹⁰ According to Saladin’s friend and biographer, Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad, Saladin did, indeed, hope to launch a military expedition against Europe: Baha al-Din tells us that Saladin once confided to him, “‘I have in mind that, when God Almighty has enabled me to conquer the rest of the coast [of Syria], I shall divide up the lands, make my testament, take my leave and set sail on this sea to their islands to pursue them there until there no longer remain on the face of the earth any who deny God’” (29).

Philip, who returns home while Philip remains to launch an attack on Damascus, accusing Richard of betrayal for leaving him to fight Saladin alone.¹⁹¹ Despite the appearance of good feeling between Richard and Philip in the text until this point, their cooperation has not been without its subtle stabs at the English and their monarch. One could certainly read the episode of Chavingny's defense of Christendom on the English coast as a slight against England, which fails to produce a champion to match Chavingny's skill or bravery. The implication is certainly that the English would not have survived Saladin's attack without help from the French.¹⁹²

Alongside the breakdown of relations between Richard and Philip when the former abandons the latter in the Levant, the romance establishes the possibility—even the desirability—of feudal relationships between the French and the Saracens. Such feudal relationships are demonstrated in *Saladin* by the Christians Jehan de Ponthieu and Huon de Tabarie, who eventually become Saladin's vassals as well as his prisoners when he endows them with lands. Historically, relationships among the Christian nobility in the crusader states and their Muslim and Eastern Christian neighbors were intricate and volatile; Latin Christians often established fruitful alliances with Muslims against Greeks

¹⁹¹ According to Georges Goyau, Philip did, historically, accuse Richard of betrayal—trying to poison him—after Philip's return to France. See "Philip II (Augustus)." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. (See Bibliography for full citation of electronic source.)

¹⁹² *Saladin* was most likely composed during or soon after the Hundred Years' War between England and France. Though Ponthieu often allied itself with the English against the French—as it had done since the time of William the Conqueror's invasion of England in 1066, which was launched from Ponthieu—by the close of the war French sovereignty had been established in the region. Thus, it makes sense that the

or against opposing European factions, as did Conrad of Montferrat with Saladin against Richard I. In the romance, Jehan and Huon sustain their fidelity to Saladin as their lord through much of the narrative, even when they have the opportunity to escape to Richard's camp during Saladin's attempt to conquer England. The two Christians spend between twelve and fifteen years in Saladin's service, and (temporarily) break their commitments to him as their liege lord only when the fate of Christendom is on the line: when Saladin is on the verge of invading England, for example, Jehan reluctantly decides to warn Richard, fearing that all of Europe will fall into Saracen hands unless he acts behind Saladin's back to prevent a full-scale invasion. Fortunately for the Frenchman, Saladin considers blood kinship more important than feudal allegiance, and spares Jehan from having to prove his loyalty through trial by combat. Jehan's decision to side with Christendom rather than his feudal lord—he remains ignorant of his blood relationship to Saladin, who does not enlighten him—models an ideal of Christian solidarity in crusade situations, however difficult this ideal was to maintain in reality.

Jehan and Huon's loyalty to Saladin in the romance is quite understandable from the audience's perspective. The hero is virtuous, pious, generous, and adept in the art of war. Moreover, he is tolerant of the religious difference of his kinsman and vassals and, as I have shown already, he is curious about their faith and their culture. Saladin is portrayed as a protector of the weak and powerless, even when they happen to be Christians. His embodiment of the chivalric ideal, in this romance, is ideologically

romance aligns itself more with France than with England, despite lingering resentment of more centralized royal control, evidenced by *Saladin's* various critiques of royal administration.

explained by the French Christian influence in his bloodline.¹⁹³ As the French claim Saladin's chivalrous character for their own, they may also claim his territory; the dynastic link back to France provides a justification for the future establishment of hereditary French rule in Syria. Saladin himself implicitly endorses such an interpretation, working in the other (East to West) direction, when he claims a hereditary right to rule Europe through his kinship to the great conqueror Alexander: upon his arrival on the shores of England, Saladin declares, "ce pays et tout le demourant du monde est a moy appartenant a cause du bon roy Alixandre le Grand, duquel lignage mes peres anchiens sont yssus et descendus, et par ce me compette par vraye et directe sucession" (131) [this country and all the rest of the world is mine because of the good king Alexander the Great, from whose lineage my ancestors are issued and descended, and therefore I claim it by true and direct succession]. If Saladin pretends to be heir to Europe because of his genealogical association with Alexander, surely the counts of Ponthieu may use the same logic to claim the Levant because of their tie to Saladin himself. And, indeed, the heart of Saladin's empire in Egypt was the object of most crusades beginning with the Fourth. Thus the romance, like *Floire et Blancheflor* and the *Sowdone of Babylone*, asserts a continuing hereditary interest for France in Muslim

¹⁹³ Matthew Bennett discusses other instances of literary mingling of French and Saracen bloodlines in both *chansons de geste* and crusade chronicles. In the *Gesta Francorum* (an anonymous chronicle of the First Crusade, written *circa* 1100-1101), for instance, the author claims that the Turks "have a saying that they are of common stock with the Franks" (115). Bennett concurs with my evaluation of the high importance of genealogical fictions in crusade literature (though our foci are slightly different): "Certainly the epic poems with their emphasis on 'good' and 'bad' *lignages* as being the main influence on a character's behaviour highlighted birth and descent" (106). See Bennett, "First Crusaders' Images of Muslims: The Influence of Vernacular Poetry?" *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 22.2 (1986): 101-122.

territories that reinforces the common crusade claim that the Holy Land belongs to Christians as the inherited patrimony of Christ.

As we have seen in *Floire* and in the *Sowdone of Babylone*, the mechanism through which the genealogical colonization of the Saracen ruling family occurs centers on capture and captivity. The initial capture of Saladin's great-grandmother, the Countess of Ponthieu, by merchants bound for Aumarie leads to the establishment of a line of rulers who are sympathetic to Christianity: the lady turns her captivity to advantage by choosing to marry the Sultan and bear his children. Jehan and Huon, likewise, turn their capture by Saracens to their advantage, and the advantage of Christendom, by becoming Saladin's vassals but maintaining, nevertheless, a certain loyalty to their brothers in faith. In both cases, capture results in genial cohabitation, which is imagined as an opportunity for cultural conquest.¹⁹⁴ Thus, *Saladin* suggests many kinds of opportunities to be exploited as alternatives to the largely ineffective military expeditions of Europeans to the East after the First Crusade: we see the possibility of conversion of the Saracen enemy and of infiltrating Saracen courts in order to instill Western values among their leaders; and we see the suggestion that familial affiliations with the Saracen Other can create new and unforeseen benefits in the long term. This romance works to break down the alterity of Islam, creating space for alliances of all kinds to flourish. Such alliances, I

¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Lynn Tarte Ramey notes that "medieval authors forged fictive relationships with Muslims to appropriate and conquer another culture" through "cultural assimilation" (50). See Ramey, *Christian, Saracen and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001).

conclude, are posited as the desired future of East-West relations in this late medieval romance.¹⁹⁵

Conclusion

Though they all stem from some form of wartime capture, the individual methods by which Saracens are converted to Christianity in these Saracen romances vary as widely as do the depictions of Islam itself, from paganism and idol-worship to implicit acceptance of the institutions of Christianity. In *Floire et Blancheflor*, the hero converts for the love of Blancheflor, but his conversion, despite its worldly origin, is so absolute that he puts to death any of his subjects who will not adopt his new faith. In the *Sowdone of Babylone*, Ferumbras converts after being defeated in combat by Oliver, who is so severely wounded from a previous engagement that he could not possibly triumph over the noble Saracen without divine intervention; Ferumbras recognizes the miracle and swears fealty to Oliver as well as requesting baptism. Saladin, on the other hand, is converted through a decade-long process of learning from his Christian advisor-prisoners, convening in his last days a trio of wise men (one Christian, one Saracen, and one Jew) whose debate leads him to a deathbed conversion and self-baptism. Two of these conversions are a result of homosocial contact, made possible by the sharing of chivalric codes that span ethnic differences. Floire, like Floripas in *Sowdone*, converts as a result

¹⁹⁵ Ramey suggests that some medieval authors may have seen positive relationships between Christians and Muslims as not only desirable, but also necessary: “What does it mean to link the history of your nation with that of your archenemy? It means that at least some writers were willing to see cooperation as a necessary part of the survival of the nation” (64). In the Epilogue to this dissertation, I propose that Chaucer demonstrates a similar attitude when it comes to commercial cooperation.

of heterosexual desire, itself the product of a romantic fictionalization of the fate of women captured by members of the opposite faith in conflict zones.

On the surface, the very possibility of a Saracen hero in medieval European romance seems contradictory, but these characters prove quite useful for demonstrating alternative modes of cohabitation and conquest when outright military force becomes unpractical, unsustainable, or otherwise undesirable in the late Middle Ages. Open battle between Christian and Muslim, these romances suggest, is not necessarily the most effective way to achieve Western victory; and when open battle does occur, capture by the enemy can be a valuable opportunity for the Christian knight or pilgrim, whether male or female, to undermine Muslim unity from the inside. Based on this new formula for inter-religious contact, Christians living among—even cooperating with—Muslims had legitimate purposes much more subtle than the intolerant violence depicted in romances such as *Guy of Warwick* or in the *Song of Roland*. In *Saladin*, the *Sowdone of Babylone*, and *Floire et Blancheflor*, the capture of Christian prisoners of war leads directly to the conversion of the Saracen ruler. In this context, capture is romanticized as an opportunity to accomplish that which martial conflict cannot. Romances featuring Saracen heroes seek to bridge the gaps between Christian and Muslim, building common ground based on a similar set of social and moral values. The colonization of the Saracen hero in these romances is achieved through his very blood, which establishes European territorial claims envisioned as spanning both generations and continents.

Chapter Four

FEMALE CRUSADERS AND THE MATRILINEAL LINE

Introduction

In the last two chapters, most of the romances I have discussed have included female characters who, while not necessarily the dominant personality of the narrative, have nevertheless served important purposes and have supported the leading men in their achievements: Josian as the heir to Armenia and Bevis's helpmate in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*; Blancheflor as the girl who converts the Saracen prince to Christianity and generates Charlemagne's line in *Floire et Blancheflor*; the independent Floripas who, along with her ladies-in-waiting, aids Charlemagne's peers in the battle against her father the Sultan in the *Sowdone of Babylone*; and the barely-mentioned but foundational French ancestress of Saladin in the romance named for him. In this chapter, I turn to two romances, *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu* (whose titular character is the same ancestress alluded to in *Saladin*) and *Melusine*, because both are historical fictions woven around the premise of a strong female ancestor as the main character of a crusade romance. These fictions are based on the histories (both real and imagined) of powerful families in important regions of France—regions that were semi-independent throughout most of the Middle Ages and whose allegiance could determine the outcomes of both regional and international conflicts, particularly between England and France, both of which fought to bring (or keep) these regions and their rulers under royal control. Each of these

families—the line of the counts of Ponthieu in Picardy and the Lusignans in Poitou—were, moreover, represented by multiple generations of crusaders in the Latin East.

The romances under consideration here do more than simply glorify the crusading exploits of two noble French families. They work to establish sovereign regional identities within larger national contexts; they support further crusade efforts during periods when the crusades and the Latin states of the East were less successful than they had been in the early decades of crusading history; and they draw women into crusade narratives in ways that explore multiple possibilities for the future of European relationships with the East as well as multiple ways for women to participate in the crusades. More specifically, these romances explore the cultural as well as the military aspects of Latin presence in lands conquered from Muslims, Byzantines, and other non-Latin Europeans. Women are seen, in these texts, as fully part of the cultural and familial components of crusading enterprises, as promoters and financial backers of crusade (in *Melusine*), as biological producers of crusading men, and as crucial links in the familial chains that bound Eastern and Western branches of some of the most prominent medieval families. These romances explore in fictional, literary terms those roles of women in the crusades that Christoph Maier discusses in his article, “The roles of women in the crusade movement,” which details the important political, financial, propagandist, service, and militant roles of historical women in the crusades.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ As an historian, Maier brings together evidence of historical women involved in the crusades on many different levels, as suggested above. Though chroniclers often focus on women only as prostitutes, victims of brutality, or as wives of leaders in the crusader states, Maier shows that women’s roles were significantly more varied, and that women participated in the crusades in far greater numbers, than has generally been

Manuscripts and Background of

La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu and Melusine

La Fille

La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu, or "the daughter of the count of Ponthieu," is a short prose romance in a northern dialect of Old French, edited in 1923 by Clovis Brunel.¹⁹⁷ Brunel proposes that the story was probably first written in the early thirteenth century, perhaps commissioned by Marie, daughter of Guillaume IV, Count of Ponthieu. *La Fille* is extant today in two thirteenth-century redactions, of which four manuscripts survive altogether and of which there were probably at least two other surviving manuscripts into the modern period; there are also two extant fifteenth-century manuscripts, in addition to a printed copy of a hand-written copy of a fifteenth-century manuscript, now lost, and various Early Modern editions and adaptations.¹⁹⁸ All extant manuscripts come from either the north-west of France (the area around Picardy, Normandy, and Flanders) or Burgundy, slightly to the south-east. The fifteenth-century texts of *La Fille* have been incorporated into a "Saladin cycle," as Larry Crist calls it, which includes three parts: *Jehan d'Avesnes*, *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*, and *Saladin*, the latter of which I discuss in the previous chapter. This later version of *La Fille* is much longer and explores

acknowledged. See Maier, "The Roles of Women in the Crusade Movement: a Survey," *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004): 61-82.

¹⁹⁷ Brunel, *La Fille du Comte de Pontieu*. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1923. Brunel retains the Old French spelling of the county name.

issues sometimes radically different from those that dominate the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century texts. My primary focus here is on the thirteenth-century version, since it has a more focused interest on the female protagonist than do the fifteenth-century texts. The genre of *La Fille* is difficult to pinpoint, but the story is essentially a historical romance. Its short length (and consequent lack of extensive plot development) distinguishes *La Fille* from more traditional romances: the thirteenth-century version only runs approximately 15-20 printed pages of prose.¹⁹⁹

The story, as its title suggests, recounts a series of episodes in the life of the unnamed daughter of the count of Ponthieu in north-western France. The plot begins with the young woman's marriage to Thibaut, the heir to St. Pol, and their pilgrimage five years later to St. James of Compostela in order to pray for children. Thibaut chooses their path unwisely, however, and the couple is attacked by robbers who rape the lady while Thibaut looks on, bound and deposited in a thorn bush. Because of her shame, as the lady reveals later, she tries to kill her husband, only to cut his bonds in the attempt. The Count, upon learning of their adventure, is so infuriated that he seals his daughter into a barrel and sets her out to sea, whence she is rescued by merchants who give her as a gift to the Sultan of Aumarie.²⁰⁰ She converts to Islam, marries him, and has two children by him in less than three years.

¹⁹⁸ For more detailed descriptions of these manuscripts and the relationships among them, see the introductions to Brunel's edition of *La Fille* and Crist's edition of *Saladin* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972).

¹⁹⁹ Because Brunel includes alternative readings from a second manuscript in notes below the main text, I estimate the length of the story as it would run without his extensive editorial intervention. As it appears in Brunel's edition, the thirteenth-century version of the romance comprises pages 1-50.

²⁰⁰ V.A. Kolve notes that the trope of being cast adrift on the sea indicates that the victim is being handed over to the judgment of God when the persecutor wished to include the possibility for mercy or if he was

Meanwhile, the lady's kinsmen in France have repented their harsh treatment of her and have become crusaders in the Holy Land; on the return journey they are captured by the Sultan, who plans to sacrifice them. The lady recognizes her kin and intervenes on their behalf. Having established their repentance, she reveals her identity to them and devises a plan for the four of them to escape. Thibaut earns the Sultan's trust by vanquishing his enemy, after which the Frenchmen escort the lady on a sea journey justified by a feigned pregnancy and related illness.²⁰¹ The four French characters and the Sultan's son instead return to Ponthieu. The Sultan's daughter is left behind to carry on his line and eventually become the grandmother of Saladin, the historical figure who is the celebrated Muslim hero of the Third Crusade.

It is not surprising that a narrative that so narrowly focuses on a heroine and that presents a distinctly feminine point of view should have appealed particularly to women readers. Of the six known medieval manuscripts, we have evidence that two, at least, were owned by women during the Middle Ages. The oldest known manuscript, BN 25462, bears the fifteenth-century signature of Marguerite du Tertre. The thirteenth-century manuscript BN 12203 was owned by Marguerite de Flandres, Duchess of

unsure of the guilt of the victim. See Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 326. Thanks to Geraldine Heng for bringing this to my attention.

²⁰¹ The lady, in fact, arranges the whole escape, imitating the "enamored Saracen princess" of conventional romance, examples of which we have already seen in Floripas and Josian. The lady in *La Fille* works out a layered plan through which Thibaut wins the Sultan's trust and admiration before she approaches him to allow the Frenchmen to accompany her on the voyage to alleviate pretended "illness." She skillfully manipulates the Sultan, guiding him toward her desired conclusion, as when she suggests only that she bring her son, the old man (her father) and the youth (her brother) with her as entertainment; the Sultan, of course, suggests that she bring Thibaut along for protection. It may seem ironic that Thibaut is meant to defend the lady now, when he was unable to defend her from the rapists early in the narrative, thus precipitating the whole plot; however, as I argue below, the trials the prisoners have suffered over the

Burgundy (and was owned as well by Anne de Sempy in the sixteenth-century). Of the fifteenth-century manuscripts, we know that Arsenal 5208 was owned by both Princess Marguerite d'Autriche and Marie, Queen of Hungary in the early and mid-sixteenth century, respectively.²⁰²

Both the narrative itself, which focuses on the comital family, and the manuscript contents of the books in which *La Fille* appears attest to the centrality of regional and family pride in this text. Ponthieu is the westernmost county of the modern department of Somme in the region of Picardy (just to the north of Ile-de-France and Upper Normandy). Throughout most of the Middle Ages, Ponthieu was contested ground: at different times, it allied itself with, or was subjected to, the dukes of Normandy, Burgundy, and Flanders, the monarchy of France, and the monarchy of England. William the Conqueror launched his 1066 invasion of England from Ponthieu, setting the stage for a close association between Ponthieu and England (and Normandy) well into the fourteenth century.²⁰³ Two of the late thirteenth-century/early fourteenth century manuscripts attest to this association by including the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* in their contents. Even more clear, though, is the preoccupation with crusade: three of the four early manuscripts contain crusade chronicles (either William de Tyr or

course of their crusade and captivity have perfected them in many ways—they have earned chivalric prowess, the ability to bear children, and Christian forgiveness.

²⁰² Brunel gives this and additional evidence of female ownership of the *La Fille* manuscripts in the introduction to his edition. Evidence of female ownership is even more readily available for the Early Modern period.

²⁰³ The Battle of Crecy, perhaps the most important military triumph of the English during the Hundred Years' War, took place in Ponthieu. Charles V of France finally wrested Ponthieu from English control later in the War, in 1369. See Jean Lestocquoy, *Histoire de la Picardie et du Boulonnais* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 46-48.

Villehardouin or both), while the fourth contains the combination of the *Ordre de Chevalerie* and the *Enseignments de St. Louis*, the pious crusader king, implicitly linking Christian knighthood with the crusades, a connection that is clearly supported by *La Fille*.

As part of Picardy, Ponthieu had strong regional ties, and often blood and marriage alliances, with many of the region's important political figures, including the rulers of the duchies and realms mentioned above. Together they tended to resist efforts at centralization undertaken by the French monarchy, preferring to maintain the autonomy almost of a small country—and they were powerful enough to do so until well into the Hundred Years' War. The struggle between the monarchy and the northern barons was a balancing act: the king needed the support of regional powers in order to maintain national sovereignty, but also wished to strengthen his position as the head of state; meanwhile, the counts and dukes both resented royal involvement in regional affairs and desired alliances with the royal court that could bring them greater diplomatic leverage in their attempts at territorial expansion and occasional conflicts with one another.

Crusading was one front that could serve to unify otherwise competing factions, both regionally and nationally. As suggested fictionally in the romance, Picardy and the families that controlled it produced some of the most active crusading families of the Middle Ages. Clermont, a short distance to the southeast of Ponthieu, is the site where Pope Urban II gave his historic address in 1095, launching the First Crusade. Peter the Hermit (a spiritual leader of the First Crusade), Godfrey de Bouillon (first Latin King of

Jerusalem), and Robert de Clari (a crusade chronicler) are among the most famous Picard crusaders (Lestocquoy 43), without whom crusading history, and surviving accounts thereof, would have been significantly altered. Several kings of both England and France, two of Ponthieu's closet neighbors, went on crusade, from Louis VII and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine (Second Crusade) through Richard Lionheart and Philip Augustus (Third Crusade) to Saint Louis, King of France (Seventh and Eighth Crusades) and Edward I of England (Eighth and Ninth Crusades) before his coronation. Counts and nobles of Ponthieu accompanied many of these illustrious figures or led their own contingents, including Guy II of Ponthieu (d. 1147 on the Second Crusade) and his father William; Jean I of Ponthieu, who died in 1191 on the Third Crusade; William of Cayeux, "a lord of Ponthieu," who joined the Third Crusade with Richard the Lionhearted (Spiegel 71-72); and Eleanor of Castille, Countess of Ponthieu, who embarked on the Eighth Crusade with her husband, Edward I of England.²⁰⁴ Guillaume III of Ponthieu, moreover, participated in the Albigensian Crusade.²⁰⁵ The counts of St. Pol, to which Thibaut is heir in the romance, maintained very close family ties with Ponthieu historically and also produced multiple crusaders: for instance Hugh, Count of St. Pol, went on the Fourth Crusade with Baldwin IX of Flanders in 1202; Hugh II of St. Pol went on the First Crusade; and Guy

²⁰⁴ References to these crusaders are compiled from various sources: see John J. Thompson, "Collecting Middle English romances and some related book-production activities in the later Middle Ages," *Romance in Medieval England*. Eds. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meade (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 17-28 (for William and Guy II of Ponthieu, p. 173); Brunel, *La Fille* (for Jean I of Ponthieu, p. xxvi); and Gabrielle Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993) for William of Cayeux.

III of St. Pol accompanied St. Louis's Seventh Crusade.²⁰⁶ Thus we see that in almost every generation, the house of Ponthieu took upon itself, with varying degrees of success, the defense of the Holy Land.

Of the four earlier manuscripts of the text, BN 770 bears the most overt royal stamp: the signature of "Jehan, duc de Normandie," later Jean II (le Bon) of France (the father of Jean de Berry and Marie de Bar, patrons of Jean d'Arras's *Melusine*). That a fourteenth-century duke of Normandy and king of France should have been interested in a *La Fille* manuscript is not terribly surprising. As noted above, Ponthieu was important enough to have strong ties through intermarriage to the royal family and other important houses, including Burgundy, Flanders, and the royal family of England, particularly at a time when its political allegiance might decide the result of the Hundred Years' War. In the Duke of Normandy's manuscript, the *La Fille* story functions as a link between the semi-fictional *Estoire d'Outremer* and the *Chroniques de Jerusalem*, a crusade chronicle. The manuscript also contains *L'Estoire del Saint Graal* and *Le Roman de Merlin*. Thus this manuscript weaves three interconnected themes—Ponthieu as a central and originary homeland for the French *gens* with familial incursions into Saladin's bloodline; a fundamental investment in historical crusading in the Holy Land; and the Arthurian material relating to Merlin and the legend of the Holy Grail (the vessel associated with

²⁰⁵ See Mark Gregory Pegg, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1993), p. 106.

²⁰⁶ On Hugh of St. Pol, see Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, p. 41; W.B. Bartlett, *An Ungodly War: The Sack of Constantinople & the Fourth Crusade* (Phoenix Mill, UK: Sutton, 2000), p. 82. On Hugh II of St. Pol, see Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 165. On Guy III of St. Pol, see Runciman, vol. 3, p. 257.

Christ's sacrifice and the Eucharist as well as with the Last Supper)—into a nexus centered around Jerusalem, divine guidance, and providential kingship. When we read *La Fille* within the context of this and the other books in which it has been preserved, then, we see it as part of a network of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, that bring Ponthieu and its historiography into dialogue with larger narratives of national and Christian as well as regional identities.

Melusine

Le Roman de Melusine, unlike *La Fille*, is a lengthy romance of some 300 printed pages of prose (over 7100 lines of verse in Couldrette). The earliest extant version of the romance was written in prose in 1393 by Jean d'Arras, then rewritten in verse by Couldrette in the first years of the fifteenth century, approximately 1401. Though Jean's version begins with Melusine's family background, whereas Couldrette saves this episode for the end of his version and adds sections on each of the heroine's sisters, the two tales are otherwise fairly similar, as are the Middle English translations. Both versions were exceptionally popular during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern periods (and, indeed, into modern times): according to Matthew Morris, recent editor of Couldrette's romance, "[t]here are a total of thirteen attested manuscripts of Jean d'Arras's work, twelve of which are extant...An even larger number of extant manuscripts containing Couldrette's version of the romance show that the poetic version

was also of wide appeal during the late medieval period” (6).²⁰⁷ Morris goes on to note that the romance was one of the first texts printed in Geneva (1478) and was also printed in early editions in Flemish, Danish, Swedish, Czech, Spanish, Dutch, Icelandic, Russian, and English.²⁰⁸ It was certainly popular among the rulers and would-be rulers of Lusignan and the surrounding region, who had a stake in claiming Melusine’s legend (and her legendary patrimony) for their own. The romance was also popular among a wider set of the French nobility, of various ranks, who wished to align themselves with this prestigious family and its marvelous founder. Jean d’Arras’s narrative is dedicated to Jean de Berry, his patron and French conqueror of Lusignan, and to Jean’s sister Marie, Duchess of Bar.²⁰⁹ Each time Jean d’Arras mentions his patron, he also mentions Marie, leading one to suspect that Marie may have been just as influential in its composition as her brother; indeed, a tale of so gracious, pious, marvelous, and powerful a woman as Melusine seems designed to appeal to a female audience.²¹⁰

In length, plot and character development, and themes, the romance of Melusine is a more traditional romance than *La Fille*. Like many other romances, *Melusine*

²⁰⁷ Morris elaborates that there are twenty surviving manuscripts of the Couldrette version (45). See Morris’s introduction to Couldrette, *A Critical Edition of Couldrette’s Mélusine or Le Roman de Parthenay* (Lewiston, New York and Queenston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003).

²⁰⁸ See Couldrette, *A Critical Edition*. Louis Stouff and Françoise Clier-Colombanie offer details on some of the manuscripts in Jean d’Arras, *Mélusine: Roman du XIV^e Siècle*, ed. Louis Stouff. (Paris: August Picard, 1932) and Clier-Colombanie, *La Fée Mélusine au Moyen Âge: images, mythes et symboles* (Paris: Léopard d’Or, 1991) and Clier-Colombanie, “Mélusine: Images d’une Fée Serpente au Moyen Âge dans les Manuscrits Illustrés du XV^e Siècle du *Roman du Mélusine*,” *Mélusine Moderne et Contemporaine*, ed. Arlette Bouloumié with Henri Béhar (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 2001).

²⁰⁹ See Jean d’Arras pp. 307-308 and 311.

²¹⁰ We know that some *Melusine* manuscripts belonged to women. For instance, Marie de Clèves, wife of Charles d’Orléans, owned a copy in 1440 (Couldrette 60).

highlights marvelous events and people, and devotes considerable attention to the circumstances of the meeting between Raymondin and the fairy Melusine and also to the military exploits of their sons. *Melusine* is thus more fully a “family romance” than *La Fille*, in that it follows more traditional romance conventions (such as we see in *Guy of Warwick* or *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*) and traces in detail, rather than simply summarizing, the accomplishments of multiple generations. Much of this development is due, of course, to its relative length. Interestingly, however, both *La Fille* and Jean d’Arras’s *Melusine* are written in prose, which was gaining popularity as the medium for non-fiction and semi-fictional historiography in later medieval France.²¹¹

In the version of Jean d’Arras, the plot of *Melusine* begins with a brief prologue, in which the family history of the protagonists is revealed: how Elinas, king of “Albanie” (generally translated as Scotland)²¹² married the fairy Presine, and how he betrayed his vow never to see her while she is giving birth;²¹³ how Melusine and her sisters punished their father for his betrayal (by sealing him away in a mountain chamber) and were in turn cursed by their mother; and how Raymondin’s father took a fairy lady as his mistress before marrying Raymondin’s mother. Jean then relates Raymondin’s childhood and how he came to live with his uncle, Count Aimery of Poitiers, whom he accidentally kills in a

²¹¹ As noted in previous chapters, Gabrielle Spiegel shows us that the rise of prose historiography in medieval France significantly impacted the development of late medieval fiction as well.

²¹² Most critics consider “Albanie” to be Scotland; Jean Markale, however, has argued that “Albanie” may refer to Albania (23); see Markale, *Méluſine ou l’androgynne* (Paris: Retz, 1983). Stephen G. Nichols has argued that the name refers to Albion, mythical precursor to Britain (161); see Nichols, “Melusine Between Myth and History: Profile of a Female Demon,” *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 137-164.

boar-hunting mishap. In the forest he meets Melusine, who proposes to make him rich and happy in exchange for taking her hand in marriage—with the condition that he may never see her on Saturdays (when she is semi-serpentine), to which he agrees. Melusine bears ten sons, the first eight of whom have minor but marvelous physical deformities such as extra or missing eyes, a moleskin spot on the nose, or a single tusk protruding from the mouth—though they are all described as having exceptionally lovely and well-formed bodies. Their mother, meanwhile, builds castles, towns, and churches with fantastic speed.

When the elder children are grown, the first five (Urien, Eudes, Guion, Anthoine, and Regnault) seek their fortunes abroad and, through their prowess in battle against Saracens and other interlopers, win the hands of rich and lovely heiresses to important lands: Cyprus, la Marche, Armenia, Luxembourg, and Bohemia, respectively.²¹⁴ The sixth son, Geoffrey Grand Dent (or “Great Tooth”), helps his brothers in their campaigns against the infidel. But Geoffrey inherits the temper of a boar to match his giant tooth;²¹⁵ in a fury about his brother Fromont becoming a monk, an occupation he perceives as

²¹³ Presine’s condition that her husband never visit her while she is giving birth is never explained in the text.

²¹⁴ Eudes does not have to win La Marche from the Saracens, but he does help his brothers in their battles.

²¹⁵ Though most critics read the physical abnormalities on the faces of Melusine’s sons as marks of her fairy origins, Christopher Lucken, Gabrielle Spiegel, and Claude Lecouteux all read Geoffrey’s tusk as a mark transmitted through his father, whose tragic killing of his uncle occurred when he attempted to kill a boar they had been hunting. Geoffrey is different from most of his marked brothers in that this mark is associated with a negative personality trait, whereas his brothers (except Horrible) do not exhibit any negative traits. As I discuss below, most of these marks appear around the eyes, further distinguishing Geoffrey. See Lucken, “Roman de Mélusine ou Histoire de Lusignan? La fable de l’histoire,” *Mélines continentales et insulaires*, eds. Jeanne Boivin and Proinsias Mac Cana. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), pp. 145-173, at p. 159; Spiegel, “Maternity and Monstrosity: Reproductive Biology in the *Roman de Mélusine*,” *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and

corrupt, Geoffrey burns the abbey of Maillezais, killing the hundred monks therein.

(Geoffrey is later redeemed by fulfilling the penance prescribed to him by the Pope.²¹⁶)

This outrage sparks a bout of ire in his father Raymondin who, overcome with grief, denounces Melusine and reveals her hybrid identity, which he has discovered by peering at her in her bath on a Saturday: “Hee, tres faulse serpente, par Dieu, ne toy ne tes fais ne sont que fantosme, ne ja hoir que tu ayes porté ne vendra a bon chief en la fin” (Jean d’Arras 255) [Ah, very false serpent, by God, neither you nor your deeds are anything but a phantasm, nor will any child whom you have carried come to a good end].²¹⁷

According to the stipulations of her mother’s curse, Melusine leaps from the window as she is transformed into a giant serpent, or dragon.²¹⁸ Once removed from the care of its founding benefactress, the family and its fortunes gradually crumble, as Jean tells his audience, and are eventually replaced by Jean’s patron, the Duke of Berry, who claims to be a distant relative of the house of Lusignan through his mother, Bonne of Luxembourg

Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 100-124, at p. 110; and Lecouteux, *Mélusine et le Chevalier au Cygne* (Paris: Imago, 1997), p. 50.

²¹⁶ Geoffrey, along with his brother Horrible, seems to find an analogue in Robert the Devil, another romance hero.

²¹⁷ All French quotations come from either Louis Stoff’s edition of Jean d’Arras or Matthew Morris’s edition of Couldrette, as noted. Translations are mine.

²¹⁸ As punishment for having enclosed her father in a mountain, Melusine receives her fairy mother’s curse: “La vertu du germe de ton pere toy et les autres eust attrait a sa nature humaine, et eussies esté briefment hors des meurs, nimphes et faees, sans y retourner. Mais desormais je te donne le don que tu seras tous les samedis serpente du nombri en aval. Mais, se tu treuves homme qui te veuille prendre a espouse, que il te convenance que jamais le samedi ne te verra, non qu’il te descuevre, ne ne le die a personne, tu vivras cours naturel comme femme naturelle, et mourras naturellement...Et se tu es dessevree de ton mary, saiches que tu retourneras ou tourment de devant, sans fin, tant que le Hault Juge tendra son siege” (Jean d’Arras 12-13) [The virtue of the seed of your father, yours and your sisters, came to you from his human nature, and shortly would have driven out the condition of nymphs and fairies, never to return. But henceforth I give you the gift that every Saturday you will be a serpent from the navel down. But, if you find a man who wishes to take you for his spouse, and if he promises never to see you on a Saturday, or if he discovers you, never to tell it to anyone, then you will live a natural life like a natural woman, and you

(Baumgartner 187).²¹⁹ Melusine, nevertheless, continues to haunt the fortress to which she gave her name, the beloved Lusignan.²²⁰

Like the other romances discussed in my study, the *Melusine* romance evokes historical events and figures within its fictional framework, notably in the Eastern episodes that bring Armenia and Cyprus under Lusignan control and in the names of Melusine's sons, most of which correspond to common names in the family during the Middle Ages. But the romance also taps into a long and well-developed folkloric tradition: Matthew Morris traces the Melusine legend back even before the Roman occupation of Poitou, suggesting that Melusine may be a distant descendant of a Celtic goddess of prosperity and fertility who was frequently symbolized by the serpent.²²¹ Morris and other critics have noted that historical documents indicate a widespread belief in the veracity of the Melusine legend—or parts thereof—among medieval inhabitants of the Poitou region. As is so common to romance, then, bringing historical elements into the romance may have seemed entirely natural to its authors and/or commissioners, whether or not they believed in the legend themselves. The strongest historical influences

will die naturally...But if you are separated from your husband, know that you will return to your previous torment without end, until the High Judge takes his seat].

²¹⁹ See Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "Fiction and History: The Cypriot Episode in Jean d'Arras's *Méluſine*," *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 185-200.

²²⁰ Morris offers a detailed analysis of the probable origins of Melusine's name (and that of her chosen abode) in his introduction to *Couldrette*. He posits that the fairy's name developed from "Mère Lugine," Lug having been a pre-Roman divinity in Gaul (*Couldrette* 24).

²²¹ Matthew W. Morris, "Les Origines de la Légende de Méluſine et ses Débuts dans la Littérature du Moyen Âge," *Méluſine Moderne et Contemporaine*, eds. Arlette Bouloumié and Henri Béhar (Paris, L'Âge d'homme, 2001), pp. 13-19. See, in particular, pages 13-15 for discussion of Melusine's probable origins in folklore. Some of the same material is included and expanded upon in Morris's introduction to *Couldrette* (see pp. 13-26). Claude Lecouteux also notes the connection between Melusine and the serpentine fertility

on the romance stem from Poitou's relationships with other French and European territories as well as the prominence of the Lusignans in the East during the period of the Latin Kingdom and the crusades. I would also suggest that region's historical links to English royalty provide some clue as to why it was translated into English and gained popularity in England.

***La Fille du Comte de Pontieu: Geography and Gender in the
Colonization of the East***

The texts with which *La Fille* is bound, including crusade chronicles and works that are associated with crusader kings, I have suggested, indicate that the commissioners or compilers of the books were clearly interested in crusades in the East. The focus of these texts on the East specifically, as opposed to other crusade destinations, becomes important in the discussion of the geographical location of "Aumarie," which has been identified as Almería, a prominent medieval trading port on the south-eastern coast of Spain.²²² The place names are certainly similar; and it is plausible, as Sharon Kinoshita argues, that Flemish merchants, having found the lady at sea in her barrel, would stop in Almería on their way east. The Almería hypothesis makes better sense for the fifteenth-century manuscripts, where *La Fille* is embedded between *Jehan d'Avesnes*, its prequel, and *Saladin*, its sequel, as Jehan d'Avesnes, semi-fictional ancestor of the lady and her

goddess (56). Jean Markale, too, discusses the probable Celtic origins of the Melusine legend, though he does not attempt such a precise identification as does Morris.

²²² Sharon Kinoshita argues that Aumarie in *La Fille* should be read as Almería in "The Romance of MiscegeNation: Negotiating Identities in *La Fille du comte de Pontieu*," *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval*

family, went on crusade in Spain.²²³ While I do not wish to discredit the Almería reading by any means, I would add, by way of expansion, that the impression of Aumarie as part of the Near East is strong in this text. For instance, the count of Ponthieu and his entourage are shipwrecked in Aumarie only a “little” time after they depart from Acre.²²⁴ At the court of the sultan, moreover, serves a “valiant Turk” called “Malaquin de Baudas,” or Malaquin of Baghdad, who marries the sultan’s daughter by our heroine, becoming the grandfather of Saladin. Acre, Aumarie, Baghdad, and Turkey (or wherever the supposed provenance of a Turk might be),²²⁵ are clearly viewed as within easily-traversed distances of one another, collectively forming “Saracen Land.” The name “Aumarie,” then, while it may literally reference Almería, might better be read as analogous to the common medieval French term “outremer,” which generally refers to the Holy Land and its environs, but which literally means, simply, “overseas.” Almería may be a place name with which the author was familiar, even if he had little concrete knowledge of its location in relation to other eastern territories. As Geraldine Heng has observed, “Hispania,” which we might instinctually read as “Spain,” can in fact refer to Syria in chronicles of the crusades.²²⁶ Such nebulous conceptions of the geography of the

through Modern, eds. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (New York and Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 111-131.

²²³ Even Jehan d’Avesnes may be connected to the East, however: the historical figure James d’Avesnes of Flanders was a prominent nobleman who died on the Third Crusade (Runciman vol. 3, 57; W. Bartlett 102).

²²⁴ The men cling together through he storm off the coast of Acre, and “petit eurent alé en tel maniere quant il virent tere” (Brunel 26) [they had only gone a little way in this manner when they saw land], which is called “tere de Sarrasins,” or Aumarie. My translation.

²²⁵ Saladin, a Kurd who made Egypt his base of operations for Muslim reconquest of the Holy Land, was also often called a Turk by the crusade chroniclers.

²²⁶ Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 37.

East in romance (as in much medieval fiction) is, in fact, quite familiar if we remember *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*'s "Mombraunt," which is simply "north" of Jerusalem, or if we consider the easy sweep of *Floire et Blancheflor* from Compostela to Babylon (Cairo).

In other romances that take place in this poorly-defined East, I have encountered three basic plot types. First among these is a crusader fantasy, in which a knight, possibly with companions, accomplishes feats of military conquest over eastern domains. *Guy of Warwick* exemplifies this type of romance. The second plot is one in which cultural conquest is often effected through love, as in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* or the *Sowdone of Babylone*. Here, a knight goes east and earns the love of a prominent eastern ruler's daughter (or, alternatively, his wife or sister), who converts and helps him dislodge her kinsman. The third structure inverts the gender dynamics of the previous type: a Christian woman goes to the East and converts an eastern ruler. We see this, for instance, in the romance of the *King of Tars* and in the stories of the Constance saga, such as Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale," discussed in the Epilogue.

La Fille resembles this last type in that the French woman goes to Aumarie and marries the Sultan; problematically, however, she converts to Islam rather than effecting the conversion of her new spouse.²²⁷ There is no indication in the thirteenth-century texts that her conversion is insincere. Apparently referring both to her marriage to the Sultan and to her conversion, the narrator says, "Ele vit bien que mix li valoit faire par amours que par force"(23) [She saw well that it would be better to do it for love than by force],

²²⁷ In the long run, the fact that the lady converts to Islam allows for the appropriation of Saladin at the end of the romance, which is clearly one of the most important *raisons d'être* of the story.

thus recalling the rape that precipitated her eastward journey.²²⁸ At first it seems that her situation in Aumarie is either a continuation of her previous vulnerability or an unusual inversion of the typical, threatening representation of the East in European literature of this era in that Aumarie becomes a safe haven of sorts for the damsel in distress.²²⁹ However, this inversion of the lady's vulnerability does not last; her status changes as she adjusts to her new situation, marries the sultan, and bears his children.

This last detail—the fact that she has two children by the Sultan in about three years—suggests that her former inability to conceive a child with Thibaut is not infertility at all, but rather a symbolic manifestation of the imperfection of these characters, who are as yet untried by Christian suffering; though the romance allows for an unusual amount of realism, in keeping with its historiographic nature, it also insists upon maintaining at least some remnants of the chivalric ideals of courtly love and nearly-invincible knighthood, which surface once the characters have made their ways east. Until the repentant pilgrimage that Thibaut makes to the Holy Land with the lady's father, his decisions are rash and misguided, and he is unable to defend his wife as should a proper knight of medieval romance. Unlike other romance heroes, who regularly fend off hordes of trained soldiers and giants, Thibaut cannot overcome eight common highway robbers. This might be seen as one of the romance's gestures toward realism, except that when Thibaut fights for the Sultan in Aumarie as part of the lady's escape plan, he

²²⁸ All translations of *La Fille* are mine. As in the previous chapter, I wish to extend my thanks to William Kibler for sharing his expertise in this area.

²²⁹ We might recall, here, that the East was likewise a safe haven for young Beues after the murder of his father by his mother and her lover.

displays the prowess of the typical romance hero who always leaves a trail of enemy bodies in his wake. Thibaut's lack of chivalric maturity and the sterility of his marriage are then contrasted sharply with the perfect courtly behavior of the Sultan of Aumarie, who treats his lady with credulous deference, presaging the courtly reputation of his descendant, Saladin.

While the Sultan of Aumarie is certainly an example of the perfect courtly lover, and thus the vehicle for an implicit critique of Thibaut, he takes this role to an extreme, leaving him and his realm vulnerable to foreign powers. In a short time, the lady becomes the real sovereign in their relationship. This is demonstrated particularly nicely in the scene during which she asks the Sultan to spare the lives of his three French prisoners, her father, husband, and brother. Ignoring the demands of his barons, who object to the prisoners' release, the Sultan defers to the lady's whim, clearly placing her desires above those of his court. "Par ma loy, dame," he says, "se .c. en i avoit, si les vous douroie jou volentiers!" (31-32) [By my faith, Lady, if there were a hundred captives, I would still give them to you willingly!].²³⁰ Moreover, the sultan is easily duped and manipulated by his wife, as evidenced by his acceptance of her plan to make him indebted to Thibaut and by her easy escape from Aumarie. The lady's reempowerment after her rape, the establishment of her sovereignty, is thus effected through her contact with and dominance over the Islamic East. One might even say that, through being sexually colonized, she in turn achieves the role of colonizer.

The emasculation of the Sultan and his realm is reiterated through his dependence on Thibaut for military success. It is clear that the Sultan's decisive victory over his invading neighbor is due in large part to the now mature leadership and chivalric prowess of Thibaut, who defends the sultan as he failed to defend his wife earlier in the narrative. In a more traditional romance, Thibaut's prowess in this kind of episode might earn him the admiration and love of the Sultan's daughter or wife, who would then aid his escape; in fact, the romance plays with this trope, for the Sultana *does* help him to escape—only she is already his wife! Thibaut thus recuperates himself by rescuing a figurative "damsel in distress," the helpless Sultan and his eastern realm, while the lady, not content simply to be rescued, orchestrates the escape of the prisoners and her own defection from Aumarie.

Thibaut's military success in Aumarie also enacts a fantasy of territorial conquest in the East that may very well have resonated with a French audience disappointed by recent crusade failures and ambiguities.²³¹ The fantasy of just military conquest is

²³⁰ The ease with which the Lady bends the Sultan to her may remind us, like the Lady's rudderless water crossing, of the Constance saga, in which the Eastern prince's ultimate weakness and demise is his love for the European lady.

²³¹ Following the success of the First Crusade in capturing Jerusalem from Muslim hands, the Second Crusade accomplished virtually nothing. The Third Crusade's greatest success was Richard I's annexation of Cyprus, which became a bastion of European Christendom in the East until the fifteenth-century, ruled by the Lusignans for almost three centuries; Richard failed, however, to make significant headway against Saladin in the Levant. The Fourth Crusade ended disastrously with the Latin conquest of Constantinople, weakening and eventually destroying the Christian Byzantine Empire, Europe's buffer zone against the Muslim East. The Fifth Crusade met with initial success in the conquest of Damietta, but Sultan al-Kamil's offers to trade the city for Jerusalem were rejected by the cocky crusaders, who were then decimated by flood, disease, and military attack. The Sixth Crusade, of excommunicated Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, resulted (after virtually no fighting) in a treaty between Frederick and Al-Kamil in which most of Jerusalem was ceded to the Christians. The negotiated truce was not popular and lasted less than twenty years. The Seventh Crusade (1248-54) is the last major crusade that was almost certainly launched before our earliest manuscripts of *La Fille* were copied; like the Fifth Crusade, it began with the Christian capture

complemented by the text's appropriation of Saladin through the lady's daughter by the Sultan, who is imagined as Saladin's grandmother. Since Saladin is of French descent, it is not difficult to imagine that the East is, on some level, in French hands—or at least that the French (through Ponthieu) have some "legitimate" claim to his Eastern empire.

Not only does *La Fille* demonstrate a preoccupation with French territorial conquest in the East, but it exhibits a desire for cultural conquest as well. This is particularly evident in the lady's abduction of her son, the Sultan's heir, when she returns to France. Her son, approximately three years old, is baptized and renamed—in fact, he is called Guillaume, a common family name among the counts of Ponthieu. The lady's son thus conquers his eastern heritage and grows up fully French, marrying a rich French heiress, the only daughter of Raoul de Praiax, an “haut home de Normendie” (47). In this way, he is de-easternized and assimilated into French culture. At the same time, his abduction from Aumarie leaves the Sultan with no male heir.²³² Only the lady's daughter is left to continue the Sultan's line, thus feminizing the nexus of power in the Near East. In this story, women, though essential to maintaining bloodlines and useful in forging

of Damietta, but ended with disaster and the capture of King Louis IX of France, its leader, who was later ransomed.

²³² Once again we see a transfer of Christian problems or anxieties onto the Saracen foe. In the Middle Ages, though succession to high Muslim offices, such as the sultanate, were often contested, they would not result in the succession of a woman (unless as a regent, which was rare). The office would more likely turn to another branch of the same family or to another family altogether. In the crusader states, however, as in Europe, direct genealogical descent was more highly valued: if the only surviving child of the King was a daughter, she would often inherit the throne, thus opening the monarchy up to foreign influence and all manner of inheritance problems. For instance, Sibylla of Jerusalem inherited the throne in 1186, making Guy de Lusignan King Consort of Jerusalem; but Guy was not a wise military strategist, and it is partly because of his mismanagement that Jerusalem was lost to Saladin in 1187. When Sibylla died in 1190, political infighting over the succession, including the involvement of Kings Richard I of England and Philip Augustus of France (who were there on crusade), became so savage as to undermine the efficacy of the crusade.

political alliances, also represent unstable communal identification. They are penetrable, easily overcome through force; to have a female heir is thus to leave the realm inherently—indeed, even necessarily—open to foreign invasion, whether through arms or through marriage. Furthermore, female heirs tend to invite internal conflict over control of the state, as witnessed, for example, by Matilda's struggle with Stephen in England in the first part of the twelfth century or the chaos caused by the succession to the throne of Jerusalem of Sibylla in 1186 or the struggle for power between Queen Melisende of Jerusalem and both her husband (Fulk of Anjou) and her son (Baldwin III).²³³ We shall see in the next section that these limitations are overcome when the female ruler in question has supernatural or fairy origins, as does Melusine.

The Sultan's reaction to his wife's defection is strangely submissive. Instead of pursuing her, either alone or with an army, he accepts the abandonment passively. He is despondent without her, but does not resist when she "steals" her own person and their son.²³⁴ Passivity, in fact, appears to be the norm in the void left by the lady in Aumarie. Like the Sultan, their daughter is represented as a passive non-agent in the events that shape her life. In a scene parallel to the lady's own marriage to Thibaut, the Sultan asks his daughter to marry one of his important vassals; in the case of the Count's daughter at the beginning of the story, the woman consents to the match only after asking who her

²³³ In both cases, Melisende eventually consented to a compromise that gave her partial rather than full control over state affairs.

²³⁴ Before returning with them to France, the Sultana extracts a promise from her father and husband to treat her and her little son well. She threatens to stay with the Sultan and remain a Saracen if they will not guarantee her well-being. In order to underline the seriousness of the negotiation (and her role in it), she frames her defection as a theft: "J'ai molt tolu au soudant quant jou li ai tolu mon cors et son fil ne plus de

suitor is and approving her father's choice. The Sultan's daughter, however, is entirely passive in the selection of her husband: she agrees to her father's decision without so much as a question about the identity of her future mate.²³⁵ This passivity on the part of the Sultan and the lady's daughter is reinforced by the name given her when her mother's abdication becomes known: La Belle Caitive, or "the lovely captive." She is a prisoner in her own land, taking her mother's place as her father's slave, and performing this role without the subsequent inversion of power that the lady exercises upon the Sultan.

As we have seen, the lady exchanges her own lack of agency—as a victim of rape; in her failed attempt to murder her husband; and as the Sultan's prisoner—for a position of sovereignty, first in Aumarie and then, less pronounced, in France. The lady's vulnerability and her husband's inability to act in her defense are transferred onto the Eastern characters (the Sultan and his daughter) and onto Aumarie as a whole through depriving the country of a male heir. The lady's journey from France to Aumarie and back to France is thus a process of renegotiating relative positions of power. By shifting the lady's original vulnerability, lack of agency, and captivity onto the East through her own self-empowerment as Sultana, the lady performs figuratively the act of penetration and disgrace upon the east which she herself suffered in the first part of the story. In "raping" the vulnerable and feminized East, the lady reveals that it is not only penetrable, but penetrable even *by a woman*.

sez cozes jou ne li bé a tolir" (44) [I have taken much from the Sultan when I have stolen my body and his son, nor do I wish to steal any more from him].

²³⁵ The passivity of the Sultan's daughter contrasts with the agency of her mother: the two have inverted the traditional romance distinction between (passive) Christian and (feisty) Saracen princesses. This inversion serves the genealogical colonization accomplished in the romance's appropriation of Saladin.

The section of *La Fille* that takes place in Aumarie serves a triple purpose. As suggested above, it opens the East up to Western penetration by feminizing the vulnerable ruler. It also represents the East as an exotic place of fantastic possibilities and power waiting to be seized. Finally, their journeys to the East function as vehicles for the positive development of the French characters. It is only after her trials in the East that the lady becomes an ideal countess—she can now bear male children, but she is also clever, resourceful, independent, and she can wield power when necessary, all important qualities in a woman with a crusading husband (such as the historical counts of Ponthieu). Through his pilgrimage, Thibaut has become a true, chivalric knight, initiated in combat, and untempted by the prospect of great power and riches in lieu of solid faith (as when he denies the Sultan’s offer to make him a prince if he will embrace Islam). The Count has learned the value of Christian forgiveness and humility on this pilgrimage. It is through their various ordeals in the East, then, that each of these characters is perfected, arguing, I believe, for the inherent merit of pilgrimage, whether of a military nature or not—though pilgrimage in the form of crusade is portrayed as likely successful and potentially lucrative.²³⁶

The author or authors of *La Fille* seem to have imagined a pair of power inversions that thematically dominate the text. The sexual dominance of men over women that we witness with the lady's rape and the subsequent rejection by her male

²³⁶ Indeed, as we saw in Chapter Two, the crusades were theorized in the Middle Ages as pilgrimages, even if the pilgrims bore arms. To journey to Jerusalem, to walk in the footsteps and share in the suffering of Christ, was as important to many medieval crusaders as fighting the infidel, if not more so. Nichols sees this medieval understanding of crusades as pilgrimages as part of the reason for their failure; see Nichols, “Poetic Reality and Historical Illusion in the Old French Epic,” *The French Review* 43.1 (1969): 23-33.

family members is inverted when she becomes Sultana of Aumarie. There, she is the mistress to whom the Sultan yields, even when he is symbolically ravished of his masculinity through the abduction of his male heir. This male/female dichotomy then balances out when the lady reestablishes her familial ties to her father and Thibaut: her relationship to them becomes, as far as one can tell from the information provided by the narrator, one of equity and mutual respect. Paralleling the gendered struggle for domination among individual characters, the East at first seems to have the upper hand in that both the lady and her male family members arrive in Aumarie as prisoners under the absolute control of the Sultan. This relationship is quickly inverted, however, when the lady becomes the dominant partner in her marriage to the Sultan and again when Thibaut wins the Sultan's war for him. The French characters easily reestablish control over their own situations in the East as well as the relative positions of power between East and West. By depriving the Sultan of a male line and by appropriating the offspring of the remaining female line, the East is clearly imagined as vulnerable to penetration on multiple levels. Whereas the gendered power imbalance eventually rights itself in *La Fille*, the East's inferiority to Western dominance remains unquestioned at the end of the story, leaving the European reader secure, at least for a moment, in his or her relative position of privilege and empowerment.²³⁷ As we saw in Chapter Three, the capture of

²³⁷ The concise nature of the thirteenth-century versions of the text serves to emphasize these parallelisms. In the fifteenth-century versions, the plot is diluted by a greater emphasis on chivalric deeds, proclamations of faith, and flowery descriptions; I would suggest that this is in keeping with the project of the fifteenth-century versions that are followed immediately by the *Saladin* romance, which seeks more explicitly to link the chivalry, refined culture, and moral rectitude of the titular figure with the house of Ponthieu. Since Saladin converts to Christianity at the end of the romance, the inversions of power of the earlier *La Fille* become less important by comparison.

the lady and her family by the Sultan becomes an opportunity for the invasion of his realm by the French.

Melusine, Mother of the Latin East

In Jean d'Arras's romance, four of Melusine's ten sons marry rich heiresses of important lands that they have saved, through their martial valor, from being overtaken by enemies, most of whom are Saracens. All of these marriages recall the historical titles or alliances of the historical Lusignans. In the romance, Urien and Guy, the first and third sons, overcome Saracens besieging Cyprus and Armenia, respectively, and marry the heiresses to these kingdoms;²³⁸ historically, the Lusignans ruled in both Cyprus and Cilician Armenia during the period of the crusades.²³⁹ The exiled last Lusignan king of Armenia, Leo VI, died in 1393 in Paris, just as the *Melusine* romance was being composed, making the Lusignan link to Armenia in the romance particularly poignant. By the time *Melusine* was written, Armenia had been one of the last outposts of the formerly impressive Latin states in the East, and, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, had provided crucial support to the crusaders as early as the First Crusade. The loss of such a territory, especially in light of so many other Christian losses in the East by the end of the

²³⁸ In his adaptation of the romance, Couldrette also links Melusine to Armenia through her sister Melior, who is the lady of a magical castle in Armenia; her other sister's name is Palestine, and she guards a treasure that is to be used to liberate the Holy Land.

²³⁹ Guy of Lusignan (former King of Jerusalem through his deceased wife, Sibylla) took control of Cyprus from the Templars, with the blessings of Richard Lionheart, in 1192; his descendents ruled Cyprus until 1498 and Armenia until the end of the fourteenth century. As Steven Runciman notes, Richard's conquest of Cyprus and subsequent entrustment of the island to Frankish (Lusignan) hands was, from a historical perspective, a brilliant manoeuvre, providing a foothold for Western military influence in the East for centuries to come (Runciman vol. 3, 46-47).

fourteenth century, was a tremendous blow; as Emmanuèle Baumgartner agrees, the romance thus becomes “an attempt to reawaken the spirit of the Crusades” (187). The glorification of crusading in *Melusine* is certainly a tribute to the long history of Lusignan participation in the crusades and Eastern politics, but it is also a call to arms to rally support for further expeditions.

Like their brothers Urien and Guy, Anthoine and Regnault (the fourth and fifth sons of Melusine) win heiresses through feats of chivalry: Anthoine marries Chrestienne of Luxembourg after defending her from the king of Alsace, while Regnault becomes king of Bohemia through marriage to Aigentine, who was besieged by Saracens until the brothers’ arrival. Anthoine’s marriage to the heiress of Luxembourg most likely alludes to Jean de Berry’s mother Bonne of Luxembourg, through whom he claimed the hereditary right to Lusignan. Luxembourg was also one of the traditionally important French provinces, on the northern border, and frequently allied with England rather than France; asserting a natural allegiance between Luxembourg and Lusignan (or of Luxembourg *to* Lusignan) would certainly benefit the latter.

Regnault’s marriage to Aigentine is perhaps even more important, especially in view of the romance’s clear desire to highlight the crusading achievements of the Lusignan family. Aigentine’s father in the romance is named Frederick of Bohemia, distinctly evoking Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa), who died on his way to join Richard Lionheart and Philip Augustus on the Third Crusade, and perhaps also Emperor Frederick II, who won a diplomatic victory for the Sixth Crusade when he briefly regained Jerusalem, through negotiation, for Christianity in 1229. The pairing of

Anthoine and Regault's adventures and marriages in the romance, like those of Urien and Guy in Cyprus and Armenia, point to the interdependence of the two regions they represent: Bohemia was ruled by the Luxembourg dynasty beginning in the early 1300s, corresponding to the period in which Prague became an important cultural and intellectual center in Europe. The fact that Anthoine and Regnault must defend Prague and Bohemia from Saracen invasion only underlines the connection between Lusignan's Eastern European allies and the crusades. It may allude, too, to the Eastern European crusades of the Teutonic Order, who focused their efforts almost exclusively against the pagans of this region (particularly in Prussia, Lithuania, and Poland) after the final dissolution of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem with the fall of Acre in 1291.

In a political alliance arranged by his mother, Eudes, Melusine's second son, marries the heiress of the Earl of La Marche, one of the most important regions of medieval France, with which the historical Lusignans cultivated family ties, claiming the title of Count of La Marche for over two hundred years ending in 1303, when it was incorporated into royal holdings. Though La Marche is worthy of attention in its own right, the province was of particular interest to the Lusignans, both real and fictional, because it borders Poitou, the province in which Lusignan and Parthenay are located, making it a desirable natural extension of Lusignan's territorial control.²⁴⁰ La Marche also forms a link between the Lusignans and the crusades on more than one occasion.

²⁴⁰ La Marche and Poitou both also border Berry, the province given to Jean de Berry by his father, the king of France; Jean de Berry was the original commissioner of Jean d'Arras's version (1393) of the *Melusine* romance. La Marche was thus a crucial and hotly contested area in the struggle between the English and the French for control of Western France, particularly during the Hundred Years' War (1337-

Hugh VI of Lusignan, for example, who was the son of Almodis de la Marche and Hugh V of Lusignan, participated in both the First Crusade and the Crusade of 1101.²⁴¹ Hugh IX of Lusignan, count of La Marche, was a leading figure in the Fifth Crusade until he died in Egypt in 1219,²⁴² while his son Hugh X of Lusignan, also Count of La Marche, accompanied Saint Louis on his first crusade in 1248.²⁴³

Hugh X of Lusignan, Count of La Marche, provides a noteworthy link between Lusignan and England, as well as to La Marche. The Count married Isabella of Angoulême, widow of King John of England, and had several children with her. These children were thus half-siblings to the royal house of England, including King Henry III. Harold Snellgrove has detailed the conflict-ridden relationships among King Henry, his English barons, and his Lusignan siblings between 1247 and 1258, when several of these half-siblings lived in England and took advantage of Henry's generosity toward them through grants of money, land, and titles, as well as important marriages.²⁴⁴ It is, in fact, through William de Valence (one of the Lusignan brothers) and his marriage to Joan of Muntchenesy that the Lusignans claimed inheritance in Pembroke, to which the various versions of the *Melusine* romance allude when citing the family's dynastic credentials.

1453), when the romance was composed. Asserting a historical political alliance with La Marche was advantageous from the perspective of both the Lusignans and Jean de Berry.

²⁴¹ See Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, second edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 143; Sidney Painter, "The Lords of Lusignan in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Speculum* 32.1 (1957): 27-47; Painter believes that Hugh VI went on crusade to Spain in 1097 rather than to the Holy Land.

²⁴² See Runciman vol. 3, 159; T. Archer, *The Crusade of Richard I, 1189-92* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1889), p. 32.

²⁴³ See Runciman vol. 3, 257.

²⁴⁴ See Snellgrove, *The Lusignans in England, 1247-1258* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1950).

The family ties between the Lusignans and the English royal house are indicative of the long-standing, often prickly connections between England and France that led to martial conflicts such as the Hundred Years' War, during which England attempted to reassert or gain control over its land holdings on the continent, while France attempted to consolidate royal power and expel the English. England's long tenure as the preferred political ally in most of what is now western France, dating from the Norman conquest of England in 1066, made it difficult for the French kings to win the allegiance of these large, relatively independent regions. Poitou, including Lusignan and its sister city, Parthenay, was one of the regions that was wrested from English hands only through great strife in the decades before the composition of the *Melusine* romance.

Critics generally agree that the first two surviving French versions of the romance, those of Jean d'Arras and Couldrette, represent the two opposing factions who claimed the right to Lusignan: the French faction of Jean de Berry, a member of the French royal family; and the lords of Parthenay, who had long-standing ties to England.²⁴⁵ Though Jean de Berry, with greater military support, managed to take control of Lusignan definitively in the early 1370s, Morris points out that it is Guillaume of Parthenay and his son Jean who had the wider support of the common people of Poitou, who had long associated his family with the fairy Melusine and her descendants. Jean d'Arras's royalist version of the romance addresses this concern, relating how the

²⁴⁵ In the introduction to his edition of Couldrette, Morris cautiously suggests that the relationship between Couldrette and the English faction may have been exaggerated by critics; the evidence he presents, however, continues to support the interpretation that Couldrette's text is just as ideologically and politically motivated as that of Jean d'Arras, only with preference to the Parthenay rather than the Berry claim to Lusignan.

serpent Melusine, who in both versions appears above Lusignan castle three days before the death of its current lord, frightened the English occupier, Creswell (an historical figure), into surrendering Lusignan to the French. Jean d'Arras also includes the stipulation that no one who is not a legitimate descendant of Melusine may hold the castle for more than thirty years, once more supplying Jean de Berry with a genealogical structure of support that counters popular belief in the superiority of Parthenay's claim to Lusignan.²⁴⁶

Couldrette's version of the romance (associated with Parthenay) maneuvers references to Lusignan's connections to England in a way that corresponds to Jean d'Arras's connections between the fairy's lineage and his French patron.²⁴⁷ For instance, Couldrette associates the romance with Arthurian legend, something that Jean d'Arras never does in his version of the story. In the opening twenty-five lines, Couldrette extols the virtues of learning, particularly from the distant past and from exemplary figures, which is also a pleasing pastime. He gives examples of good models from whom we should learn, Arthur, Lancelot, Perceval, and Gauvain:

²⁴⁶ For Morris's detailed discussion of the Parthenay/de Berry struggle over Lusignan, both martial and literary, see Couldrette, pp. 15-18.

²⁴⁷ Walter Skeat, editor (in 1866) of the English translation of Couldrette's poem (c. 1500), appears to further this project of linking the Lusignan story to England: In his notes, he mistranslates the origin of Thierry's wife, turning "Bretain" into "Britain" rather than "Brittany." Every other reference to "Bretain" in this text (and every other version of the romance) clearly refers to Brittany. When Couldrette and his English translator wanted to refer to the "Britain" across the channel, they used the words "Angleterre" or "Englande," even in this same edition by Skeat. Had Skeat been correct, it would have been easy for the narrative to have had Thierry, Melusine's youngest son and heir to Parthenay, marry an *English* lady of great estate, thus strengthening the bond between England and the Lusignans, rather than a great lady of *Brittany*, one of Poitou's frequent allies in the fight to preserve English territories on the continent, as well as the provenance of Raymondin's paternal family. Though I can certainly see why Skeat was tempted to translate "Bretain" as he did, the text simply does not support such an interpretation. See Walter W. Skeat,

On parla tant du roy Artus
Qui veult esprouver les vertus
Des chevaliers nobles et gens.
Encore en parlent moult de gens,
Et si font ilz de Lanceloz
Ou quel yl y eut tant de loz,
De Perceval et de Gauvain
Qui n'eurent oncques le cuer vain
Pour acquerre honneur et pris.
(Couldrette lines 17-25)

[We speak much of King Arthur
Who wishes to prove the virtues
Of knights noble and gentle.
And many people still speak of him,
And also of Lancelot
Who had such a great reputation,
Of Percival and of Gawain
Who never had a faint heart
For winning honor and esteem.]

In a later section, Couldrette follows in the footsteps of earlier composers of Arthurian romance in linking Arthurian legend to the crusades. He creates a unique episode to connect Arthurian romance to his history of the Lusignans. After Geoffrey Grand Dent's failure, due to illness, age, and death, to win the legendary treasure of his grandfather Elinas, a knight of Tristan's lineage attempts the quest:

Lors dist qu'il y vouloit aller
Et que par force tant feroit
Que le thesor conquesteroiy;
Puis yroit en la region
Et Terre de Promission
Et conquesteroit la contree,
Ce dist il, a force d'espee.
(Couldrette lines 6264-6270)

[He said he wished to go
And would do so much by force
That he would conquer the treasure;
Then he would go into the region
Of the Promised Land
And conquer that country,
He said, by the sword.]

Unfortunately, as the romance laments, the knight is not of Melusine's line, and thus is unable to win the treasure that is destined to fund the conquest of the Promised Land. It still awaits, untouched, for a knight of Lusignan blood to take the treasure and launch a new crusade.

With this suggestion that a marvelous treasure to be used for conquering the Holy Land will someday come to the Lusignans, Couldrette uses Melusine's marvelous heritage as a useful tool in fulfilling the romance's project of legitimizing and encouraging Lusignan crusading and control of Eastern territories. Though half fairy by

birth, Melusine is a good Christian, and her familial and municipal roles are productive ones. The romance downplays the potentially disturbing image of Melusine as serpent from the waist down by underlining her positive, Christian qualities and, by doing so, lends the aura of divine sanction to her actions and those of her sons, particularly those who fight for Christian supremacy in the East. Melusine's serpentine hybridity, linked inextricably to her superhuman powers, stands for the cultural hybridity of her family, whose Eastern branch is predominant. Like the cultural hybridity of the lady in *La Fille* and her great-grandson Saladin, appropriated Otherness is seen in these romances as one resource (among several) that can be used to spread the influence of both the family and Christendom.²⁴⁸

Melusine's hybrid, marvelous nature may also function to legitimize the Lusignan presence in the East from another pseudo-historical perspective. Setting aside Melusine's analogues in popular myths and legends, Louis Stoff has identified no fewer than four historical women of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries upon whom Melusine might have been based: Marie de Lusignan, whose mother was reputedly a Saracen; Queen Melisende of Jerusalem who, like the fairy, was a strong ruler and founder of religious houses; her great-granddaughter Melisende of Antioch; and Eustache Chabot of Lusignan, whose son Geoffrey destroyed the abbey of Maillezais, just as Melusine's son

²⁴⁸ Melusine's serpentine hybridity and her transformation into a dragon dovetails nicely with the Arthurian material of Couldrette's romance: Arthur (son of Uther Pendragon) is often associated with dragons, especially in the prophecies of Merlin. My point here is not that Couldrette was thinking of Arthur when he wrote of Melusine transforming into a dragon; rather, it seems to me that the association among Arthur, Melusine, and dragons underlines my claim (and that of Matthew Morris) that we need not interpret Melusine's hybridity negatively, as an example of a demonic nature.

Geoffrey does in the romance (Stouff 92-94).²⁴⁹ Stouff convincingly argues that none of these women could be a perfect model for Melusine, and because of this he dismisses all four of them as important inspirations for Jean d'Arras's character. I would argue, however, that it is important to look at these female figures as a group in order to see that the romance draws on multiple sources for its legitimizing project. Melisende of Jerusalem is a particularly interesting analogue for the fairy: like Melusine in the romance, she co-ruled her realm with her husband Fulk of Anjou and, after his death, she had a close advisory relationship to her son, Baldwin III. Melusine is portrayed in the romance as having strong maternal bonds with her sons, including aiding them in their crusade campaigns. Melisende was also accused of having taken a lover (Hugh le Puiset) other than her husband,²⁵⁰ as Melusine is (falsely) accused of having a lover when she does not appear during a Saturday visit by her husband's brother. The two Melisendes offer Melusine the connection of royal blood in one of the most important and prestigious lines of the Christian states in the East, as well as providing echoes of a celebrated name with which to identify the fictional character. Eustache Chabot offers the fairy a foothold in the documented Lusignan history of Geoffrey and his antagonism toward the monks of St. Meixant,²⁵¹ while Marie of Lusignan's supposed hybrid Christian-Saracen

²⁴⁹ See Louis Stouff, *Essai Sur Mélusine, Roman du XIVe Siècle par Jean D'Arras* (Dijon: Publications de l'Université de Dijon, Fascicule III, 1930).

²⁵⁰ See Runciman vol. 2, 191. Runciman discusses Queen Melisende, her accomplishments, and her relationships with the men in her life in some detail. The accusation of Melisende's infidelity caused a revolt against her husband Fulk, while the accusation against Melusine leads to Raymondin's viewing her as a serpent, thus precipitating the downfall of his realm and his family.

²⁵¹ Painter ("The Lords") presents the conflict between Geoffrey and the monks in some depth.

background suggests a transfer of power from Saracen to Christian that has been imported to France for the purposes of founding the Lusignan line.

Despite F. W. Bourdillon's dismissal of the conquest theme as an "immense interpolation" (33), the text of *Melusine* itself clearly supports crusade enterprises.²⁵² As I have already established, several of Melusine's sons battle Saracens in the Levant, and two of these become kings of Cyprus (particularly important as the seat of the titular Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem after the fall of Acre) and Armenia—historical holdings of the Lusignan family during the period of the crusades—while another two undertake the salvation of Prague from Saracen invaders. Geoffrey, though he does not establish a kingdom in the East as do his brothers Urien and Guy, is portrayed as a pre-eminent crusader in the same vein as many popular medieval romance heroes, such as Guy of Warwick: he has the strategic skill, brawn, and ferocious drive to help his brothers and fellow Christians establish themselves firmly in the East for long-term colonization. Though the story of Melusine is clearly set in a distant past, the romance works to make a strong Lusignan presence in the crusader kingdoms part of its foundation myth. I would argue, in fact, that Melusine is developed as Lusignan's mythical ancestress at least as much to establish a supernaturally-inspired connection between Lusignan and the East as to embellish the genealogical *vitae* of the fourteenth-century dukes of Lusignan.

Melusine's sons resemble crusaders in many ways, and represent the ideals upon which the crusades were founded. All five of the brothers who fight Saracens do so

²⁵² See F.M. Bourdillon, "Some Notes on Two Early Romances—Hun de Bordeaux and Melusine," *The Library*, Ser. 4.1 (1920): 21-39.

explicitly in the name of Christ as well as in the name of Lusignan, linking the Lusignan's prestigious name with the project of the crusades. The defenselessness of the Christian lands in the East, and hence the need for Lusignan intervention, is emphasized by the dead or dying rulers who leave behind only marriageable young daughters. These daughters allow Melusine's sons to acquire legitimately the kingdoms they protect against the Saracens; by marrying the princesses, the Lusignan brothers create a fictional illusion of acceptance of—even appreciation for—Latin presence in the East, from the borderland of Prague to Cyprus and Armenia. Their benign government and effective routing of the Saracens cannot appear as a compensation for Guy of Lusignan's loss of Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187. Their "legitimate" claims to the thrones are a marked rewriting of the family's initial historical claims in the East: Guy of Lusignan, after losing Jerusalem to Saladin and being dethroned, bought the island from Richard Lionheart, whose right to Cyprus was by no means uncontested in the first place.²⁵³

The romance also rewrites the troublesome history of crusader pillage in Christian cities and communities. Before entering Cyprus's Christian citadel at Famagouste, Urien specifically states that he and his troops will accept no compensation for having saved Cyprus from the infidel: "Par foy, dist Uriens, nous ne sommes pas cy venus pour estre soudoyers pour argent, mais pour essaucier la foy catholique et estre soudoier Jhesucrist. Et voulons bien que chascun sache que nous avons finance assez pour paier noz gens" (Jean d'Arras 115) [By my faith, said Urien, we are not here to be soldiers for money, but

²⁵³ Richard had only recently conquered Cyprus from the Byzantines; however, local hostility against his rule convinced him to sell it almost immediately.

to exalt the catholic faith and to be soldiers of Christ. And we want everyone to know that we have plenty of finances to pay our people]. Urien's declaration thus elides historical tensions between Latin and Eastern Christians by figuring Christians as a unified "us" in conflict with an explicitly Saracen "them." When he speaks of defending "nostre droit heritaige" (108) [our rightful heritage], he refers to the heritage of all Christians, not just the Latins. Urien's claim to the inheritance of Jerusalem is underlined in the romance by associating him explicitly with Christ when the Saracen kings make a pact to crucify him: "[Ils] avoient juré que ilz feroient le roy Urien mourir en croix crucifié" (213) [They have sworn that they will kill King Urien by crucifying him on a cross].

Ignoring history, Urien upholds the early crusading ideal of asserting the brotherhood of Christendom rather than vilifying Eastern Christians.²⁵⁴ The romance smooths over the historical practice of Latin Christians pillaging Eastern Christian quarters, a problem that became increasingly controversial leading up to and including the conquest of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. Indeed, Urien's speech might have been designed to speak directly to the atrocities of the Fourth Crusade, which was diverted to Constantinople because the young prince Alexius Angelus, deprived of his throne, promised to pay the crusaders vast sums of money if they would restore him as the rightful heir; he could not come up with the necessary funds, however, which led to the breakdown of relations between the Greeks and the Latins, eventually devolving into

²⁵⁴ Urien also ignores the persistent schism between the Eastern and Western churches; Rome, in fact, frequently portrayed the Byzantines as heretics because of their refusal to conform to the Latin rite.

outright war. In his speech, Urien denies and rejects the righteousness of crusaders seeking monetary reward for their conquests from fellow Christians.

The defeated Saracens in Cyprus, Armenia, and Prague are unanimously impressed by their conquerors' supernatural strength and skill. In Syria, the Saracens are so awed by Geoffrey's ferocity that they escort him deferentially into Jerusalem, which is portrayed as markedly available for conquest: "Et le mena le soudant en Jherusalem, qui pour lors n'estoit pas reparee ne refremee de la destruction que Vespasien et Thitus, son filz, y orent faicte, quant ilz vindrent vengier la mort Jhesucrist aprez son crucifiement" (237) [And the Sultan brought him into Jerusalem, of which the walls had not been repaired nor rebuilt after the destruction caused by Vespasien and Titus, his son, when they came to avenge the death of Jesus Christ after his crucifixion].²⁵⁵ Jerusalem, it seems, would be easy to recapture from the Saracens, particularly since Geoffrey has recently reestablished Christian military dominance in the region. Moreover, by mentioning the vengeance of Vespasien and Titus, Jean d'Arras suggests unfinished business for Christians in the Holy Land.

All of these excursions against Saracens by the Lusignan brothers, both in Europe and in the East, are condoned—indeed, encouraged—by their mother, Melusine. Like Urien, Melusine describes their endeavors as legitimate and reminds them of their duties to serve Christ and aid the poor and the weak. She provides for the sustenance and payment of her sons' troops so that they will not be tempted to loot their intended

²⁵⁵ This episode may echo Frederick II's entry into the unfortified Jerusalem, for which he negotiated with Sultan al-Kamil in 1229.

beneficiaries, taking pains, thus, to ensure the correction of some of the most shameful outcomes of crusading history. She also provides her sons with magical rings that will protect them from harm in all their military adventures so long as their cause is good and honest—implicitly, also, the rings ensure that their intentions are pure, which was a stipulation for crusade indulgences. More than mere conventional romance gifts, these magical rings serve as reminders to keep the crusaders in good conscience, accomplishing noble deeds in the service of God rather than selfishness. The rings’ magical qualities thus appear to be divinely authorized, as do the actions of those who wear them. The conditional quality of the rings speaks, certainly, to the belief throughout the crusades that defeat was a result of the sins of the crusaders, whom God punished by granting victory to the enemy. Thus, when hunger threatened the very existence of the army of the First Crusade at Antioch, one chronicler explains that “[t]his poverty and wretchedness God meted out to us because of our sins” (from the *Gesta Francorum* in Peters, 194);²⁵⁶ but when the army succeeds against its oppressors, he says that “the merciful Lord, remembering His compassion, put off the punishment of His children, lest the arrogance of their adversaries increase” (from the chronicle of Raymond of Aguilers in Peters, 197). Leaders of the crusades sometimes forcefully removed temptation from their hosts, as during the Latin siege of Constantinople in 1204 when “[a]ll the women in the camp were put aboard ship and taken away from the menfolk” in order to ensure the success of the next day’s battle (W. Bartlett 147).

²⁵⁶ See Edward Peters, ed, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, second edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

The rings, like Melusine's other super-human powers, help to balance out the negative imagery of the serpent's tail and the physical deformities of the first eight of her offspring. Like these physical traits, the rings underline the marvelousness of Melusine and her line. We see that, though the animal qualities of the fairy-human hybrids are often read as evidence of the darker, demonic side of Melusine's nature, Jean d'Arras discourages this interpretation: both he and his titular character remind the audience that God's plans may be revealed in mysterious ways not comprehensible to the human mind. Humans must accept this, he argues, and allow such marvels to strengthen, rather than diminish, their faith in God's wonders. Raymondin, Melusine's husband, flourishes for as long as he is able to accept Melusine's marvelous nature without question—it is only when his faith in God's will falters that he falls into error and loses his wife forever. Even the Saracens demonstrate an astonished acceptance of the marvels they witness in the Lusignan family: at first confused about whether Geoffrey is an evil spirit or a corporeal god, the Sultan of Damascus eventually develops an affection for him (after a treaty has been signed that favors the Christians): “estoit le soudant moult en amourez de Gieffroy, et lui tenoit tousjours compaignie, et lui offroit tousjours tout le plaisir qu'il lui pourroit faire” (Jean d'Arras 237) [the Sultan was much enamored of Geoffrey, and always sought his company, and offered him each day any pleasure that he might make for him]. The fawning devotion of the Sultan is emasculating at best.

It is, it seems, the very marvelous qualities—the signs that may at first seem monstrous—that point to a positive interpretation of Melusine and her sons. The fairy blood that shows itself in the brothers through their physical marks (or “mother-marks,”

as Douglas Kelly calls them)²⁵⁷ links them to the wondrous, productive force that we, along with the people of Poitou, observe in their mother. Her territorial expansionism and building of towns and churches is mirrored and magnified in the deeds of her marked, hybrid sons.²⁵⁸ Notably, by contrast, the two youngest, unmarked sons stay at home in France and inherit their father's and uncle's patrimonies. So, while Jean d'Arras does prefer to keep the unmarked sons as carriers of the French Lusignan line, the romance also needs the marvelous strength and aggression of the marked brothers to convincingly and inspiringly export Christian success to the Latin kingdoms of the East. If super-human power and determination were, by the fourteenth century, the last remaining hope for Christian victory over Saracens in the Levant, Melusine's romance offers just such a possibility for the declining geopolitical prospects of her descendents.

Crusade, Colonization, and the (En)gendering of Expansionism in *La Fille* and *Melusine*

Melusine and *La Fille* together demonstrate several telling similarities, despite differences in popularity and origin. Both insist upon an interdependent relationship between legend and history. *Melusine*, rooted firmly in popular mythology, combines elements of traditional fairy tales and pseudo-historical family romance. *La Fille*, also centered around a powerful family, evokes a romanesque or novelistic style that was new

²⁵⁷ See Douglas Kelly, "The Domestication of the Marvelous in the Melusine Romances," *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 32-47.

²⁵⁸ Melusine's civic productivity, along with her biological procreation, supports Morris's argument that Melusine may be associated with an ancient, serpentine fertility goddess rather than a demon.

to late-medieval French literature and leaves the magical elements of more traditional romance behind. And yet, both of these romances demonstrate the centrality of the crusades to dynasty-building (and *vice versa*) and the unique roles that women could play in the rise and fall of family fortunes and political power, particularly in the Latin East, where women frequently inherited important territories. Moreover, these romances point to a provocative tension between desire for powerful female ancestors and social suspicion of transgression associated with powerful women, both purely fictional (such as Arthur's queen Guinevere) and historical (such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and the various rumors of her misbehavior while on crusade, or Queen Melisende of Jerusalem and the widespread belief that she was unfaithful to her husband). This tension is nothing if not complex and multifaceted.

In both *Melusine* and *La Fille*, the female figures are inextricably linked to social transgression. In the case of *La Fille*, the heroine's first transgression is her attempt to kill her husband, Thibaut, after her brutal rape in the woods.²⁵⁹ This act is clearly interpreted as transgressive by her father, the Count of Ponthieu, who casts her out to sea when he discovers it—a punishment he later regrets, suggesting that patriarchal authority is also in need of correction. If one considers that losing battles in war was theorized as retribution for sins, the text seems to support the idea that the Count is culpable for his

²⁵⁹ Though modern audiences are unlikely to interpret the lady's rape as transgressive on *her* part, both historical and literary evidence suggests that medieval women were sometimes punished, both in court and by their families, for having been raped. Kathryn Gravdal, for instance, cites a fourteenth-century example from Picardy of a victimized women being fined for her rape: "Quenet [one of the rapists] was fined five sous, one of the lightest fines meted out for 1391, despite the fact, established by the court, that the men used violence to break into the widow's home. Alicia herself was fined fifteen sous, three times more, for

disproportionate rage against his daughter: we have seen that during their pilgrimage of repentance, the three men are captured and it is only the lady's forgiveness that can save them from death at the Sultan's court. One might also argue that the lady's conversion to Islam in the thirteenth-century versions of *La Fille* is transgressive, though it is never designated as such in the texts. The narrators seem to treat her conversion as a matter of necessity, with very little comment, except to explain that it is "better to do it for love than by force;" there is no ideal of religious martyrdom here, only an acceptance that such things are sometimes required. In the fifteenth-century versions, the text cautiously adds the qualifier that the lady's conversion is a false one. For example, having learned the identity of her captive father, she asks her Heart what she should do: "O cuer,...non obstant que toy non consentant de ce que j'ay par parole fainte renoyé le createur de toutez chosez, que veulz tu que je face a cil qui t'engendra, a cil qui tant t'aima et a cil qu'en la mer te plonga, toy laissant a l'aventure?" (Brunel 110) [O heart,...without considering that you never consented to my having by false words reneged the Creator of all things, what would you have me do to him who engendered you, to him who loved you much and to him who plunged you into the sea, leaving you to your fortune?].²⁶⁰ By inserting such affirmations of Christian faith, utterly contrary to the earlier version's lady, who twice declares to her family that "Je sui Sarrasine" (34, 39), the fifteenth-century version of *La Fille* deflates the consternation a more sensitive Christian audience might

allowing the two men to have carnal knowledge of her" (127). See Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

²⁶⁰ The lady's conversion is less elaborately portrayed as insincere or "par fainte" (98) when she first decides to accept the Sultan's advances rather than have them forced upon her, as in the thirteenth-century version.

feel in the face of her religious inconstancy.²⁶¹ This fifteenth-century text is also, of course, the version that precedes the *Saladin* romance—in which the charming Sultan eventually converts to Christianity—whereas the thirteenth-century *La Fille* is bound with more historically accurate crusade chronicles.

Melusine abounds with transgression, not just by the heroine (though the manifestation of the fairy's hybrid body is the most obvious form), but by the male characters as well. In both Jean d'Arras and Couldrette's versions, Melusine is depicted as being born into transgression, for her father Elinas breaks his vow to her fairy mother, Presine, never to look on her in childbirth, precipitating the break between the couple and, later, Melusine and her sisters' decision to imprison Elinas in a mountain cavern. This transgression on the part of Melusine's father is, of course, mirrored in Raymondin's betrayal of Melusine, having seen her on the forbidden day and revealed her semi-serpentine nature to the public. Two of Melusine's sons also transgress basic social expectations: Horrible in killing squires and nurses throughout his horrific childhood, cut short when Melusine condemns him to death in her farewell speech; and Geoffrey in killing the monks of Maillezais, including his brother Fromont, for which he spends the remainder of his life performing penance.

Some critics who have focused on the transgressive elements of the *Melusine* romance have seen her semi-serpentine transformation as evidence of her inherently

²⁶¹ The heroine of the *King of Tars*, who marries a Saracen in order to save her family and her country from his brutal attack, likewise pretends to convert but maintains her faith in Christ. In the *King of Tars*, however, the Sultan eventually witnesses the miracle of his child's baptismal transformation from a lump of flesh to a beautiful boy and is converted.

demonic nature, a mark of her hybrid ancestry,²⁶² but neither Jean d'Arras nor Couldrette's versions encourage such an interpretation. In both, Melusine is the epitome of a good Christian—far better, in fact, than her human husband—and she protects Lusignan against unjust invasion even after her transformation into a dragon at the end of the romance. Her marvelous powers are put to use to build Christian towns, to build and endow churches and abbeys, and to bear almost supernaturally powerful Christian sons who fight against Islam and strengthen Christian territories. She exemplifies, moreover, the Christian ideals of forgiveness (particularly in her relationship with her husband, though his betrayal condemns her to an eternity of earthly hell), and also of unquestioning faith in God's design: for instance, she points out to Raymondin that Geoffrey's burning of the monastery may be an enactment of God's will. This scene is of particular importance in our evaluation of Melusine because both Jean d'Arras and Couldrette emphasize in authorial voices that God's marvelous works are sometimes beyond the realm of human understanding. It is Melusine alone who projects this acceptance of divine mystery, as we see in her attempt to comfort Raymondin after Geoffrey kills Fromont and the monks:

Vouléz vous argüer contre la voulenté du Createur de creatures, qui tout a fait et deffera a son plaisir, quant il lui plaira? Sachiez qu'il n'a si grant pecheur ou monde que Dieu ne soit plus grant pardonneur et plus debonnaire, quant le pecheur se repent et lui crie mercy de bon cuer et de bonne voulenté (Jean d'Arras 255).

²⁶² Stephen G. Nichols, in particular, is adamant that Melusine's hybridity makes her irredeemable, a demon whose nature is ambiguous at best.

[Do you wish to argue against the will of the Creator of creatures, who made everything and can destroy it all at his pleasure, whenever it pleases him? Know that there is no sinner great enough in the world that God is not a greater pardoner and more forgiving, when the sinner repents and cries to him for mercy with true heart and good will.]

Geoffrey does, indeed, repent with all his heart and gains absolution for his sin from the Pope through pilgrimage and rebuilding—bigger and better—the monastery he had destroyed, thus justifying his mother’s faith that God works His will, whether humans understand His purpose or not.

In addition to the textual evidence, Matthew Morris convincingly argues that a woman with a serpent’s tail one day a week should not be interpreted as a negative, demonic creature, but as a way of acknowledging hybrid cultural beginnings symbolically. Citing several other cases in which prominent medieval families claimed fairy ancestry, Morris argues that

Pagan antiquity furnished innumerable genealogical fantasies like that of the Lusignans. It is not surprising, then to find a last manifestation of this tendency in the joining of a great noble family with a fairy indigenous to their [sic] domain. Fairies were the last representatives of the primitive Celtic religion and served as a link to ancestors outside of humanity...These last remnants of the religion of their ancestors lent a prestige to illustrious families, placing them under the patronage of semi-divinities still respected despite the coming of Christianity...The presence of a fairy in the family of the Christian rulers of European territories as well as of Cyprus and Jerusalem seems at first to smack of heresy. There is less astonishment, however, when one considers the persistence of the

cult of *divinités champêtres* [sic], despite the spread of Christianity, up to the end of the Middle Ages. For although the Christian priests attributed a diabolic origin to these “otherworld” creatures, the converted peasants refused to believe in the eternal damnation of beneficent beings of whom they had implored aid for so long (Couldrette 16-17).

The premise behind Morris’s argument is that there were factors other than those sanctioned by Christian doctrine that would have influenced medieval audiences’ response to marvelous tales such as that of Melusine and the history of the Lusignans.²⁶³ Those influences—in this case, a belief in the possibility of benevolent creatures that cohabit with humans—may, in fact, have been well established enough in the popular culture of some regions that it behooved families to draw upon them. Similarly, in *La Fille*, incorporating the figure of Saladin, with a reputation for perfect courtly, chivalric behavior as well as martial skill, clearly brought more prestige to the family than it brought condemnation for being contaminated with Saracen blood.

Though significantly less critical attention has been devoted to *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu*, some of the same principles that guide our interpretation of *Melusine* may guide our understanding of *La Fille*. The lady’s initial transgression, attempted homicide, is prompted by the failure of her husband to fulfill his duty in ensuring her protection. Moreover, Thibaut literally leads them into the robber’s attack with a choice that, symbolically, highlights his moral failure at this point in the narrative: when they come to

²⁶³ One sees analogues to this fantastic incorporation of the fairy world into the Christian, human world, for instance, in *Richard Coeur de Lyon*, which portrays the hero’s mother as a fairy from the East, and in the legend that Merlin’s father was an incubus. Melusine seems to be one of the more benevolent of such otherworldly neighbors.

a fork in the road, he “descendi et esgarda la voie et trova la fause voie plus antee et plus large que la boine, et dist: ‘Dame, alons, de par Diu, cesti’” (Brunel 8) [Thibaut dismounted and regarded the path and found that the false way was better kept and wider than the good one, and said, ‘Lady, let us go, by God, on this one’]. Particularly since the couple is on pilgrimage, any good Christian hero ought to have known, in the symbolic language of romance, not to choose the wider, more heavily traveled path.

The lady’s second transgression, converting to Islam, is a direct result of the first—and perhaps a matter of life or death. In both romances, the heroine’s violent act against a male family member (Melusine’s father and the lady’s husband) is portrayed in the text as explicable, given the distressing situation in which she is placed and the failure of the male family member to uphold his duties, which, in each case, he later repents. The resulting change in the heroine’s condition—becoming semi-serpentine or becoming Saracen—is symbolic not only of her own transgressions, but also those of her family. It is not her transgression alone that disrupts the “natural” (Christian, human) order and development of her character, but a combination of factors that is acted out upon her body. In *Melusine*, as several critics have observed, Geoffrey Grand Dent is a glaring reminder of this: his great tooth, or tusk, is emblematic of Raymondin’s accidental killing of his uncle, the Count of Poitiers, while the pair is boar-hunting. The lady in *La Fille* also bears children who will forever remind her and her family of the transgressions that led to her Saracen exile; her son by the Sultan returns with her to France and, though Christianized, embodies the past sins of his mother and his stepfather, Thibaut. In a subtle parallel, Saladin, the descendent of the lady’s daughter who remains in Aumarie, will be

the scourge of Christianity, reminding the Franks of their own misdeeds through his systematic dismembering of the crusader states.

It is fascinating that transgression plays such a pivotal role in both *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu* and *Melusine*, the two romances that most clearly link European crusader families to the East through the female line. In both, I believe that the transgressive elements in the romance and the resolution or partial resolution of the transgressions serve the marvelous, legendary pseudo-history that gives the thematized family a special claim to the East through crusading history. As noted above, the family link established between Ponthieu and Saladin not only bolsters the prestige of the dynastic family of Ponthieu, but also bestows upon this crusading family a hereditary claim to Saladin's empire. The Melusine legend symbolically unites the many branches of the Lusignan family in the East and in the West and explains the family's greatness, celebrating its claims to patrimonies not only in the Poitou area, but also in Cyprus and Armenia, through the fictional marriages of Urien and Guy. In both contexts, too, the timing of the composition of the romances corresponds to low points in Western support for the crusades; each romance seems intended to rekindle interest in Eastern campaigns, whether to compensate for the loss of Jerusalem to Saladin through the debacle caused by Guy de Lusignan; for the failures of the Fifth Crusade to Egypt; or for the loss of Armenia to the Ottomans.

Despite clearly encouraging renewed interest in crusading projects, these romances are remarkably tolerant of cultural and religious Others. Along with downplaying the shock of ancestresses who are either not fully human or not fully

Christian, neither *Melusine* nor *La Fille* seems particularly invested in vilifying Saracen enemies on religious grounds, even abandoning, for the most part, the religiously-motivated banter and insults before or during battles that characterizes the *Song of Roland* or *Guy of Warwick*. When the Christian heroes fight their Saracen enemies, they do so as valiant knights on both sides, attempting to win or protect territory perceived as rightfully belonging to one side or the other; but they do not generally vaunt a religious ideology behind the conflict. In *La Fille*, the heroine's marriage to the Sultan seems to induce very little culture shock: she adapts quickly by learning the Saracen language and is loved by her subjects.²⁶⁴ In *Melusine*, Saracens are enemies because they are invading lands held by European allies and Christians, but, again, they have no physical or moral marks of inherent Otherness. Even the Saracen giants of Northumberland that Geoffrey fights lack the usual black skin that giants in most romances exhibit. In fact, it is the Christian warriors themselves who are physically "Other," with their mother-marks, and who, according to their Saracen foes, seem to be devils or demons, a dramatic inversion of the usual romance trope of the demonic Saracen giant. We see no evidence of a desire to convert the Saracens in these romances, with the exception of Guillaume, the lady's son in *La Fille*, who is baptized as a small child in Rome. In *Melusine*, Guy gives the

²⁶⁴ D. Fairchild Ruggles argues that, in fact, many Muslim men of the royal family of early medieval Spain had children by blond, northern women, often slaves, whom they may or may not have married. These Christian women are described by Ruggles as having adapted quickly to their Muslim environment; in a society in which legitimacy did not determine whether a child was accepted by its father, the birth of a child gave a female slave a great deal of power in her household. See Ruggles, "Mothers of a Hybrid Dynasty: Race, Genealogy, and Acculturation in Al-Andalus," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.1 (2004): 65-94.

order, “noz ennemis ne pevent eschapper que ilz ne soient ou mors ou pris” (Jean d’Arras 221)—death or capture are the only options for the Saracen enemy.

Conclusion

In both *Melusine* and *La Fille*, the boundaries that separate Christian from Saracen are viewed as permeable. The heroines each maintain an “Other” identity that is linked intrinsically to their sons; indeed, the relationship between mother and son is held up in both texts as the most stable of social and familial bonds. As discussed above, for instance, the lady in *La Fille* assures that her son will be safe and accepted in France before agreeing to return to her original Christian family; she threatens to remain with the Sultan—and to remain a Saracen—if he might be mistreated. Thus, the traces of alterity that came with being a Saracen are not entirely erased by the lady’s reintegration into Christendom and Ponthieu. Bringing her young son with her to France symbolically ties the lady to her Saracen past even after she returns to her homeland—young Guillaume serves as proof and reminder that the lady’s options remain open and that she is capable of crossing the boundaries of ethnic and religious identity as necessary.

In *Melusine*’s case, her semi-serpentine identity is forced upon the heroine by her mother and remains hidden until Raymond breaks his oath never to look for her on Saturdays (the days which, unbeknownst to him, she has her serpent’s tail); nevertheless, her hybridity erupts into sight through her sons, whom she nurtures and provides for with wisdom and tenderness before sending them off on crusade. *Melusine*’s fairy half, her hidden self, provides the impetus for her to marry and bear children in the first place:

Melusine seeks to erase her hybridity through fulfilling the roles of human wife and mother so that she may eventually earn the human attribute of an eternal soul. Her sons, in fact, provide the medium through which the romance's audience views Melusine's gradual transformation toward full humanity: though her first eight sons are "marked" with facial deformities,²⁶⁵ her last two sons, Raymond and Thierry, bear no sign of their mother's fairy nature. Melusine thus appears to become more human the longer she remains a viable part of a human family. As Douglas Kelly affirms,

Melusine's virtue is actually progressing toward a real humanity at the time her last two sons are born, before Raymondin breaks his marriage contract and openly reveals her Saturday-night metamorphoses. The last two sons, Remonnet and Thierry, besides having no marks identified in the texts, also evince a decidedly humane, almost placid moral self. (44)

If Raymondin had not broken his marriage vow, the romance tells us, Melusine would have died a natural human death; because of his betrayal, however, she is doomed to haunt Lusignan castle indefinitely in the form of a winged dragon.

At the same time that these romances break down barriers between the Self and the Other based on religious and even special (fairy vs. human) categories, they challenge traditional romance gender roles. In *Melusine*, the

²⁶⁵ The fact that each of Melusine's first eight sons bears his deformity on his face also seems symbolic of the problems of identity in question: the face is that part of the human body that we most identify with our individuality. In the Middle Ages, the face, and more particularly the eyes, were thought to be the "windows" to a person's soul. Probably not coincidentally, several of Melusine's sons' deformities have to do with eyes: Urien's eyes are different colors; Guy's eyes are uneven; Regnault has only one eye; and Horrible has three eyes. In this romance, the eyes hold particular significance because the betrayals of both Elinas and Raymond involve seeing something that they were forbidden to witness.

heroine is responsible for the founding and building of towns, churches, and the family fortune. She controls the finances and decides whether to give the parental blessing to her sons when they set off of their adventures. She provides for them, both materially and spiritually: it is Melusine, not Raymondin, who advises their sons on correct and profitable behavior. Without her influence, the narrator tells us, the family gradually sinks into decline. In *La Fille*, the distinction between male and female roles is less distinct in France, where the lady and her husband eventually become equal partners; but in Aumarie, as we have seen, the lady dominates both her Saracen husband and her French family, controlling their destinies as they hang between life and death, freedom and captivity.

Furthermore, it is through the female line that these romances work their cultural colonization—of Saladin and his realm (in *La Fille*) or of Armenia, Cyprus, and Eastern Europe (in *Melusine*). Melusine may be seen also to colonize the history of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in her links to Queen Melisende, complementing the military conquest of the Holy Land effected by her sons, which results in a 100-year peace treaty to ensure Christian dominion there.

Thus, these romances, with all their differences in form, structure, and even in their use of the romance genre, do much the same kind of work. They appeal to a distinctly feminine sensibility—even, in Jean d'Arras's romance, to an explicitly female readership through the invocation of Marie de Bar—highlighting the areas in which women can most effectively support the crusades and implying a great need for such support at a time when Christian military efforts in the East

resulted in one dismal failure after another. Because women are seen as the cornerstones upon which the great crusading families of Lusignan and Ponthieu are built, multiple different kinds of crusade and colonization, both cultural and militant, may be enacted by these families.

As we have seen, planting a family's genealogical seed in the fertile ground of a female ancestress had the potential to be both problematic and productive for medieval French families of the thirteenth century and beyond. Though the "founding mother" narratives we have explored here are rife with ambiguities, one strong common theme does emerge: the use of women to legitimate conquest and crusade in the East. *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu* and *Melusine* accomplish their aims in different ways: in the former, the lady herself is providentially sent to the East, where she infiltrates and undermines the established power structure of the Sultan's realm; in the latter the male line is exported permanently to the East in order to overcome Muslim resistance by military force. In both romances, however, the narrator reminds us that women are a necessary—and, indeed, a useful and powerful—part of France's imperial project.

Epilogue

ROMANCE OF THE PAST, ROMANCE OF THE FUTURE: COMMERCE AS CONQUEST IN CHAUCER'S *CANTERBURY TALES*

In the three previous chapters of this study—Chapter Two on romances with Christian heroes, Chapter Three on romances that feature Saracen heroes, and Chapter Four on female crusaders in romance—I have brought to the forefront of my readings of these texts ways in which they condone or, more often, complicate the black and white, violent conflict that epitomizes relations between Christians and Muslims in texts such as the *Song of Roland* and *Guy of Warwick* along with many other medieval romances and *chansons de geste*. These diverse texts point to a multiplicity of imagined kinds of contact between East and West. Many of these romances respond to specific historical events—the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187, for example—or familial imperatives such as the desire to connect Melusine's marvelous legacy in France to the Lusignan's traditional holdings in the Levant and the Mediterranean and their struggles against the Mamluks and other Muslim threats.

“Sweete wyn” and “sugre that is trye:” The Excessive Sweetness of the “Tale of Sir Thopas”

By the late fourteenth century, the traditional values of romance—seeking adventure, the proving of prowess in battle, the winning of beautiful heiresses, discovering magical or

supernatural marvels—were gradually being replaced by more modern concerns: commerce, exchange, mercantilism, and exploration, to name a few. English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (c. early 1340s-1400) adapted the genre of romance to respond to these changing social values. Chaucer’s playful use of romance and its themes is explicitly acknowledged in an oft-quoted passage from the “Tale of Sir Thopas:”

Men speken of romances of prys,
Of Horn child and of Ypotys,
Of Beves and sir Gy,
Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour—
But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour
Of roial chivalry!
(lines 897-902)²⁶⁶

Guy of Warwick and Beues of Hamtoun, paired as they so often are as famous English knights, are cited by the narrator as paragons of the romance tradition, to which his invented Sir Thopas favorably compares. “The Tale of Sir Thopas,” told by Chaucer the Pilgrim—a designation coined by E. Talbot Donaldson,²⁶⁷ Chaucer the Pilgrim is the fictional character, a poet, whom Chaucer has named after himself as narrator of the *Canterbury Tales*—is a fairy romance in which the hero would be likely to overcome various hardships and survive many adventures in his attempt to win the love of a fairy queen. Sir Thopas is a caricature of a romance hero: he apparently prefers to hear romances told or sung to him while he indulges in exotic delicacies—“sweete wyn, / And mede eek in a mazelyn, / And roial spicerye / Of gyngbreed that was ful fyn, / And

²⁶⁶ All Chaucer quotations are taken from Larry Benson’s edition of the poet’s works, *The Riverside Chaucer*, third edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

licorys, and eek comyn, / with sugre that is trye” (lines 851-856)—rather than perform the deeds of romance: instead of fighting the giant whom he encounters during his forest ride, he flees, claiming that he will return the next day when he has collected his armor; then he retires to the decadent meal described above.

The “Tale of Sir Thopas” is so insipid that Harry Bailly, the host of the pilgrims at the Tabard Inn and the judge of their tales, interrupts the narrator, opining that the poet’s “drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord!” (line 930). The tale remains unfinished, and the pilgrim Chaucer is asked to try another tale. In the abbreviated “Tale of Sir Thopas” and the host’s criticism that follows, Chaucer the poet clearly pokes fun at the most vapid of traditional romances.

Chaucer’s assignment of the “Tale of Sir Thopas” to his own namesake among the pilgrims suggests several things: first, it confirms for the reader that the narrator, like so many of Chaucer’s other narrators, is a bit naïve, not only telling a frivolous tale of no moral consequence that we can see, but also misjudging the tastes of his audience—a lack of perceptiveness that the reader may have observed in his uncritical descriptions of many of the pilgrims (such as the Monk, the Squire, and the Prioress, for instance) in the General Prologue.²⁶⁸ Second, placing this tale in the mouth of his namesake, whom we

²⁶⁷ E. Talbot Donaldson, “Chaucer the Pilgrim,” *PMLA* 69. 4 (1954): 928-36.

²⁶⁸ In Rodney Delasanta’s words, “Chaucer the pilgrim...is incapable of qualifying his praise and is thus himself ironically victimized in his judgments by Chaucer the poet” (297). Delasanta refers here specifically to the narrator’s portraits in the General Prologue, but the same is true of Chaucer the pilgrim’s judgment of his protagonist, Sir Thopas, whom the narrator overestimates as “the flour / Of roial chivalry” (lines 901-902) while at the same time revealing his shortcomings as a romance hero. See Delasanta,

know from the Man of Law's Prologue to be a poet, underlines for the audience the purportedly "poetic" nature of the tale. As a tale told by a poet, it should represent the interests and talents of a man of this profession; but Chaucer's poet, like his narrator's knight, is a caricature of his profession. Chaucer is not above poking fun at his own place in society along with those of his peers; in the *Parliament of Fowls*, for example, he demonstrates how Parliament—of which Chaucer was a member—could cluck and quack and cackle with "a tonge loos" (line 570), members bickering among themselves while affairs of state stagnate.

The point here is that casting his narrator as a somewhat inept and imperceptive poet works, along with the utter frivolity of the "Tale of Sir Thopas" and the foppish hero, to give Chaucer's reader the sense that such traditional romances were no longer appreciated and perhaps even thoroughly outdated, a view shared by critics Susan Crane and Lesley Kordecki, among others.²⁶⁹ Chaucer knew, of course, that romance was as popular a genre in his own time as it had been when it developed in the twelfth century, but he also shows his reader how much romance had changed in the intervening centuries. The "Tale of Sir Thopas" mimics an older, twelfth-century romance style in which a knight's quest for a lady love, perhaps a fairy queen or a beautiful princess, was a popular and entirely adequate topic for a long, imaginative narrative. In contrast, a romance such as *Melusine*, written in its extant form at about the same time that Chaucer

"And of Great Reverence: Chaucer's Man of Law," *The Chaucer Review* 5.4 (1971): 288-310.

was working on the *Canterbury Tales* (the 1390s), demonstrates that by the late fourteenth century, even a fairy romance needed more than a knight, a lady, and a quest to be successful; as we have seen in the previous four chapters, later romances were often made more “topical” or culturally relevant by incorporating crusades themes. Chaucer was no exception, as we see in the “Man of Law’s Tale,” a hybrid romance that moves from Rome to Syria to England and which involves two different scenarios of the conversion of pagans to Christianity, the first of which occurs in the East. More generally, Chaucer incorporates Eastern settings into many of his works that are most heavily influenced by romance: the “Knight’s Tale,” the “Squire’s Tale,” the *Legend of Good Women*, *Troilus and Criseyde*. Though crusades themes are not always evident in these tales, an interest in the East is clearly discernable.²⁷⁰

The Squire’s Decline and Fall

Several critics, including Sheila Delany, Susan Schibanoff, Carol Heffernan, Carolyn Dinshaw, and Kathryn Lynch, have offered invaluable insight into the nature of Chaucer’s medieval orientalism as it manifests in various texts: the “Man of Law’s Tale,” the “Squire’s Tale,” the “Prioress’s Tale,” the *Legend of Good Women*.²⁷¹ In the

²⁶⁹ See Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Lesley Kordecki, “Chaucer’s ‘Squire’s Tale’: Animal Discourse, Women, and Subjectivity,” *The Chaucer Review* 36.3 (2002): 277-297.

²⁷⁰ In fact, the crusades play a relatively minor part in Chaucer’s works; the itinerary of the Knight in the General Prologue is an explicit reference, and the “Man of Law’s Tale” clearly imagines Custance as a variety of crusader-by-conversion; but part of my argument here is that for Chaucer, the crusades as military endeavors had passed their period of usefulness.

²⁷¹ Not all of these critics discuss Chaucer’s orientalism in terms of Said’s theoretical conception of the term, but all of them discuss Chaucer’s specifically Western depictions of the East as inherently and

Canterbury Tales, one of the few stories set explicitly in the East—indeed, in the more exotic Far East of Tartary rather than in the more familiar Near East or the Levant—is the “Squire’s Tale,” which, along with “Sir Thopas,” is also arguably the only of Chaucer’s romances that lacks significant hybridization with another genre, usually epic, saint’s life, or fabliau. The “Squire’s Tale” is set up as an interlaced,²⁷² episodic romance centered on King “Cambyuskan,” or Genghis Khan, and his offspring Algarsyf, Cambalo, and Canacee. As the romance opens, the Khan’s birthday celebration is interrupted by the appearance of a foreign knight bearing marvelous gifts from the “kyng of Arabe and of Inde/My lige lord” (lines 110-111). The gifts are both magical wonders and technological devices: the flying brass horse, for instance, operates with the twist of a pin, but it also has the more magical attributes of impossible swiftness, becoming invisible, and keeping its rider seated even while sleeping. It is compared to both the Trojan Horse, a human construct, and Pegasus, a supernatural being. The magical ring that Canacee is given allows her to communicate with birds and understand the natures and uses of all plants—a gift both fanciful and practical. These gifts hint at the double nature of medieval European representations of the East as a place of magic and wonder, but also as a place of great technological advancement (a reputation which it well

usefully “other;” each of these critics offers an interpretation of Chaucer’s text(s) that helps us to understand why Chaucer may have employed orientalist discourse, even when Said’s terminology is not explicitly used.

²⁷² An interlaced romance is one that features two or more separate protagonists, each with his/her own plot line, which intersect periodically and which generally complement one another at the thematic level. These romances began to gain popularity in the twelfth century with Chrétien de Troyes. The “Squire’s Tale” was evidently conceived by the Squire as such as romance, as it advances Cambyuskan, Canacee, Cambalo, the lady falcon, and the strange knight all as protagonists or potential protagonists, each with his/her own related adventures which the Squire previews for his audience before he is cut short by the Franklin.

deserved compared to medieval western Europe).²⁷³ The East is also, in the “Squire’s Tale,” a place of high romance, but seemingly of romance gone awry. The lady falcon’s love has left her for another, a condition that is left unresolved by the Squire in his closing plot summary, though he foretells us that “this faucon gat hire love ageyn / Repentant, as the storie telleth us, / By mediacion of Cambalus, / The kynges sone” (lines 654-657).

The other romance of the “Squire’s Tale” is not, as we might expect, between Canacee and the strange knight, who dances with her at her father’s birthday celebration, but rather between Canacee and one “Cambalo, / That faught in lystes with the bretheren two / For Canacee er that he myghte hire wyne” (lines 667-669). The failure of the Squire to relate Canacee’s love affair in full has led to perhaps the greatest critical debate concerning the “Squire’s Tale:” are Cambalus (the king’s son) of line 656 and Cambalo (who wins Canacee) of line 667 the same person? It is impossible to know for certain whether Chaucer intended his reader to assume that Canacee and her love Cambalo were siblings; however, the Prologue to the “Man of Law’s Tale” does suggest that Chaucer

²⁷³ On the gifts as technological artifacts, see Kenneth Bleeth, “Orientalism and the Cricital History of the Squire’s Tale,” *Chaucer’s Cultural Geography*, ed. Kathryn Lynch (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 21-31 (especially page 22); John Flyer, “Domesticating the Exotic in the Squire’s Tale,” *Chaucer’s Cultural Geography*, ed. Kathryn Lynch (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 32-55 (especially pages 34-37); and Kathryn Lynch, “East Meets West in Chaucer’s Squire’s and Franklin’s Tales,” *Speculum* 70 (1995): 530-551 (especially pages 539-541). The Squire’s portrayal of the gifts as feats of technology as well as magical artifacts may be seen to underline his own lack of understanding of romance and the ways it has shifted in focus in the previous two centuries. The Squire seems to half-comprehend that the “magic” of the East often can be explained scientifically, but he is also unwilling to let go of the well-worn trope of the magical artifact as a catalyst for narrative romance. Regarding the brass horse, for instance, he has the strange knight explain that it is operated by “writhyng of a pyn” (line 127) and that “He that it wroghte koude ful many a gyn...And knew ful many a seel and many a bond” (lines 128 and 131): clearly a technological device; and yet, in repeating the many speculations about the horse that were voiced at court, the Squire seems to share, along with the “lewed peple” (line 221) whom he

implies just such an abomination: the Man of Law is careful to condemn the tale of “Canacee, / That loved hir owene brother synfully— / Of swiche cursed stories I sey fy!” (lines 78-80). If the repetition of Canacee’s name and the similarity between “Cambalo” and “Cambalus” are not coincidental (or accidental), then the “Squire’s Tale” would eventually have told the story of the incestuous love that the Man of Law rejects as inappropriate material for a tale. Incest, like many other forms of sexual depravity, was often associated with the East in Western medieval literature.²⁷⁴ Before the Squire can confirm our suspicions about Canacee and Cambalo, however, the Franklin interrupts him at the beginning of the *pars tercia* with seemingly disingenuous praise for his wit (“considerynge thy yowthe”); the Franklin says he wishes his own son were more like the Squire—a man of “discrecioun” and one who would “to vertu listeth,” qualities that must be attributed ironically, given the Squire’s *lack* of discretion in choosing a tale of incest and his *failure* to listen to virtue by heeding the Man of Law’s warning against telling the tale of Canacee. Along with many recent critics since Joyce Peterson, I read the Franklin’s praise as distinctly tongue-in-cheek, a way to stop the Squire from continuing to tell a tale that his audience does not want to hear in a way that is socially acceptable

wants to disdain, a great awe of it as an intrinsically unknowable and marvelous thing, seemingly “ymaad by som magyk” (line 218).

²⁷⁴ Carolyn Dinshaw notes the imagined link between incest and Saracens in “Pale Faces” (27), as do Steven F. Kruger and Sheila Delany. See Dinshaw, “Pale Faces: Race, Religion, and Affect in Chaucer’s Texts and Their Readers,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001): 19-41; Kruger, “Conversion and Medieval Sexual, Religious, and Racial Categories,” *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, eds. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James A. Schultz (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 158-179; Sheila Delany, “Geographies of Desire: Orientalism in Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*,” *Chaucer’s Cultural Geography*, ed. Kathryn L. Lynch (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 225-247 (see pages 236-237). In *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008), John V. Tolan repeatedly emphasizes the connection in medieval European imaginations between Muhammad, Islam, and sexual depravity.

and reasonably courteous. Harry Bailly, the judge of the tales, seems to support the Franklin's interruption by urging the Franklin to begin his own tale.²⁷⁵

Based on the Squire's stated agenda for his tale, the Franklin's interruption comes just at the beginning of the romance, though it is already longer than many of the other Canterbury tales. Though the tale has not yet reached unmanageable length—it is only half the length of the tale of “Melibee” and less than a third the length of the “Knight's Tale”—it is clear that if allowed to proceed uninterrupted the Squire could take days to rehearse his episodic romance. Many reasons have been proposed for the Franklin's interruption; among the most compelling, in addition to the uncouth subject matter, is that the travelers—or some of the travelers, including the Franklin and Harry Bailly—do not wish to listen to the Squire's rather inept handling of so long a romance;²⁷⁶ this reading is particularly supported by the fact that the “Tale of Sir Thopas,” also a poorly-executed, traditional, episodic romance, is likewise interrupted (by Harry Bailly) and not allowed to proceed beyond the introductory episode.

In *Gender and Romance*, Susan Crane has argued that the cool response the Squire receives from his fellow pilgrims is a judgment by Chaucer against the romance

²⁷⁵ I concur with Joyce Peterson, then, that the tale is “intentionally a fragment in the same way that *Sir Thopas* is intentionally a fragment” (62)—the Squire's handling of his material, as Peterson demonstrates, is particularly inept and the tale would have been impossibly long if completed as the Squire foretells. The company's lack of tolerance for poorly-executed romance is demonstrated, moreover, by the clear interruption of the “Tale of Sir Thopas,” while the lack of tolerance for the Squire's probable inclusion of incest has already been established by the Man of Law, as cited above. See Joyce Peterson, “The Finished Fragment: A Reassessment of the ‘Squire's Tale,’” *The Chaucer Review* 5.1 (1970): 62-74.

²⁷⁶ See, for example, Chapter 2 of Angela Jane Weisl's *Conquering the Reign of Femeny: Gender and Genre in Chaucer's Romance* (Woodbridge, UK, and Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1995) for a discussion of the Squire's ineptitude and his basic lack of understanding of the genre he attempts to employ. Stanley J. Kahrl also argues that the Franklin makes fun of the Squire, an “inept story-teller” (195)

genre as a whole, which Crane says was “outmoded in Chaucer’s milieu” (11), though she qualifies that the romance mode might be successfully invoked in other genres.²⁷⁷ As noted above, Chaucer does usually blend his romances into generic hybrids with epic, saint’s life, fabliau, or other popular genres, and he seems to find these hybrid romances much more satisfying than the old-fashioned romances represented in the *Canterbury Tales* by the “Squire’s Tale” and the “Tale of Sir Thopas;” on the other hand, I am not convinced that we must read the failure of these tales as a condemnation of the genre as a whole, particularly since romance—especially crusade romances—continued to thrive in late fourteenth-century England and beyond. The Squire’s understanding of romance (as well as the pilgrim Chaucer’s) may be outdated, to be sure, but Chaucer’s experimentation with the romance genre and the pervasive influence of the genre throughout his body of work points to a distinction among different kinds of romance, some of which have lost their social significance by the end of Chaucer’s lifetime, but others of which continue to offer fruitful opportunities for adaptation, as I shall discuss in greater depth below.

The outdatedness of the old-fashioned “Squire’s Tale” may be mirrored by the Squire himself, who, though following all the latest trends in clothing and hairstyle, has an aura of the obsolete about him. As John Fyler has noted, the Squire’s “most distinctive quality as a historical character—implied by the General Prologue and openly evident in the way he tells his tale—is his strong sense of belatedness: his father’s Crusades have

who does not fulfill the expectations that he arouses in his audience. See Kahrl, “Chaucer’s ‘Squire’s Tale’ and the Decline of Chivalry,” *The Chaucer Review* 7.3 (1973): 194-209.

dwindled to his own ‘chyvachie’ (I.85) in Flanders” (35).²⁷⁸ Just as the Squire’s martial career pales in comparison with his father’s, and just as the inappropriateness of his dress and bearing on pilgrimage is highlighted by his father’s humility,²⁷⁹ so too does the “Knight’s Tale”—with its solemn Boethian undertones, its carefully crafted structure, its rhetorically effective telling—contrast starkly with the “Squire’s Tale’s” frivolity, its inappropriate content, and its pointless, seemingly interminable meandering.

By comparing him favorably against the Squire, I do not mean to suggest that Chaucer’s Knight is a perfect or uncomplicated character. The description of the Knight both valorizes his skill and subtly suggests that he is not simply a valiant crusader: after a long list of places in which the Knight has proven himself in battle, including fighting “for oure feith at Tramysene” (line 62),²⁸⁰ the narrator adds,

This ilke worthy knight hadde been also
Sometye with the lord of Palatye
Agayn another hethen in Turkey;
And everemoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.”
(lines 64-67)

The Knight, then, is sometimes a legitimate crusader, but at other times he works for a Saracen lord in exchange for fame and/or material compensation. This side job seems not

²⁷⁷ Lesley Kordecki also sees romance as outdated in Chaucer in “Chaucer’s ‘Squire’s Tale’” (293).

²⁷⁸ See Fyler, “Domesticating the Exotic.”

²⁷⁹ In the General Prologue, the Knight’s portrait gives one a sense of humility on pilgrimage: “of his port as meeke as is a mayde /...His hors were goode, but he was nat gay. / Of fustian he wered a gypon / Al bismotered with his habergeon” (lines 69 and 74-76). The Squire, on the other hand, sings and plays his flute; he wears his hair “[w]ith lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse” (line 81); his clothes are embroidered, and “Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde (line 93): in other words, a picture of sumptuous, stylish attire and carefree manners.

²⁸⁰ Larry Benson glosses “Tramysene” as “Tlemcen (near Morocco)” (note on page 24 in the *Riverside Chaucer*). In the following quotation, he glosses Palatye as “Balat (in modern Turkey).”

to be the work of the Lord, for the Knight “was late ycome from his viage./And wente for to doon his pigrymage” (General Prologue lines 77-78), implying that he has some penance to perform for his latest deeds. According to papal crusading policy since 1095, no such penance would be necessary if the Knight had been on crusade.²⁸¹

Despite his prowess as a fighter, even the Knight himself comes off as slightly old-fashioned when he tells his tale, a romance-epic set in ancient Greece. The Knight is more interested in battle and homosocial conflict than in the purported love interest of his tale, Emily, downplaying the romance elements and highlighting the epic feel that the Trojan setting initiates. The Knight’s tale, however, is supremely appropriate for the pilgrimage setting; ultimately, the tale shows its hero coming to terms with inner turmoil and warns its audience about the spiritual dangers of *eros*. Despite the clear romance influences—for example, the Knight’s concern with “gentillesse” and the inspiration that Emily provides for the action of the tale—unlike the Squire, the Knight is conventional, controlled, thorough; his tale is long, but does not spin out of control as does the Squire’s; the tale is linear and well-organized, in this respect also quite different from what we see of the Squire’s romance.²⁸² Compared to his father, then, the young Squire appears inferior in almost every way: he is more suited to dancing and singing than to battle,

²⁸¹ Many historians have noted the change of policy regarding just and papally-sanctioned war in the late eleventh century, a change that allowed crusaders to be absolved of sin through fulfilling their crusade vows; see, for instance, chapter 1 of Christopher Tyerman’s *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press (Harvard), 2006).

²⁸² The dichotomy between the appropriate and well-structured “Knight’s Tale” and the out-of-control “Squire’s Tale” has been addressed by Weisl in *Conquering*, chapter 2.

despite having “born hym weel” in his Continental “chyvachie,”²⁸³ according to the notoriously generous narrator of the General Prologue. His oriental romance would need, perhaps, a more mature teller in order to succeed with the company of pilgrims, whose tolerance for courtly romance is low. The pilgrims react with respect and a modest display of pleasure to the “Knight’s Tale:”

Whan that the Knyght had thus his tale ytoold,
In al the route nas ther yong ne oold
That he ne seyde it was a noble storie
And worthy for to drawn to memorie,
And namely the gentils everichon.
Oure Hooste lough and swoor, ‘So moot I gon,
This gooth aright; unboked is the male.’”
(Miller’s Prologue, lines 3109-3115)

Once again, one can not help but notice the contrast between the Knight’s reception and that of the Squire, who is relieved of the obligation of finishing his tale.

²⁸³ “Chyvachie” could refer to chivalric deeds either in war or in tournaments. Kahrl argues that the Squire was in Flanders on Pierre de Lusignan’s “crusade”—an utter failure. But the Squire’s foppish attention to appearance and the more “courtly” arts of knighthood (such as dancing and composing poetry), and his hope “to stonden in his lady grace” (Gen. Pro. line 88) as a result of his chivalry, all insistently align him with courtly pleasures rather than martial duty. The Squire seems caught up only in the trappings of chivalric knighthood—he seems not to understand that in his own day, one of the most compelling uses of the romance genre was to support just war, with a love story generally taking a secondary place as the reward for martial prowess. The Squire is interested in the exotic—strange people and magical things—but he deploys the romance genre ineffectively and seemingly without purpose. Gardiner Stillwell points out that the Squire refrains from telling his audience about the celebratory feast at court (a common romance trope), and in doing so, fails rhetorically even in his chosen genre: “If, in this exotic tale, foreign marvels are not to be described, what *is* to be done?” (183, Stillwell’s emphasis). See Stillwell, “Chaucer in Tartary,” *The Review of English Studies* 24.95 (1948): 177-188. Elizabeth Scala, though not so critical of the Squire and ascribing greater structural meaning to the Squire’s notable silences, agrees that the “Squire’s Tale” is literally structured around *not* telling, that the narrative “is founded upon particular acts of exclusion” (35)—an irony, given all that the Squire tells his audience he plans to relate, but is never

Chaucer's Man of Law and the Commercialization of the East

The "Squire's Tale" fails, as I have discussed above, for several reasons: because it is an unwitting parody of an outdated romance genre; because it is poorly told, in a rambling and incoherent manner; because its exoticism of the East fails to hold the interest of the Squire's companions; because its subject matter is on the verge of devolving into incest and aberration. At the same time that he offends the sensibilities of his fellow pilgrims, the Squire misses an opportunity to create a more suitable candidate for the hand of Canacee, his female protagonist, than her brother Cambalo—perhaps the strange knight or his lord, the king of Araby and India (as might appeal to the Man of Law, with his tale of exotic marriages)²⁸⁴ or else a Western knight who might convert her and her country to Christianity, as we see in so many romances that employ the "Saracen princess" motif. The Squire could have made Canacee, as a young, unmarried woman and daughter of the king, an important object of currency and exchange in negotiations and alliances among men, as women so often are in medieval romance.²⁸⁵

The Man of Law, unlike the Squire, seems to have a good grasp of the collective tastes of the pilgrims—he seems to know what the pilgrims want from their Oriental fantasies: not the sexualized and deviant exoticism of the "Squire's Tale," but an

given the chance. See Scala, "Canacee and the Chaucer Canon: Incest and Other Unnarratables," *The Chaucer Review* 30.1 (1995): 15-39.

²⁸⁴ Carolyn Dinshaw notes that "Inde" can, in fact, refer to the Far East in medieval literature, in which accurate geographical knowledge of territories east of the Holy Land remained significantly lacking even in Chaucer's time. See Dinshaw, "Pale Faces" (page 20).

²⁸⁵ Both Kathryn Lynch and Geraldine Heng examine the importance of the motif of currency and trade in the "Man of Law's Tale." See Lynch, "Storytelling, Exchange, and Constancy: East and West in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 33.4 (1999): 409-422; and chapter 4 in Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

imagining of the East as a place of possibility for Western benefit or, perhaps, even conquest. “The Man of Law’s Tale,” a member of the Constance group of hagiographical romances that were extremely popular in the Middle Ages, participates in just the kind of romance that the pilgrims see as timely and appealing.²⁸⁶ The hagiographic element of the romance is appropriate to their condition as pilgrims, and hagiographic romance was fantastically popular in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as “the ratio of female to male saints increases exponentially from gender ratios of the same kind in earlier medieval periods” (Heng 202).²⁸⁷ The *Canterbury Tales* themselves demonstrate the popularity of the hagiographical romance, which “connects the suffering of Christians with the suffering of women” (Martin 139).²⁸⁸

Perhaps more importantly, the Man of Law centralizes the theme of commerce and exchange, and uses his heroine, Custance, as part of this economic system: the Sultan of Syria offers to convert to Christianity in exchange for gaining Custance in marriage. She is the most valuable of commodities, holding the life of the Sultan in her power, for

²⁸⁶ *Guy of Warwick*, discussed above in Chapter Two, is another romance that capitalizes on the popularity of hagiography: Guy dies a saintly hermit, escorted to Heaven by Michael and a chorus of angels. Many critics have suggested that *Guy* may draw on the *Life* of St. Alexis, who, though a married man, exchanges his noble life for one of poverty, becoming an anonymous beggar at his own home. See, for instance, Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1996); Julie Burton, “Narrative Patterning and *Guy of Warwick*,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 105-116; Susan Dannenbaum [Crane], “Guy of Warwick and the Question of Exemplary Romance,” *Genre* 17.4 (1984): 351-374; David N. Klausner, “Didacticism and Drama in *Guy of Warwick*,” *Medievalia et Humanistica*. n.s. 6 (1975): 103-119.

²⁸⁷ Carol F. Heffernan confirms that “[r]omances about saintly heroines had enormous appeal in their own day” (24). See Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003).

²⁸⁸ See Priscilla Martin, *Chaucer’s Women: Nuns, Wives, and Amazons* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990). Indeed, the suffering of women seems to be a running theme in the *Canterbury Tales*, a theme that nearly every pilgrim adopts in some way, exploiting its familiarity to further his/her own message of womanly virtue, holiness, and sacrifice (the Second Nun); feminine dominance in matters of love and marriage (the Wife of Bath); feminine gullibility and silliness (the Nun’s Priest’s Tale); feminine carnality (the Miller), etc.

he has fallen in love with Custance after hearing about her virtue and beauty from merchants, and has come to the conclusion that “but he myghte have grace / To han Custance withinne a litel space, / He nas bet deed” (lines 207-209). Kathryn Lynch observes that “the exchange of this woman is a carefully arbitrated bid to purchase the religious affiliation of the Saracens” (“Storytelling” 415). Lee Patterson, speaking specifically of the “Merchant’s Tale” and the “Shipman’s Tale,” notes that “we can see that Chaucerian poetry does, indeed, profoundly and even self-consciously embrace the ideology of commerce” (366);²⁸⁹ this embrace of commercial values is equally evident in the exchange of Custance in the “Man of Law’s Tale” as it is in the exchange of the unnamed merchant’s wife in the “Shipman’s Tale;” the “Man of Law’s Tale” adds to this exchange of woman the exchange of faith that permeates the tale, particularly as the Sultan exchanges the religion of “Mahoun” for that of Christ as long as he may have Custance as part of the bargain.²⁹⁰

Even the *tale* of Custance is viewed by the Man of Law as a commodity. In the prologue to his tale, the Lawyer complains that a poet named Chaucer has already used up most of the tales worth telling; however, he has heard the story of Custance from

²⁸⁹ See Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

²⁹⁰ The Sultan’s offer to convert to Christianity in exchange for Custance is partly motivated by his understanding that “no ‘Cristen prince wolde fayn / Wedden his child under oure lawe sweete / That us was taught by Mahoun, oure prophete” (lines 222-224). The Man of Law here demonstrates a strict interpretation of Deuteronomy 7.3-4, against intermarriage, contrary to the historical reality of relatively frequent intermarriage in the crusader lands and contact zones. It is interesting to note that the Sultan specifies that it is the *Christian* prince who would object to his marrying Custance without his conversion: according to Islamic law (*Qur’an* surah 5.5), a Muslim man may marry a woman from among the “People of the Book” (Jews and Christians), though a Muslim woman may not marry a man outside her faith (*Qur’an* surah 2.221). One wonders whether the Man of Law is meant to be familiar with the Qur’anic stipulation that would allow the Sultan to marry Custance, or whether he simply assumes that the Sultan is familiar with Christian religious theory forbidding intermarriage.

merchants, and thus has new wares to offer his fellow travelers. Commerce is seen, then, not just as an exchange of money and goods or services, but also as an opportunity for cultural expansion: contact with merchants is a way to replenish the cultural resources—stories available for telling—of the pilgrims’ England. The importance of merchants, both in the prologue and in the tale, underlines the commercial elements that make the heroine herself a commodity to be bought or traded. Carol Heffernan argues that, in addition to being traded as a commodity herself, and in addition to her story being treated as tradable, Custance imitates merchants in the number of years she spends at sea.²⁹¹ Heffernan sees Custance’s profits as spiritual rather than monetary; I would add that Custance appears explicitly to trade in souls. The “sale” of her body to the Sultan results in an increase of Christian souls as well as an increase in Christian territory because of the treaty by which the Sultan and his court agree to convert to Christianity.²⁹²

Or, at least, that is how it is supposed to work. The productive cultural work of the treaty (from the Christian point of view) is undone by the Sultan’s evil mother, who arranges for her son and his Christian converts to be slaughtered during the wedding

²⁹¹ Carol Heffernan, *The Orient*, p. 30.

²⁹² Geraldine Heng tempers her reading of the romance’s mass conversion of the Saracens with the observation that, in fact, their sincere conversion is never firmly validated by any kind of external sign such as a change in skin color, as we see in the *King of Tars* romance, which is another member of the Constance group (*Empire* 234). Carolyn Dinshaw, following Nevill Coghill, also advises caution: in his reverence for the (as yet still only imagined) beauty of Custance, “the Sultan’s conversion is motivated by an idolatry that is basically indistinguishable from his ‘Mawmettrie’” (“Pale Faces” 27). This may be so, but to my mind the Sultan’s idolatry of Custance is no more or less than the typical romance hero’s idolatry of the typical romance heroine when he admires her from afar. What Dinshaw reads as idolatry, may instead be read as an idealization of the unknown woman that occurs in so many medieval romances that it seems, rather than alien or pagan, entirely conventional.

feast.²⁹³ She dramatizes the violence as self-defensive, even self-sacrificial: “The lyf shal rather out of my body sterte / Or Makometes lawe out of myn herte!” (lines 335-336). Custance, for some unexplained reason spared the violent death of a martyr that, ironically, her mother-in-law had sworn to bear if necessary, is set upon the seas in a rudderless boat.²⁹⁴ When the Sultanness wipes out all of the new Christians in Syria, she erases (at least temporarily) the territorial expansion of the Christians as negotiated through the treaty. The Roman Emperor, Custance’s father who believes her dead, wages war on Syria and wreaks revenge on the Sultanness: the Romans “brennen, sleen, and brynge hem to meschance / Ful many a day” (lines 964-65).

Some critics have read this absolute destruction in Syria as a sign of the utter incompatibility between East and West—the impossibility that even conversion to Christianity might truly bring Saracens into the fold. This is certainly possible, but there is another, albeit small, opening for East-West intercourse left in the wake of all this carnage: the merchants, who brought news of Custance’s beauty to Syria in the first place, are not present, as far as the audience knows, at either of the scenes of slaughter. Certainly, one may imagine that they survive—indeed, Heffernan has suggested that the merchants could be Christians, perhaps Venetians, who were among the most active traders between Western Europe and the Levant in the Middle Ages (28). If we imagine that, instead of an unpopulated territory emptied of both Christian converts and

²⁹³ The conquest-by-treaty plot element in the “Man of Law’s Tale” seems a faint echo of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II’s diplomatic conquest of Jerusalem in 1229. Like the treaty sealed by the marriage of Custance to the Sultan, however, the results were short lived.

murderous Saracens, Syria now represents a land in which the merchants (whether Christian or not) may be the principal survivors, might not this territory be ripe for conquest of either a military or a cultural nature? Moreover, might a land whose contact with the West is based entirely upon commerce and exchange actually be a more profitable ally than a country of converts?²⁹⁵ The “Man of Law’s Tale” demonstrates at its opening that merchants were a medium of potentially very productive cultural exchange, a group who brought tales of Western virtue and beauty to the East and made them desirable to an Eastern monarch. Despite the success of the Sultanness in uprooting the nascent Christian community in Syria, the Roman Emperor’s invasion of Syria may be imagined to open the country to greater Western influence and control. The romance leaves these questions unanswered, but perhaps lingering for further consideration.

When Custance’s rudderless boat finally washes up on the shores of pagan England, another set of conversions ensues, beginning with her hosts: Custance’s first convert is Hermengyld, her hostess and wife of the constable of the Britons. Though Custance is clearly portrayed as the catalyst for Hermengyld’s conversion because she “loved hire right as hir lyf” (line 535), the text attributes the agency of the conversion to Christ: “Jhesu hath converted thurgh his grace / Dame Hermengyld, constablesse of that place” (lines 538-539). Christ is likewise present in the conversion of the constable; when a blind man entreats Hermengyld to “yif me my sighte agayn!” (line 562), Custance “bad

²⁹⁴ On the significance of the ruddlerless boat, particularly as a means for God to act as a judge of guilt, see V.A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

hire wirche / The wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche” (lines 565-566). The blind man’s sight restored, Custance explains to the constable, ““Sire, it is Cristes myght, / That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare”” (lines 570-571). She then “gan oure lay declare” (line 572), resulting in the conversion of the constable. Unlike the commercialized, eroticized conversion of the Sultan of Syria, Custance’s converts in England are persuaded through divine intervention. Later, when Custance has been falsely accused of murder, she stands trial before the king, Alla (or Aella, in Old English), and her accuser swears that she is guilty upon a “Britoun book, written with Evaunglies” (line 666). God strikes him down, astonished. Then,

A voys was herd in general audience,
And seyde, “Thou has desclaundred, giltelees,
The doghter of hooly chirche in heigh presence...”
And for this miracle, in conclusioun,
And by Custances mediacioun,
The kyng—and many another in that place—
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!
(lines 673-675 and 683-686)

The voice of God himself affirms Custance’s innocence, causing great wonder among the audience at her trial. As in the case of the constable, Custance’s religious teachings enable the conversions that follow upon divine revelation. These British conversions, then, are prompted by Christ’s direct intervention in human affairs, reinforced by the teaching of the faith by Custance.

²⁹⁵ Geraldine Heng points out that conversion of non-Christians was, in fact, considered bad economic policy in the crusader states of the East: it was more lucrative to collect taxes from Muslims than to convert

The successful conversion of King Alla and his subjects, inspired by miracle rather than erotic desire, becomes a foundation myth for England,²⁹⁶ rewriting the history of its conversion in order to form a fictional and, at the same time, Christian dynastic link to Rome, but also in order to transform the story of England's conversion into a story of worldwide interaction and exchange. Though drawing on the romance genre, as does the "Squire's Tale," the "Man of Law's Tale" transforms the genre not only by highlighting Custance's passive saintliness but also by encoding new economic imperatives upon the old genre. The world in which Chaucer lived was changing, and with the "Man of Law's Tale" we see a preference for a romance that imagines England as part of a thriving world marketplace rather than a tale of magical foreign wonders. This is not to say that foreign wonders could not be appealing to the Canterbury pilgrims in a well-executed romance, but rather that they are not enough to hold the pilgrims' interest when the Squire fails to provide them with an appropriate and well-conceived narrative. Despite the violence that ends the religious dialogue between Rome and Syria, opening a power vacuum that the commercial interests of the merchants might someday fill, the "Man of Law's Tale" clearly sees the regular travel and exchange of stories, goods, and people across

them (*Empire* 82-83).

²⁹⁶ The rewriting of the history of England's conversion to Christianity as a romance may remind one of the similar rewriting of the conversion of Armenia as a romance in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, or the conversion of Spain in *Floire et Blancheflor*. There are two (at least) significant differences, however: first, in the "Man of Law's Tale" we have an origin myth of Chaucer's own country rather than a distant, though Christian, land; second, the other romances follow the conversion (based on love rather than divine revelation) of the heir/ruler, who leads the violent forced conversion of the masses. Aside from the death of the treacherous liar struck down by God in Custance's trial, violence is noticeably absent in the Man of Law's conversion of England. Alla might very well have returned from his pilgrimage to Rome to force mass conversion upon his subjects, but instead he and Custance "lyve in joye and in quiete" (line 1131). The elision of any kind of violence associated with the conversion of England indicates a naturalization of

geographical and cultural divides as an ultimately productive system. If the Christianization of England is given priority over that of Syria in the “Man of Law’s Tale,” this seems only natural given the narrator’s position as a fourteenth-century Christian, English character. But I do not think we, as readers, have reason to believe that Chaucer or his character mean for Syria to be unconvertible or unable to participate in the medieval global economy: indeed, it is Syria’s possible openness to such participation that the destruction of the Sultaness by the Emperor of Rome makes possible.

Historian Aziz Atiya observed long ago that in the Middle Ages, “[d]irect contacts between East and West, though begun by the way of the sword, were soon destined to yield to the ways of peace in the fields of commerce and culture” (170).²⁹⁷ Chaucer, as a customs officer as well as a diplomat, must have realized how important commerce and free travel—that is, travel unhindered by the violence that accompanies Christian-Muslim conflict, such as the violence that hindered the pilgrimage routes to Jerusalem and St. James of Compostela in the early Middle Ages—would be to England’s future. In this context, the pilgrimage upon which the Man of Law’s audience has embarked is seen as part of this world of economic exchange and travel. The economics of the pilgrimage are brought to the attention of the reader of the *Canterbury Tales* each time Harry Bailly reacts to a tale or chooses a new teller, for we are reminded that his role in the pilgrimage is to act as judge of the best tale; the teller of the best tale

England’s acceptance of Christianity that we do not see in the mass conversions in Beues’s Armenia or Floire’s Spain.

²⁹⁷ Aziz S. Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

will receive a meal at his establishment paid for, not by the wily Harry himself, but by the other pilgrims. The pilgrimage will undoubtedly prove a profitable one for the innkeeper.

The frame story—the competition among the pilgrims to tell “Tales of best sentence and moost solaas” and to win “a soper at oure aller cost” (lines 798-799)—underlines the pervasive importance of economics, commerce, and exchange in the *Canterbury Tales*. While the Man of Law successfully integrates these themes into his tale, the Squire is unable to bring any commercial discourse, no matter how romanticized, to fruition in his aborted tale. The economic relationship implied by the magical gifts received by the Khan in the “Squire’s Tale” is never illuminated, nor do the gifts provide any of the usual romance impetus for adventure and economic gain; the female protagonist of the tale, Canacee, is never introduced onto the marriage market or married to a suitor who would provide a profitable alliance to her family;²⁹⁸ and not even the exchange of mates lamented by the lady falcon is balanced by the end of the tale. As Stanley Kahrl notes, the Squire creates a set of expectations for his audience that he never fills (196)—his metaphorical story-telling account is left unpaid and his listeners (consumers) left unsatisfied.

Romance and Economic Communities: Settling the Accounts

In the “Squire’s Tale” and the “Man of Law’s Tale,” we see two different kinds of romances, one successful and the other unsuccessful by the standards of the pilgrims (at

least Harry Bailly and the Franklin, the two interrupters) in Chaucer's frame story. "The Squire's Tale," like the "Tale of Sir Thopas" told by Chaucer's fictional persona, is a failed attempt at a long, interlaced romance, in theory highlighting themes of love won, lost, and regained; forbidden or unnatural love; magic and wonder; and the territorial conquests, not of a European knight, but of Genghis Khan. This type of romance is outdated, worn out; likewise the role of the crusader knight, to which the Squire seems to aspire at least on a superficial level, has become nearly obsolete as economic transactions begin to replace martial conflict as the most desirable kind of relationship between East and West (particularly as military tensions escalated between England and France in the Hundred Years' War). This old-fashioned kind of romance must be replaced by a new kind, one in which the merchant is a major figure, worthy of praise and reward, and in which the actors must learn their places in world economics and world travel. The successful romance, Chaucer implicitly argues, like the successful nation, is one that adapts to the times. The collapse of the crusades as a movement designed to alienate Muslims and Christians—as symbolized by the Knight accepting mercenary work for the "lord of Palatye" in addition to his crusading "for oure feith"—is paralleled in the *Canterbury Tales* by the collapse of the traditional romance that developed, in many ways, in tandem with the crusades. Black and white dichotomies between East and West

²⁹⁸ Indeed, this exchange of women seems as though it may shut down entirely, if Canacee is to love "hir owene brother synfully," as the Man of Law suggests in his Prologue (line 79) and as the Squire seems to confirm in the similarity of the names "Cambalo" and "Cambalus."

simply do not make sense in this context; the “black” or “Saracen,” so despised by Guy of Warwick, may actually be a lucrative trading partner or potential convert.²⁹⁹

This commercial rethinking of romance by Chaucer, who seems to see the rise of commerce, the gradual decline of the crusades,³⁰⁰ and the transformation (or failure) of traditional romance as parallel impulses, should not be viewed as an “ending point” to medieval romance, or even to crusade romance more specifically. The Auchinleck manuscript, in which early English versions of *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (and also the English *Floris and Blancheflour*) are found, was not compiled until the 1330s, just half a century before Chaucer began work on the *Canterbury Tales*; Jean d’Arras’s *Melusine* was composed in the same decade (the 1390s) as many of the *Tales*; extant versions of *Saladin* were not copied until nearly a century later. The crusades were very much still a part of European and English imagination and literature. But Chaucer’s unique perspective on the crusades and romance (and, in the case of the “Man of Law’s Tale,” crusade romance itself) is one of the many simultaneous imaginative engagements with Europe’s Eastern Other that existed in the late medieval period. Like many of the crusade romances I have discussed in previous chapters, Chaucer views contact between Christians and Muslims as potential opportunities for

²⁹⁹ Carolyn Dinshaw complicates the already ambiguous racial discourses in Chaucer’s work in “Pale Faces,” where she argues that paleness, instead of being desirable (as in most earlier romances), is in Chaucer a negatively charged condition that indicates distress, tension, and fear.

³⁰⁰ The crusades did not die, from an ideological perspective, in the fourteenth century; but practically, crusades were not launched on the same scale that they had been in the earlier Middle Ages; they were also increasingly aimed at Eastern Europe (a greater strategic threat) rather than the Holy Land (the most ideologically sound destination).

expansion and growth of Western interests, not just (or even primarily) territorial, but also cultural and economic, through the trading of goods and the trading of stories.

Much of Chaucer's work is heavily indebted to romance—not only several of the *Canterbury Tales*, but also many of his other major poems, from the *Parliament of Fowls* through *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Legend of Good Women*.³⁰¹ He consistently plays with the genre, melding it with epic, dream vision, satire, political allegory, or saint's life; Chaucer seems to see these adaptations and expansions as the future of romance. In its most "pure" form—romance for romance's sake—with no clear social commentary, as we see in the "Tale of Sir Thopas" or in the "Squire's Tale," romance does not, apparently, appeal to Chaucer, since these two tales are interrupted by other pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer is glad to adapt what is useful in romance, such as the common trope of a virtuous pagan converted to Christianity through contact with an equally virtuous Christian (a trop we find in *Saladin, The Sultan of Babylon*, and *Floire et Blancheflour*, as well as in the "Man of Law's Tale"); or he may perform a lesson in Boethian acceptance of divine will and a negation of human desires, as in the "Knight's Tale;" but Chaucer's rejection of the frivolous fairy story or the pointless exoticism of the "Tale of Sir Thopas" or the "Squire's Tale" encourages his audience to rethink the traditional values of romance, in which war against a threatening Other is the pinnacle of chivalric behavior. What if, Chaucer implicitly asks his audience, this model is no longer

³⁰¹ Sheila Delany has an excellent article on the orientalist undertones of the *Legend of Good Women*: "Geographies of Desire: Orientalism in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*," *Chaucer's Cultural Geography*, ed. Kathryn Lynch (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 225-247. Among many useful contributions to Chaucer scholarship, this article details the many and various relationships that Chaucer had with crusaders and supporters of the crusades while at court and in his professional life.

appropriate to the world in which we live? What if adaptability, trade, learning about foreign cultures rather than demonizing them is a legitimate way for England and the West to expand influence and wealth? What if the new crusade is to be fought on economic terms or by missionary example rather than on the field of battle?

Chaucer's intense interests in trade and travel—in economic communities—make sense given his professional life as a diplomat and customs officer and his own family's mercantile origins. These concerns extend well beyond the bounds of the tales discussed here: they permeate the *Canterbury Tales* at the most fundamental level. The premise of the *Tales* as an exchange and competition among the travelers, as I have pointed out, is decidedly economic in nature. But the competition is not, as it appears on the surface, a winner-take-all scenario. The *Canterbury Tales* is a didactic body of work by which everyone profits; even the tales told by such morally questionable pilgrims as the Reeve or the Wife of Bath may instruct their audiences in the avoidance of greed, for example, or pride; the Wife of Bath's loathly lady's pillow discourse on true nobility—the nobility of the spirit—is among the most powerful moments in all the *Tales*. The value of the *Tales* as instructions for how to live better lives—a value entirely in keeping with the pilgrimage setting—is emphasized by the Parson's closing “tale,” a long discussion on sin, how to avoid it, and repentance. The Parson particularly focuses on the Seven Deadly Sins, one or more of which plagues nearly every pilgrim in the fictional company. Through association with one another, through the exchange of tales, through the sharing of resources, these pilgrims demonstrate at the level of the frame story itself the value of trade and commerce and the opportunity to learn invaluable lessons from the most

unlikely of sources. These values carry over, I suggest, into Chaucer's treatment of the East in the "Man of Law's Tale" and in the development of the character of the Knight, while at the same time Chaucer undermines counterproductive portrayals of the East in a tale such as the Squire's.

Conclusion

Crusade romance, developing out of the *chansons de geste* at the time of the First Crusade partly as propaganda to glorify and encourage crusading, over the next several centuries developed into a more nuanced genre. As Europeans had greater contact with Muslims in the East—in battle, at the negotiating table, as prisoners, as allies against mutual enemies, as family members—and as military success against Muslims in the East became more ephemeral, romance, too, began to explore alternative options for how Christians might productively interact with Muslims. Some of these, as portrayed in the imaginative literature I have discussed, are pure fantasy, as when *La Fille du Comte de Ponthieu* inserts a French ancestress into Saladin's lineage; but others, such as Beues's alliance with Armenia, reveal a seed of truth at the heart of their fantastic fiction. Crusade romance was a way for medieval Europeans to work out not only what their relationships with the East *were*, but also what they *wished them to be*. This did not always apply only to Christian-Muslim relationships: I have shown that *Guy of Warwick* imagines a fictional parallel to the Fourth Crusade in which a Byzantine invitation for the crusaders to take control of Constantinople, while legitimized, is also and at the same time rejected. The work of crusade romance is thus, as we have seen, to negotiate the dangers in East-West

relations; to imaginatively correct historical blunders; to glorify great families and great deeds; to justify territorial claims and demand the recapture of lost holdings; to imagine possibilities for the future; and—we must not lose sight of this—to delight and entertain.

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