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**Images of Women in the First  
and Second Crusades, 1095-1148**

**by**

**Laura Brady**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
Through the Department of History  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
at the University of Windsor**

**Windsor, Ontario, Canada**

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### Abstract

The history of women in the crusading movement has been a seriously neglected area of historical inquiry. There remain few analytical studies of the roles and participation of women in the medieval crusading movement. Contrary to traditional historiography, then, a close reading of the western chronicles of the First and Second Crusades (1095-1148), reveals that women did indeed participate and affect the course of the early crusading movement.

The influence and presence of women is noticeable in a number of areas. First, the imagery of femineity influenced the language used both to precipitate and sustain the military venture. That is, womanliness as a universal concept was utilized by the men who preached the crusade as a means of inducing support and of continuing the war. As such, notions of femineity pervade the chronicles, inform the language of war and provide the subtext which defined and maintained the venture.

The literature of the crusades also reveals that women attended the movement to the Middle East and played crucial roles in the wars against the Muslims. For example, the participation of western women became pivotal during the settlement phase of the crusades, when they became desirable as mothers and wives. They are also seen in the roles of warrior, campfollower, intermediaries in the marriage process and as inspiration to weary fighters.

Most significantly, the presence of women on crusade was

regarded as a potential source of sin for men, and a suspicion and dislike for women pervades the writing. The clerics who accompanied the crusaders, in addition to the many secular leaders of crusade, believed that military victory hinged on the sexual purity of the warriors. Thus, the sexual temptation which the presence of women afforded caused resentment and enmity towards women. As a consequence strict laws regarding sexual behaviour and the movement of women were enacted, which sometimes led to the expulsion of women from crusader camps.

Finally, the image of Muslims further illustrates the social values of the crusaders. Muslim men were perceived as innately perverse and sexually deviant. The Christian view of women as weak, gullible and passive highlighted the need for Christian men to defend their honour and virtue. The image of Muslim women in the chronicles marginalizes them as insignificant or, when they converted to Christianity, presents them as trophies of war and evidence of the bravery and virility of Christian knights.

In the final analysis, the image of women in the First and Second Crusades was inherently dualistic and oppositional. The evidence shows women who were vigorous and active participants in the crusades. Conversely, their presence was resented and at times they were banned because of their allegedly perverse influence. The imagery of femineity, furthermore, portrayed women as weak, soft, pliable and vulnerable, and therefore in desperate need of defence. The women of the crusades were at once essential and despised. Yet, for all that, women in the

Crusades nevertheless are more visible and accessible than historical scholarship has hitherto indicated.



### Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people for their support during the research and writing of this thesis. First, and most importantly, my supervisor and teacher, Jacqueline Murray, deserves the bulk of my appreciation. She has been extremely supportive of both my undergraduate and graduate academic careers, and has nurtured and challenged my research in history and my belief in feminism. She has been both a strict and encouraging thesis supervisor, without whom I would be mired in another, and undoubtedly less gratifying, field of history. Her support and attentiveness throughout the writing of this thesis has been unique and invaluable. I should also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Kathleen McCrone and Dr. Lois Smedick, whose comments on my thesis and assistance throughout my tenure at the University of Windsor have been important. Finally, Janice Bell and Maureen Souchuk at Interlibrary Loan have been patient and extremely helpful in assisting my research.

I would also like to thank others whose more general support during the past two years has been important. Dr. Bruce Tucker and Dr. Christina Simmons are each owed a debt of gratitude for the very significant roles each have played in the nurturing of my political self. They have both been integral persons in my graduate experience at Windsor and their influence will not easily be displaced. Finally, I would like to thank my peers, especially Constance Cooper, Lori Newton, James Hirst and Michael Van Raalte, who have played an invaluable and unquantifiable role

in my education. Discussions in the graduate students' room and at the pub, while at times heated and overflowing, have been an inestimable and central contribution to my intellectual development. Thank you all.

## Contents

Abstract . . . . .	iii
Acknowledgements . . . . .	vi
<u>Chapter 1</u>	
Introduction . . . . .	1
<u>Chapter 2</u>	
Weak and Violated: Gender Imagery and the Language of War . . . . .	32
<u>Chapter 3</u>	
Diplomats, Warriors, and Settlers The Participation of Women in the Crusades . . . . .	56
<u>Chapter 4</u>	
Nuisances and Temptresses: Sexual Purity and Military Victory . . . . .	83
<u>Chapter 5</u>	
Crusader Encounters With Muslim Women and Men . . . . .	104
<u>Conclusion</u>	
The Dualities of Woman . . . . .	124
Bibliography . . . . .	131
Vita Auctoris . . . . .	142

## Chapter 1 Introduction

The period of the crusades, from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, was an exciting, tumultuous and expansionary time in the history of the Christian west. For medieval Europeans, the crusades represented many potentialities, not the least of which was the broadening of their collective perspectives, both geographically and metaphorically. Whereas pilgrimages to the Holy Land had previously been commonplace for a few, the Crusades were the first time in the history of Christendom that a popular movement enlisted people of all classes, age groups and sexes in a holy expedition to the East. The effects of the crusades were enormous and grave. "The highly localized life of the eleventh century in which the immediate horizon so often served to limit men's vision of knowledge," Professor Krey writes, "was shaken from end to end."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the crusading movement became a recurring activity in the west, continuing into the late thirteenth-century and changing the face of religion, spirituality, science, philosophy, law and society. The ramifications of the crusades were dramatic and deeply transformative: "What this exchange of ideas and wares meant transcends statistics and must be looked for in the accelerated progress of Europe which followed, in the so-called Renaissance of the Twelfth Century."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>August C. Krey, The First Crusade: Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants (Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press, 1921), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Krey, The First Crusade, 2.

The crusades have fascinated scholars of medieval history and the literature on this movement has proliferated throughout the twentieth-century and continues today.<sup>3</sup> The scholarship on the crusading era has focused on a number of perspectives, from the economic, military and political to the popular, spiritual and religious, with the expected divisions and contentious interpretations of crusading and the impetus behind the crusading movement. For example, Edward Gibbon characterized the crusades as a mournful spectacle of hundreds of thousands of human beings led on to inevitable slaughter by a spirit of ignorant fanaticism, while others, such as Krey, have interpreted the crusades as a wonderful expansionary experience in the history of the West.<sup>4</sup>

The most glaring defect of the historiography of the crusades, however, is the literature's exclusion of women. Up to the 1970s, absolutely no attention was paid to women as a

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<sup>3</sup>The scholarship on the crusades is sizable. For historiographical overviews of the field see James A. Brundage, "Pennsylvania's Crusades: A Review Article," Medievalia et Humanistica N.S. 16 (1988), 195-99; and Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Reading History: The Crusades," History 32 (April 1982), 48-49.

<sup>4</sup>Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J.B. Bury (London: Methuen and Co., 1889), 264-72; Krey, The First Crusade, 1-13. For more specific examples, see James A. Brundage, "The Army of the First Crusade and the Crusade Vow: some reflections on a recent book," Mediaeval Studies 33 (1971), 334-343; John Gilchrist, "The Erdmann Thesis and the Canon Law, 1083-1141," in Crusade and Settlement: Papers Read at the First Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East and Presented to R.C. Smail, ed. Peter W. Edbury (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), 37-45; and John Gilchrist, Review of Jonathan Riley-Smith, The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading, Speculum 63 (July 1988), 714-17.

transformative, categorical force. Of the numerous studies produced on the crusading movement since the beginning of the twentieth century, none can be said to incorporate any ideas about femineity or women.<sup>5</sup> Joseph-François Michaud, an early nineteenth-century historian, devoted a section to women crusaders which was superficial and derogatory.<sup>6</sup> Steven Runciman's three volume study is the definitive work on the whole of the crusading movement, to which all subsequent scholars have referred. His heavily detailed narrative focuses on the leaders, battles and politics of the crusades, with absolutely no analysis of the role of women.<sup>7</sup> Shortly afterwards Kenneth Setton published a multi-volume History of the Crusades. Claiming to be a comprehensive and definitive collection of the efforts of many authors, it includes no essays on the participation or the role of women in the crusades.<sup>8</sup> Several other narratives and analyses of the crusades have also been published which focus solely on the political, military and economic aspects of the

---

<sup>5</sup>Jonathan Riley-Smith, in an examination of the scholarship as of 1982, does not once refer to the role of women in the crusades nor does he include gender in his call for renewed scholarship. See Riley-Smith, "Reading History," 49. For a discussion of the definition of the term 'femineity' see page 11.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph-François Michaud, Histoires des Croisades par Michaud, ed. M. Huillard Bréholles (Paris: Furne, Jouvet, 1867).

<sup>7</sup>Steven Runciman, A History of the Crusades, 3 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

<sup>8</sup>Kenneth M. Setton, ed., A History of the Crusades, 5 Vols. (Philadelphia: University Press, 1955-64); especially Volume 1, The First Hundred Years, ed. Marshall W. Baldwin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958).

movement.<sup>9</sup>

More recent works on the crusade are beginning to incorporate new modes of analysis and focus on the crusades as a social movement as opposed to a strictly political or economic operation. As the shift towards social history, women's history and class history influenced the writing of the history of the crusades, the focus of analysis began to change. Several recent analyses of the crusades, moreover, have incorporated gender into their investigations.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, there have been several studies specifically on the role of women in the crusades.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The list is voluminous. See Harold Lamb, The Crusades: Iron Men and Saints, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1930); John L. LaMonte, Feudal Monarchy in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932); Dana C. Munro, The Kingdom of the Crusaders (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936); Carl Erdmann, The Origin of the Idea of Crusade, trans. by Marshall W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Hans Eberhard Mayer, The Crusades, trans. John Gillingham (Stuttgart, 1965; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); Zoé Oldenbourg, The Crusades, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966); T.S.R. Boase, Kingdoms and Strongholds of the Crusaders (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971); and Hans Eberhart Mayer, The Crusades (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

<sup>10</sup>See Elizabeth Siberry, Criticism of Crusading, 1095-1274 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985). Christopher Tyerman, England and the Crusades, 1095-1588 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) has an adequate discussion of the effect of the crusades on the women left at home in England. Ronald C. Finucane, Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Moslems at War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) includes a chapter on "Minorities at Risk: Women and Jews," which provides a brief and not heavily analytical description of the activities of women. Also see Penny J. Cole, The Preaching of the Crusade to the Holy Land, 1095-1270 (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1991).

<sup>11</sup>While there are few studies of women in the crusades, general studies on women in the Middle Ages have proliferated and therefore provide the background for a study like this. See Margaret Wade Labarge, A Small Sound of the Trumpet: Women in

Régine Pernoud has written the only full-length study of women and the crusades. Her narrative, La femme au temps des Croisades inserts women in the traditional picture of the crusading period. Her book focuses almost solely, however, on aristocratic women, and does not analyze the roles women played or the influence they had from a grassroots level.<sup>12</sup>

Maureen Purcell has also examined the question of women as legitimate crusaders. She rejects the notion that women were full-fledged crusaders. While there are references to women in the chronicles, Purcell contends that there was no legitimate crusading role for women. They had, she believes, neither legal status in canon law nor social status in the Levant. Purcell concludes that although there were complements of women in each crusade, they remained marginal and ultimately were a canonical and social aberration.<sup>13</sup> Purcell and Pernoud represent the earliest feminist-informed readings of the chronicles which, contrary to the traditional readings, have discovered the image

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Medieval Life (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Shulamith Shahar, The Fourth Estate: a history of women in the Middle Ages (New York: Methuen Press, 1984); Edith Ennen, The Medieval Woman, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989). See also, Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, "The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe: 500-1100," in Mary Hartman and Lois W. Banner, eds., Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women (New York: Harper, Colophon Books, 1974), 103-118; and David Herlihy, "Land, Family and Women in Continental Europe, 701-1200," Traditio 18 (1962), 89-121.

<sup>12</sup>Régine Pernoud, La femme au temps des Croisades (Paris: Stock/Laurence Pernoud, 1990).

<sup>13</sup>Maureen Purcell, "Women Crusaders: A Temporary Canonical Aberration?," in Principalities, Powers and Estates, ed. L.O. Frappell (Adelaide: Adelaide University Union Press, 1979), 57-64.



of women in abundance.

James Brundage was also one of the first scholars to fully examine this topic. Through a comprehensive examination of the position of crusading women in canon law from Ivo of Chartres to Innocent III, Brundage found that by the late twelfth century women had full crusading status. They had, however, always had some form of official sanction from the inception of the crusades in 1095.<sup>14</sup> The granting of more official legal status was due to the exigencies of the conjugal debt and marital responsibilities.<sup>15</sup> Effectively, canon lawyers were concerned with the spread of adultery and fornication as a result of the separation of husband and wife and so condoned women's presence on crusade. They also wrestled with the problem of the remarriage of a woman whose crusading husband was presumed dead, ultimately deciding that a ten year waiting period was sufficiently pious and respectful of the dead man's memory in addition to assuring all involved that he was dead.<sup>16</sup> Brundage has also written a short examination of sexual mores in the First

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<sup>14</sup>James Brundage, "The Crusader's Wife: A Canonistic Quandry," Studia Gratiana 12 (1967), 425-41; also see his Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and "The Votive Obligations of Crusaders: The Development of a Canonistic Doctrine," Traditio 24 (1968), 77-118.

<sup>15</sup>On the responsibilities of marriage see Elizabeth M. Makowski, "The conjugal debt and medieval canon law," Journal of Medieval History 3 (1977), 99-114.

<sup>16</sup>Brundage, "The Crusader's Wife Revisited," Studia Gratiana 14 (1969), 241-51.

Crusade. He found that the venture was coloured by a fundamental ambivalence toward sexuality, despite its extreme condemnation of all behaviour not conforming to the austere sexual ideal of the leaders of the crusade.<sup>17</sup>

Most recently, there has been a growing interest in the relationship between woman and war in the Middle Ages. Perhaps the earliest reference by a historian to women in the crusades is by Thomas Fuller who, in the year 1640, wrote:

And which was more, women (as if they would make the tale of the Amazons truth) went with weapons in mens clothes; a behaviour at the best immodest, and modesty being the case of chastity, it is to be feared that where the case is broken, the jewel is lost.<sup>18</sup>

Whether or not all women who participated in the crusades were 'immodest', this stereotype established the tone of the discourse on these eleventh and twelfth century crusading women. Characterizing them as either prostitutes or viragos, posterity has not been generous to their reputation. Three recent articles, in partial reaction to this type of image, have examined the question of the effect of the crusades on the potentiality of the image of the woman warrior in medieval literature and in domestic warfare. Furthermore, these scholars, informed by feminist critical theory and their individual desires to replace women in the historical record and working from either

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<sup>17</sup>Brundage, "Prostitution, Miscegenation, and Sexual Purity in the First Crusade," in Edbury, ed., Crusade and Settlement, 57-65.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas Fuller, The Historie of the Holy Warre 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Thomas Buck for the University of Cambridge, 1647), Book 1, 18.

a feminist or a women's studies perspective, represent the most recent approach of the historiography. Megan McLaughlin, in her discussion of women warriors, maintains that since defense was not yet recognized as a part of the public, and therefore male, sphere of activity, women could and did participate in battles at home and in the crusades without consequent backlash. After the eleventh century the image of women warriors became more anomalous but was not criticized or suppressed since women were necessary defenders of their homes and estates, particularly in their husbands' absences.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Helen Solterer has studied the image of female militancy in medieval France. She found that the image and potentiality of military engagement for women represented by the crusading movement was a broadening one. Images of women warriors appeared in literature and the issue of women in war became a tangle for canon lawyers. Most significantly, the image of woman as warrior was necessarily masculinized through cross-dressing and therefore de-sexing the women. Solterer writes that these women "are deemed proper warriors insofar as they display no ostensible sign of their bodies."<sup>20</sup> Finally, Sarah Westphal-Wihl has analyzed The Ladies' Tournament in terms of the significance of marriage and especially dowry to the lives of women. The images of jousting women she examines are as

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<sup>19</sup>Megan McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: gender, warfare and society in medieval Europe," Women's Studies 17 (1990), 193-209.

<sup>20</sup>Helen Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," Signs 16 (Spring 1991), 541.

potential brides, not warriors.<sup>21</sup> The efforts of these feminist scholars, discovering the image of women as warrior where it lay neglected previously, are now the foundation for further feminist scholarship, especially the inter-relationship between the imagery of women, femineity, and the language of war.

The major deficiency remaining in the historiography of women and the crusades, in addition to the sheer paucity of studies, is the lack of analysis of the image and participation of women in the Holy Land.<sup>22</sup> None of the works cited above discuss the imagery employed in the language of war, while the feminine and its effects are an important aspect of all military ventures, the crusades included. Furthermore, many of the studies, such as Purcell's article, have merely duplicated the words of the chroniclers without examining the reasons for their ambivalence or even interpreting that ambivalence. The chroniclers were clear about their feelings toward women; they were obsessed with sexual purity and possessed deeply ingrained fears of the potency of female sexuality which tainted all discussions of and relations with women. Finally, there has been no discussion of the relationship between the crusaders and Muslim women and men in the literature, especially in terms of

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<sup>21</sup>Sarah Westphal-Wihl, "The Ladies' Tournament: Marriage, Sex,, and Honor in Thirteenth-Century Germany," Signs 14 (Winter 1989), 371-98.

<sup>22</sup>For an example of a study which examines the image and reality of women in the text of the *Chanson de Geste*, see Penny Schine Gold, The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

the construction of gender.<sup>23</sup>

This study will examine the crusades from the perspective of the various chronicles for evidence of women's participation and effect, from both a popular level and from the perspective of war, diplomacy and politics. As Joan Scott effectively argues:

High politics itself is a gendered concept, for it establishes its crucial importance and public power, the reasons for and the fact of its highest authority, precisely in its exclusion of women from its work. Gender is one of the recurrent references by which political power has been conceived, legitimated, and criticized. It refers to but also establishes the meaning of the male/female opposition. To vindicate political power, the reference must seem sure and fixed, outside human construction, part of the natural or divine order. In that way, the binary opposition and the social process of gender relationships both become part of the meaning of power itself . . .<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, women and female representations were present in the chronicles of the crusades, both physically and metaphorically. From a close reading of the western chronicles, supplemented by Greek and Arab writings, the presence of women in the crusades takes on four distinct patterns.

First, gender imagery informs the discourse on the holy war, most significantly in the language, direction and outcome of the crusades. The influence of femineity, that is womanishness as a pervasive image with essential characteristics -- vulnerability, feebleness and motherly nurturing traits -- is infused into the

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<sup>23</sup>There has been one study of ethnically diverse medieval Spain. The relationship between Spanish women and the Moors is a major theme. See Heath Dillard, Daughters of the Reconquest: Women in Castilian town society, 1100-1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>24</sup>Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," American Historical Review 91 (December 1986), 1073.

discourse of holy war. The interplay between the female, or the essence of femineity, and the male informs and is constructed by the language of war. As opposed to femininity, meaning "of or characteristic of women; effeminate", femineity embodies the concept of woman and "the quality or nature of the female sex; womanishness or womanliness."<sup>25</sup> That is, the metaphorical image or what is designated female or 'womanish' as opposed to purely feminine characteristics, incarnates the essence of femineity. For example, a warrior's performance in battle was evaluated according to whether his feats were considered to be *weak* and therefore *womanly*, or *courageous* and therefore *manly*. The hierarchical nature of the church and the structure of war embodied contemporary, patriarchal understandings of the relationship between what is termed male and female. The prescribed roles of women and men, then, were based on the 'natural' gender order, in turn were reflected in the language of war. For example, Pope Urban II preached that the desecration of Christian women in the Holy Lands was reason for all able-bodied Christian men to participate in the crusade. The metaphorical image of the female as weak, vulnerable, and passive and needing to be defended, that is of femineity, provides the conditions and motivation for the crusading movement.

Yet, women were also recognized as an essential element of and participants in the crusading movement, especially as

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<sup>25</sup>Oxford English Dictionary, 1981 compact edition.

circumstances advanced toward the settlement phase. All the preachers of the crusades acquiesced to the presence of women in some form, be they wives of leaders, campfollowers or prostitutes and domestics. Once in the Holy Land these women appropriated many roles for themselves as leaders, emotional inspirations, as warriors and participants in battle and as settlers of the vanquished territories.

A familiar theme running through the chronicles of the First and Second Crusades is that of sexual purity. There was an overwhelming fear in the crusader camps of the sensual nature of women and their demoralizing effect on the crusading forces. This attitude is informed by the fundamental medieval mistrust of women, especially and most significantly as sexual beings. For example, Tertullian, writing in the late second century, embodied what would become the medieval misogynistic tradition.

And do you not know that you are Eve? God's sentence still hangs over all your sex and this punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God.<sup>26</sup>

Women were, according to Tertullian, the port through which Satan crept into the hearts and minds of men and ultimately destroyed their spirits. The medieval Christian mind, moreover, was imbued with a fundamental attitude towards sex as dirty, unclean and sinful, an attitude inherited from a variety of sources including

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<sup>26</sup>Tertullian, De Cultu feminarum I, 1; quoted in Page Ann Du Bois, "'The devil's gateway': women's bodies and the earthly paradise," Women's Studies 7 (1980), 43. Also see the discussion of Tertullian and other early Church Fathers in James A. Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 62-74.

St. Paul, the patristic writers and such ancient sects as the Gnostics and Stoics.<sup>27</sup> In this pervasive configuration of sexuality, women were seen to be the more physical sex, defined by their inherently carnal, earth-bound and sensual character. Thus, being the inheritors of Eve's sin, women were both a "site of temptation" and "agents of [the] malevolent powers" of Eve.<sup>28</sup>

This belief in women's alluring and destructive character was augmented by the contemporary masculine fear of the dangers of sexuality. Constantinus Africanus, an eleventh-century monk, informed by Greek and Arabic medical theories, wrote that the act of frequent sexual intercourse was debilitating for certain types of men, and that it could make the body cold and weak. For example, he wrote that too much ejaculation dried out the body, causing a weakened system and eventually causing death.<sup>29</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup>James A. Brundage, "'Allas! That Evere Love Was Synne': Sex and Medieval Canon Law," Catholic Historical Review 72 (January 1986), 1-13.

<sup>28</sup>See especially Du Bois, "'The devil's gateway'", "44-46; and Brundage, "'Allas! That Evere Love Was Synne'", "7-9. Also see Vern L. Bullough, "Sex Education in Medieval Christianity," Journal of Sex Research 13 (August 1977), 185-96; Brundage, "'Better to Marry Than to Burn?' The Case of the Vanishing Dichotomy," in Frances Richardson Keller, ed., Views of Women's Lives In Western Tradition: Frontiers of the Past and the Future, Vol. 5 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen), 195-219; and Brundage, "Carnal delight: Canonistic theories of sexuality," in Stephan Kuttner and Kenneth Pennington, eds., Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law (Vatican City: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, 1980), 361-385.

<sup>29</sup>Paul Delany, "Constantinus Africanus' De Coitu: A Translation," The Chaucer Review 4 (January 1970), 55-65. Also see Joan Cadden, "Medieval Scientific and Medical Views of Sexuality: Questions of Propriety," Medievalia et Humanistica N.S. 14 (1986),



temptation of women's bodies, therefore, was the lure to indulgence, consumption and physical deterioration, leading to the "loss of power, sin and death."<sup>30</sup>

The fear of female sexuality in the crusades, then, was linked directly to the belief that men's virility and physical prowess would be weakened by sexual intercourse. Incidents of expelling the women from the camp are obvious attempts both to remove the impure temptation and eradicate sexual activity in the crusader camps. That is, the burden of responsibility and punishment fell on the women whose sexuality was perceived as irrepressible. James Brundage has called this fear of sexuality a simple "ensorious disapproval of sex."<sup>31</sup> Walter Porges writes that:

In times of crisis . . . the question of morality merged with the problem of morale. The preaching of the clergy against misconduct in general, and adultery in particular, was directed toward a very important end: to reconcile the soldiers to their Creator; to preserve the sense of righteousness which gave confidence to the Christian army, and in this way, to keep up its fighting spirit.<sup>32</sup>

The leaders of crusades and especially the clerics, therefore, were worried that the presence of women might exercise a demoralizing influence. The women posed a direct threat to the

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159; and Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>30</sup>Du Bois, "'The devil's gateway'," 45.

<sup>31</sup>Brundage, "Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity in the First Crusade," 57.

<sup>32</sup>Walter Porges, "The Clergy, the Poor, and the Non-Combatants on the First Crusade," Speculum 21 (January 1946), 14.

sexual integrity of the crusaders, thus also threatening their military victory. This apprehensiveness caused the leaders to take such drastic measures as the occasional expulsion of the women from the camp, the enactment of strict sexual codes and the development of austere regimens of prayer and abstinence.

Finally, there was a distinct view of the character and actions of Muslim women and men. Muslim men were seen to be intrinsically sexual creatures who were constantly devising new methods of capturing and defiling virtuous Christian women. The crusaders referred to Muslim men as destructive and duplicitous, without the capacity for redemption, whereas Christian men were governed by reason. Muslim women, on the other hand, while spurned for their religion, were used as a source of labour. They were also viewed as a potential source of empowerment for Christian knights. That is, Muslim women, as a result of their gender, were potential targets for the conquests of Christian knights. They were inherently redeemable, specifically because of their gender. The conversion and sexual conquest of Muslim women combined two central elements of chivalrous culture: battles and women. An examination of relations with Muslims reveals many aspects of the crusaders' attitudes toward gender.

These four themes cumulatively transmogrify into a distinctive and dichotomous perception of the qualities and interpretation of femineity and woman. These mythical crusading women were creatures with the dual nature of temptress and innocent, degenerate and vital, depraved and admirable. These

dualities existed in the fluid new social organization of the Levant wherein many other new social roles were founded and contained, while at the same time reflecting the gendered social codes of the Christian west. The women of the First and Second Crusades, in either a real or abstract understanding, were both necessary and hated aspects of the crusade.

A problem central to the explication of these themes, nevertheless, and to many studies of medieval women, is the basic fact that the chronicles were written by men, for men and about men. So, then, how do we proceed with a discussion about women's participation in and influence on the crusading movement? It is important to realize from the outset that those with a greater access to power will be disproportionately represented in documents and thus in their contribution to the historical record. In the Middle Ages the group with access to power was by definition male; thus all ideas of femaleness were created and advanced by men. As Caroline Walker Bynum says:

Female creativity must be facilitated by men; female saints are not canonized or revered unless they are in some way religiously useful to men; female rejection of family and fertility must be conceptualized by men as acceptance of other communal and generative possibilities.<sup>33</sup>

So, too, when discussing female agency of any kind in the Middle Ages, a certain amount of sensitivity and innovative reading is required to unearth the sparse references to women from the

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<sup>33</sup>Caroline Walker Bynum, "In Praise of Fragments: History in the Comic Mode," in Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 17.

chronicles. As Jo Ann McNamara writes, the histories of women are ". . . fractured by hostile sources. This is the history we are all trained not to write; a history in confrontation with our sources rather than in conformity with them." Further she writes:

When we do hear their voices directly, these voices have been sculpted and shaped to serve the purposes of their male recorders. Thus women who were once whole and complex appear to us only as broken images.<sup>34</sup>

The voices of the women of the crusades are muted, fractured and distorted by the chroniclers, most of who were clerics.

The only way we can know the women of the crusades is through the mediation of men's voices. The discussions of women in the chronicles are moulded by the perceptions of the male authors; they were constructed by clerics who expected and therefore realized a certain vision of women through their writings. Gabrielle Spiegel notes, that:

. . . texts both mirror and generate social realities, are constituted by and constitute the social and discursive formations which they may sustain, resist, contest, or seek to transform, depending on the case at hand.<sup>35</sup>

The chronicles of the First and Second Crusade, then, illustrate the social reality of the Christian west and its transportation to the Holy Lands. In addition, they formed the opinion,

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<sup>34</sup>Jo Ann McNamara, "De quibusdam mulieribus: Reading Women's History From Hostile Sources," in Joel T. Rosenthal, ed., Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 239, 251-52.

<sup>35</sup>Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," Speculum 65 (January 1990), 77.

especially in the removed West, of the social construction of gender roles in the crusading movement.

The process of extricating the images of women, furthermore, is arduous and frustrating. As Linda Gordon writes:

The work historians must do in order to find texts, which they make into evidence, inclines some to a sense that the sources speak to us. I have experienced research as requiring me to be very quiet when reading documents so that I can "hear" them speak. . . . Certainly, this intimacy with sources makes us feel at times like mediums, merely transmitting the past by making ourselves empty.<sup>36</sup>

The muteness about women of both the traditional historiography and the historical documents reflects an entrenched bias which confronts the reader insistently and continuously throughout a study of this kind. Even under deeply hushed almost clairvoyant circumstances, it is yet difficult to elicit female voices from the past, so we must rely on remnants divined from the voices of men. As Bynum says, "Historians, like the fishes of the sea, regurgitate fragments," and these fragments form the pieces of the colourful mosaic of women's history.<sup>37</sup> Maureen Purcell and Régine Pernoud have shown that there were women present on the crusades.<sup>38</sup> They are represented in the chronicles and, following McLaughlin and Solterer, not only were they present and

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<sup>36</sup>Linda Gordon, "AHR Forum: Comments on *That Noble Dream*," American Historical Review 95 (June 1991), 684.

<sup>37</sup>Bynum, "History in the Comic Mode," 14. Also see Judith Bennett, "Feminism and History," Gender and History 1 (Autumn 1989), 251-72; and Jacqueline Murray, "Thinking about Gender: Medieval Perspectives and Modern Polemics," unpublished paper.

<sup>38</sup>Purcell, "Women Crusaders: a Temporary Canonical Aberration?" 57-64; and Pernoud, La femme au temps des Crousades.

sometimes active participants, the image of women warriors emanating from the crusade literature in turn influenced western imagery of women in war.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, femineity is present, often in binary opposition to what is explicit, but we can learn from it all the same.

When reading about the crusades, a movement which spanned the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries and continued in spurts thereafter, it is important to recognize that they were not a single, organized and cogent movement. The term *crusade* is in itself problematic. The idea of a holy war or crusade, while originating with St. Augustine in the fourth century, was never utilized, *per se*, before the eleventh century.<sup>40</sup> The crusading schema was uniquely articulated by Urban II, and rehearsed and executed at the same time by the initial crusading hordes who embarked upon the journey to the Holy Land. In the early campaigns, the participants were referred to as *peregrini*, that is, as pilgrims, not as warriors or settlers despite their explicitly bellicose aim to retake the Holy Land from infidel hands. It was not until the thirteenth century that crusaders were labelled *crucesignati*, those signed with the cross, with any

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<sup>39</sup>McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: gender, warfare and society," 193-209; and Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," 522-49.

<sup>40</sup>See H.E.J.Cowdrey, "The Genesis of the Crusades: the Springs of Western Ideas of the Holy War," in Patrick Murphy, ed., The Holy War (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 9-32.

frequency.<sup>41</sup> As Edward Peters has said, "The 'First Crusade' was born, in effect, in the minds of men who had already lived through it."<sup>42</sup> These ideas are important to any discussion of women, since the First Crusade set the precedent for all later crusading ventures. As E.O. Blake observed:

This growing view of a distinctive religious exercise was taken up in the planning of a repeat performance, deliberately based on precedent, thus sharpening the outline of the model into what was from then the First Crusade. After this it would be no longer necessary to appeal to the originally separate forms of lay devotion, 'holy' war and pilgrimage in recruiting for a chosen campaign: the 'crusade' had its own terms of reference -- vocabulary of appeal, organization and conditioned response.<sup>43</sup>

The role constructed for women in the First Crusade, therefore, would be the pattern for later crusades and ultimately influenced notions about woman as pilgrim for the next two centuries.

It is equally significant that the motivations behind the First Crusade were individual and almost purely religious. Urban's speech at Clermont inspired the multitudes who were driven by a sense of spiritual longing which could be satiated only by travelling to Jerusalem in the name of their saviour.

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<sup>41</sup>James A. Brundage, "Cruce signari: The Rite for Taking the Cross in England," Traditio 22 (1966), 289-310.

<sup>42</sup>Edward Peters, "Introduction," The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials, trans. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), xvi. Also see, Jonathan Riley-Smith, The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1986).

<sup>43</sup>E.O. Blake, "The Formation of the 'Crusade Idea,'" Journal of Ecclesiastical History 21 (1970), 20.

Originally they thought of themselves as armed pilgrims.<sup>44</sup>

Jonathan Riley-Smith has a very particular view of the motivations for crusading. He says:

. . . love, even in the debased form in which it was presented to potential crusaders, was theologically essential to the crusading movement, because for Christians in all ages sacred violence cannot be proposed on any grounds save that of love. And the idea of charity contributed to the crusades' attraction in that . . . contemporaries really did feel that they were engaging in something morally satisfying.<sup>45</sup>

Likewise, the massive response to the call for the First Crusade is evidence of the renewed spirituality of the central Middle Ages, of the profundity of feeling waiting to explode.

The First Crusade (1096 to 1099) elicited emotions which would be replayed in most subsequent crusades in the twelfth century, though to a lesser degree. Essentially, the Second Crusade (1148) has been viewed as a failure, a movement that was ". . . modeled slavishly on the First Crusade, but without its mystic power, and lacking the vigorous secular quality of the Third and Fourth Crusades."<sup>46</sup> The leaders of the Second Crusade tried to duplicate the First, although the circumstances were significantly altered, and they met with a more unified

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<sup>44</sup>Rosalind Hill, "Crusading Warfare: A Camp-follower's View, 1097-1120," in R. Allen Brown, ed., Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies I - 1978 (Haverhill: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1979), 76.

<sup>45</sup>Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an Act of Love," History 65 (June 1980), 191.

<sup>46</sup>Virginia G. Berry, "The Second Crusade," in Kenneth M. Setton and Marshall W. Baldwin, eds., A History of the Crusades, Volume One: The First Hundred Years (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), 463.



Turkish kingdom, increased lay participation and depleted grassroots commitment. It was also more of a fractured enterprise, with independent armies commanded by French, German and English leaders; segments travelled by land or by sea; and some contingents headed to the Holy Land and others to Portugal. The Second Crusade, coming 52 years after the start of the First, was also less spontaneous and less of a movement in and of itself. It was, therefore, more inclined to failure.<sup>47</sup>

These characteristics of the crusades are reflected in the tone, variety and abundance of the chronicles. The First Crusade engendered a host of writings nearly all of which were spiritually inspired and of varying quality and depth. The result is that the First Crusade is documented with much greater consistency and diversity than the Second. The chroniclers of the Second Crusade were less prolific and their works were shorter and less descriptive on the whole. Thus, the historical record is inevitably skewed toward the earlier period.

The chronicles of the First Crusade are a motley assortment written during or after the crusade, by both eyewitnesses and persons who never left the West. They employ both aspects of literary allusion and substantive descriptions. One author has suggested that "In general . . . the literary merit of [the chronicles] consists chiefly in their vivid realism, which the

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<sup>47</sup>Giles Constable, "The Second Crusade as Seen By Contemporaries," Traditio 9 (1953), 213-79.

very crudeness of expression only serves to accentuate."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Krey has suggested that the numerous chronicles of the First Crusade can be attributed not to the personal motives of the individual authors, or to the thirst for information about the war on the homefront, but rather to the deep religious significance accorded to the movement itself. Since the crusades were of such religious consequence, several writers were inspired to take up the pen.

The chroniclers of the First Crusade were all men, the majority of whom were clerics. We know much more about some of the writers than others. Fulcher of Chartres, one of the main sources for this study, was the chaplain to Baldwin I, a western noble and first king of Jerusalem, and an eyewitness to the First Crusade. His purpose for writing a chronicle was both to preserve the feats of the Franks for posterity and to attract support for subsequent crusades to the Middle East.<sup>49</sup> Because he was chiefly interested in popularizing the crusades and attracting settlers to the Holy Land, Fulcher tends to ignore political events. His account, written during the crusade and completed around 1127, is characterized by disdain for the

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<sup>48</sup>Krey, The First Crusade, 3.

<sup>49</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127, trans. Frances Rita Ryan, ed. Harold S. Fink. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 21. For other sources on the First Crusade, also see Peters, trans., The First Crusade; James A. Brundage, trans., The Crusades: A Documentary Survey (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962); Régine Pernoud, The Crusades, trans. Enid McLeod (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1963); and Krey, The First Crusade.

Muslims and an intense admiration of Urban II and the Cluniac reform movement.<sup>50</sup>

The anonymous Gesta Francorum written around the year 1101, is the first complete account of the crusade.<sup>51</sup> Little is known about the author; some speculate that he was Norman, either from southern Italy or France, though it is certain that he accompanied the Norman crusade leader, Bohemond, and was an eyewitness to the events he reports.<sup>52</sup> The great merit of this account is that it was probably written during or very shortly after the First Crusade, thus it is more likely to be an accurate picture, not blurred by hindsight or subsequent events. Also, its author was likely a military man, although a lesser knight, as opposed to a member of the clergy, thus he is not as morally dogmatic as some. Finally, it was enormously influential and every other chronicle of the First Crusade relies either directly or indirectly on the Gesta Francorum for many dates and events. Thus, in many ways it set the tone for the subsequent development of the crusading discourse.

Another account was written by Raymond D'Aguilers, the chaplain of Raymond, Count of Toulouse, one of the wealthiest

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<sup>50</sup>Harold S. Fink, "Introduction," A History of the Expedition, 37.

<sup>51</sup>Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum, or The Deeds of the Franks and Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem, trans. and ed. Rosalind Hill (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962).

<sup>52</sup>Krey, The First Crusade, 7-8.

leaders on the crusade.<sup>53</sup> His book can be seen primarily as a defense of the authenticity of the controversial Holy Lance found at Antioch, and secondarily as a record of the exploits of Count Raymond, Bishop Adhèmar and their assembly. While the author relied considerably on the Gesta Francorum, large portions of his work are original, thus making it a credible and valuable source.

Peter Tudebode's account of the First Crusade is the least original of the accounts because it is mostly derivative.<sup>54</sup> Peter was a priest from Civray, who wrote his chronicle after those of the Anonymous and Raymond D'Aguilers. He borrows quite heavily from both, especially from the Gesta Francorum. Peter's account differs in some aspects, for example, he includes information on the death of his brother in Antioch, an event at which he claims to have been present. Mainly, however, Peter Tudebode's chronicle is a corroboration of the work of others.

There are a number of other chronicles, for example that by Ekkehard, Abbot of Aura. Ekkehard wrote an account of the First Crusade, entitled Hierosolymita, based, again, largely on the Gesta Francorum. He was a monk at Corvey when the crusading movement started, and later accompanied a band to Joppa in 1101. The Gesta Tancredi is one of the only sources written by a layman, Raoul de Caen. He was a Norman knight who was educated

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<sup>53</sup>Raymond D'Aguilers, Historia Francorum Qui Ceperunt Iherusalem, trans. John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1968).

<sup>54</sup>Peter Tudebode, Historia de Hierosolymitano Itenere, trans. John Hugh Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974).

by Arnulf, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and went to Antioch in 1107. He provides a reliable account of the events he witnessed, although he is extremely partisan and hostile to both the Emperor Alexius and Count Raymond. Albert of Aix, although he never visited the Holy Land, wrote his Liber Christianae about the First Crusade and the history of the Holy Land to 1120. His work relies, he contends, on the oral and written testimony of participants but it is largely legendary and is not corroborated by other authors.

Three other western authors who also did not participate in the crusades wrote accounts based on other sources or oral history. Robert the Monk, believed to be present at Urban II's speech at Clermont, was the Abbot of Saint-Remi of Rheims. His Hierosolymitana Expositio, was extremely popular, judging from the number of manuscripts which survive. Guibert of Nogent, a prominent scholar, also wrote a chronicle of the First Crusade based on the Gesta Francorum. His work, composed between 1108-1112 while he was Abbot of Nogent, is entitled Gesta Dei per Francos. Finally, Balderic, Archbishop of Dol, put his name on a chronicle, Historia Hierosolymitana, which was little more than an edition of the Anonymous.<sup>55</sup>

Odericus Vitalis was a monk at the abbey of St. Evroult in northern France, whose entire history was written from the accounts of eye-witnesses travelling through France who stopped

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<sup>55</sup>The above discussion was based in part on the Introduction to Krey, The First Crusade, 1-31.

at his famous abbey and from the chronicles of others. Odericus' Ecclesiastical History is a very reliable and comprehensive account of European history in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Odericus' chronicle ends in 1141 providing an abundance of information on the First Crusade and the Latin Kingdom up to that date.<sup>56</sup>

Other accounts of the First Crusade include that of William of Tyre who wrote two generations after the fact from the perspective of the Latin Kingdom. William's major work, a survey of the Latin Kingdom beginning with the First Crusade of 1096, is entitled Historia Ierosolymitana. It was begun in 1167 and completed in 1184.<sup>57</sup> William was born in the Levant and educated in the West but he spent most of his life in the East as Archbishop of Tyre. His history is marred by the fact that it is retrospective, but it is nevertheless a work notable for its first hand account of events in the Latin Kingdom between 1130 and 1160, including the Second Crusade. By far the bulkiest, William of Tyre's account of the crusaders in the East is one of the most reliable, even if it is vehemently anti-Greek.

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<sup>56</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, trans. Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854-56), Vols. 3 and 4.

<sup>57</sup>There are two English sources for William. The first was translated from the French in 1481 by William Caxton, Godeffroy of Bologne, or The Siege and Conqueste of Jerusalem by William, Archbishop of Tyre, ed. Mary Noyes Colvin (London: Oxford University Press, 1893), and a modern translation from the original latin version, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, ed. and trans. Emily Atwater Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 2 volumes.

William of Malmesbury's work was written entirely in England and contains little or no useful information concerning the crusades. His book centres not on the crusades, but on the history of the English kings, to which the First and Second Crusades are incidental. He naively relates his love of truth, saying, "I shall now describe the expedition to Jerusalem, relating in my own words what was seen and endured by others."<sup>58</sup> This intent, however, is overshadowed by his preoccupation with the movement of the English kings who did not participate in a crusade until the late twelfth century.

Odo of Deuil, author of the De Profectione Ludovic VII in orientem, writes specifically to eulogize the "actions, ideas and virtues" of the king of France, Louis VII.<sup>59</sup> He accompanied Louis on the Second Crusade in 1147-48 and relates first hand information about the French army. Odo of Deuil was a monk and chaplain at St. Denis. His chronicle takes the form of a letter written to his abbot, Suger, reporting on the events and, he hopes, providing useful information for those planning to undertake such a pilgrimage in the future. Odo's account is peculiar for the fact that he never once mentions the wife of Louis VII, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and his chronicle is consequently of little value for this study.

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<sup>58</sup>William of Malmesbury, Chronicle of the Kings of England from the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen, ed. J.A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), 355.

<sup>59</sup>Odo of Deuil, De profectione Ludovic VII in orientem, ed. and trans. Virginia G. Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), xvii.

Otto of Freising, provides the only German chronicle of the Second Crusade. He was the immensely powerful Bishop of Freising and the uncle of the emperor Frederick Barbarossa. His two accounts are primarily German national histories and focus on the crusades only in so far as they touched upon the course of events in Germany.<sup>60</sup> His is a highly partisan chronicle and does not accord much importance to the whole crusading movement, especially since Frederick Barbarossa did not participate.

The anonymous chronicle of the conquest of Lisbon in 1147, the only important success of the Second Crusade, fits into the genre of crusading literature. Although it does not discuss a crusade to the Holy Land, it was a direct outgrowth of the preaching of the crusades in France and England and does not differ substantially from other crusade literature. It was written by a Norman cleric who was also an active military participant.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, John of Salisbury's Historia Pontificalis retells the history of the Second Crusade from a purely ecclesiastical perspective. John did not participate in the crusade, and indeed never ventured to the Middle East. He was, however, most concerned about the impact of the Crusade, as it pertained to the

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<sup>60</sup>Otto, Bishop of Freising, The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D., trans. C.C. Mierow, ed. by Austin P. Evans and Charles Knapp (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928); and Otto of Freising, The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa by Otto of Freising and continuator, Rahewin, trans. by C.C. Mierow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).

<sup>61</sup>De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi - The Conquest of Lisbon, trans. Charles Wendell David (New York: Octagon Books, 1936).



divorce of Louis VII and Eleanor of Aquitaine which had dramatic results for Western political alliances.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to these Western sources, there are some extant Greek and Arabic chronicles which provide an alternate view of the crusades. The most important was written by Anna Commena, an eyewitness to the First Crusade.<sup>63</sup> Commena provides a Greek diplomat's view of the invasion of the Norman hordes. She wrote The Alexiad with the express purpose of vindicating her father, the Emperor Alexius Commenus, and absolving him from the guilt of the crusades. She was fervently anti-Norman and her work is flawed by inaccuracies and mistakes in chronology. Nevertheless it provides significant material which supplements the western sources.

The Arabic chroniclers provide interesting and curious though less reliable information. The chronicles of Imad ad-Din, Beha ad-Din and Ibn al-Qalanisi each detail to some extent the lunacy and perfidiousness of the crusaders. At times they are derogatory and outrageous. For example, Usamah ibn-Munqidh tells the tale of two aged women in a three-legged race which he

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<sup>62</sup>John of Salisbury, Historia Pontificalis: Memoirs of the Papal Court, trans. Marjorie Chibnall (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1945).

<sup>63</sup>Anna Commena, The Alexiad of Anna Commena, trans. E.R.A. Sewter (Markham: Penguin Books, 1987). And while Anna Commena's account is one of the most interesting because it was written by a woman, The Alexiad actually provides no useful information on the role of women in the crusades.

describes as the "strange" entertainment of the Franks.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, some of the images of western women which Muslim authors use are revealing. For example Beha ad-Din wrote fabulous tales of furious transvestites in battle.<sup>65</sup> When read with a degree of caution, Arabic chronicles can be a useful supplement to Western sources.

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Because women were denied a voice and a place in history, the role and images of women in the First and Second Crusades need to be reclaimed. They were neither the Amazonian viragoes of Thomas Fuller, nor the mute aberrations of Maureen Purcell. Rather, they were a sanctioned crusading body who participated in and effected the crusading movement through their assistance in battle, as images of inspiration or sexual temptation. At once an essential and despised element of the crusades, the women of the eleventh and twelfth century crusades embodied and perpetuated an image of duality reminiscent of St. Augustine's description of sin as a "necessary evil."

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<sup>64</sup>Usamah ibn-Munqidh, An Arab-Syrian Gentleman in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah ibn-Munqidh, trans Philip K. Hitti (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 167.

<sup>65</sup>Also see Francesco Gabrieli, trans. and ed., Arab Historians of the Crusades, trans. E.J. Costello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Ibn al-Qalanisi, The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades: Extracted and Translated from the Chronicle of Ibn al-Qalanisi, trans. H.A.R. Gibb (London: Luzac and Co., 1932); W.R. Taylor, "A New Syriac Fragment Dealing with Incidents in the Second Crusade," The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 11 (1929-30), 120-130; and H.A.R. Gibb, ed., and A.S. Tutton, trans., "The First and Second Crusade from an Anonymous Syriac Chronicle," Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1933), 69-101.

Chapter 2  
**Weak and Violated:**  
**Gender Imagery and the Language of War**

The whole of the medieval crusading endeavour has been viewed traditionally as an inherently male-sponsored, male-led event. It was preached by a male clerical hierarchy, commanded by an elite male ruling class and guided by male spiritual directors. The presence of women as a metaphor - the pervasive female trope - haunts the enterprise, however, in its imagery, language, direction and outcome. The construction of gender is embedded in the discourse surrounding the crusades, in how it was advocated and in the images utilized in the military propaganda. In patriarchal societies, such as eleventh- and twelfth-century Europe, as Joan Scott writes:

Attention to gender is often not explicit, but it is nonetheless a crucial part of the organization of equality or inequality. Hierarchical structures rely on generalized understandings of the so-called natural relationship between male and female.<sup>1</sup>

Gendered 'coding' of terms and images to establish their meanings, then, underlies the discussion of the crusades in the chronicles. Femininity, defined as a universal image with essential characteristics - vulnerability, feebleness and motherly, nurturing traits - infused and constructed the medieval discourse of holy war.

The crusading fervour which swept Europe was rooted in the speech of Urban II at Clermont on 27 November 1095. This speech has been considered as a most effective rallying cry, a call

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<sup>1</sup>Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," American Historical Review 91 (December 1986), 1073.

answered by an overwhelming number of zealous pilgrims from all levels of society.<sup>2</sup> The pope used the image of desecrated, defenceless women to fire the sensitivities of the would-be-crusaders in the audience. William of Tyre, in his embellishment of Urban's speech, tells of the evils committed by the pagans in Jerusalem. "Priests and Levites are slain in the sanctuaries," he writes, "Virgins are forced to choose between prostitution and death by torture; nor do matrons reap any advantage from their more mature years."<sup>3</sup> All women, married and single, were ravished or killed by the pagans. It is telling that William chose to refer to the women as both virgins and matrons, softer and more pleasing appellations than 'married', 'single' or some other form which may be misconstrued as prostitute or the like. In other words, they are presented as women for whom it is worthwhile to engage in war.

Robert the Monk, in another report on Urban's speech, writes:

What shall I say of the abominable rape of the women? To speak of it is worse than to be silent. The kingdom of the Greeks is now dismembered by them and deprived of territory so vast in extent that it can not be traversed in a march of

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<sup>2</sup>Dana C. Munro, "The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont," American Historical Review 11 (January 1905), 231-42; and H.E.J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," History 55 (1970), 177-88.

<sup>3</sup>William, Archbishop of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, trans. E.A. Babcock and August C. Krey (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 1:90. The plight of Muslim women and children in the hands of the crusaders, was also a powerful theme used to evoke Muslim sentiment for war. See Hadia Dajani-Shakeel, "Jihad in Twelfth-Century Arabic Poetry: A Moral and Religious Force to Counter the Crusades," The Muslim World 66 (April 1976), 101.

two months. On whom, therefore, is the task of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you?<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, this was an appeal to the emotions of the men in the crowd who were socialized to be protectors. It was the responsibility of Christian knights to safeguard Christian women from the threat of the infidels. Moreover, the threat was portrayed as an overtly sexual one, no doubt because this would likely be interpreted as a more serious menace than mere physical imperilment. That is, Christian women raped by Muslim men, the so-called 'unclean' race, would be a grave affront to all Christianity. Furthermore, the perception of women as a group to be protected from violation, along with the Holy Land, implies that women were perceived to be passive and supple. The safety of these women is grouped with the inviolability of the Greeks' land. The sanctity of the Holy Land and of the sexual purity of the women are grouped in a 'natural' fashion, lending a territorial, protective quality to the discussion of the violation of their rights.

In a related fashion, the defence and protection of the Holy Land is likened to the security of a woman. The description of the Holy Land takes on a tone of femineity. William of Tyre writes:

The cradle of our faith, the native land of our Lord, and the mother of salvation, is now forcibly held by a people

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<sup>4</sup>Robert the Monk, Hierosolymitana Expeditio, quoted in August C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants (Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press, 1958), 31.

without God, the son of the Egyptian handmaiden . . . Her temple is become as a woman without honour and her glorious vessels are carried away into captivity.<sup>5</sup>

In this instance, her refers to the Holy Land, specifically Jerusalem, which is described as a woman violated and destitute. Furthermore, the city, represented as a defenceless woman, is incapable of fighting off incursions, and is thus defiled and cheapened by 'her' captors. With equally sexual overtones, Saint Bernard describes the actions of the Saracens in the Holy Land prior to the Second Crusade.

They pant - O the pity of it! - with sacrilegious jaws for the very shrine of the Christian religion and attempt to profane and to trample underfoot the very resting place wherein for us our Life slumbered in death.<sup>6</sup>

These traditionally Christian lands, the birthplace of the Saviour, were subject to the most heinous encroachments by the infidels, people without respect for the sanctity of Christianity. This lack of respect leads directly to the 'profaning' of their sacred places. William of Tyre describes the advance of the Persians on Antioch, saying, "That noble and splendid mistress of many provinces, the first seat of the prince of the apostles, became a tributary of the infidels."<sup>7</sup> The protection of holy cities is of paramount importance and the

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<sup>5</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:89 (my emphasis).

<sup>6</sup>Saint Bernard in a letter to eastern Franks, 1146, in Otto of Freising, The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa by Otto of Freising and his continuator, Rahewin, trans. C.C. Mierow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 77.

<sup>7</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:79.

language used to inspire that security appeals to the 'man' in the fighters. Antioch becomes a secondary possession of the Muslims, an image designed to inspire outrage and action. Odericus Vitalis tells us that around 1105, the crusaders left Jerusalem unprotected and under seige, entreating King Baldwin to intervene. "Hasten . . . brave king, to return to the holy city, lest it should be beset by this immense army while it has no protector, and the mother and her children perish by a sudden assault."<sup>8</sup> In another place, Odericus Vitalis, describing the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, says:

On the eighth of the ide of June, the Christians invested Jerusalem, not as step-sons approaching mother-in-law, but as children embracing their parent; for her friends and sons surrounded her to fetter the brood of aliens and bastards, not to deprive her of her freedom, but to set her free . . . Jerusalem, therefore, beset and surrounded by her sons, while within she was profaned by a bastard population.<sup>9</sup>

The susceptible city embodies female traits of vulnerability, pliability and maternal importance. The safety of these cities takes on very personal, family-like importance as the men are incited to protect their 'mothers' from being polluted by 'bastard' populations of, presumably, excessively immoral, sexual and illicit peoples. The fighters become the brood of a benevolent though vulnerable matron to whom they are bound by honour to provide protection.

Similarly, in discussing the celebrations in Jerusalem that

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<sup>8</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, trans. Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. bohn, 1854-56), 3:301.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 169.

followed the news that Tyre had surrendered, Fulcher of Chartres reports that there were great displays and congratulations all around. Fulcher went on to write:

Justly Jerusalem like a mother rejoices over her daughter Tyre at whose right hand she sits crowned as befits her rank. And Babylon mourns the loss of her prestige, which sustained her until recently, and the loss of her hostile fleet, which she used to send out against us each year.<sup>10</sup>

In another example, in a letter from the Patriarch of Jerusalem written in January 1098 calling for more crusaders, the author writes:

. . . our spiritual Mother Church calls out: 'Come, my most beloved sons, come to me, retake the crown from the hands of the sons of idolatry, who rise against me -- the crown from the beginning of the world predestined for you . . .'<sup>11</sup>

The similarity of these two quotations lies in the use of distinct and unmistakable female imagery to represent political states, cities and the church. The mother church beckons her sons to protect their patrimony, in this case the Holy Land. Implicit in this statement is a gendered breakdown of military power; it is the men who are being summoned to war and the women who should remain. These passages, especially the latter, exemplify the male/female dichotomy inherent in the feudal political structure. By constructing the church and the state as female motifs, women are explicitly excluded from the hierarchy, but equally the language created is inclusive given that the

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<sup>10</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 267. The chroniclers frequently use "Babylon" to refer to Egypt.

<sup>11</sup>The Patriarch of Jerusalem to all the bishops of the West. Written from camp at Antioch, January 1098; as quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 143.



image of femineity is the entity in dispute, or needing to be saved and protected. By saving the Holy Land, the men would be revering mother church, making the Holy Land a preserve for all Christians and reclaiming their rightful patrimony. Similarly, in their loss, the Babylonians acquiesce to the weakness of their state and betray their citizens. The women, tacitly and theoretically uninvolved in the fighting, are exposed by the errant actions of their navy. Babylon has lost "her prestige", the downfall of all "her" citizens.

Additionally, women were regarded as both a possession to be protected and a source of pride. William of Tyre, during the battle for Jaffa, says that:

Although few in numbers and far unequal to their foes in strength, they were fighting for their wives and children, for liberty and for country -- for everything, in fact, on behalf of which man deems it noble to die.<sup>12</sup>

The wives of these men, in addition to their other material possessions, provided inspiration to fight, indeed to vanquish the infidels. Conversely, a sign that a battle was not going favourably was the inability of the crusaders to provide protection for the women. Odericus Vitalis writes of the fighting before Antioch that:

No one had any assurance of his safety, whether priest or woman, common soldier or knight. Both parties despaired of ever seeing each other again. Those who were dear to each other embraced by turns, and all were melted to tears.<sup>13</sup>

Whereas normally the women would be sure of their safety, in this

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<sup>12</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:502.

<sup>13</sup>Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, 3:113.

instance they were not, thus the battle was a source of great anxiety equally for the noncombatants and the fighters. The men failed the test of their military prowess by their inability to protect the women. In a parallel passage, William of Tyre says:

But the Christians, though few in number, were yet glowing with faith and afire with righteous zeal for their country, their wives, and their children. They seized their arms and, issuing forth from the city, rushed as with one mind against the foe.<sup>14</sup>

These are expressions of protective paternalism; they are direct appeals to the manhood of the warriors exemplifying the expendability of the individual for national strength in the name of the women and children. "Afire with righteous zeal" denotes an overwhelming pride and inspiration based on the nationality and family status of the individual. A warrior's wife and children provide images to lead him into glorious battle in order to protect the vulnerable from the pagans.

In addition to appealing to the fighting nature of the men to protect the defenceless women abroad, Pope Urban admonished the increasingly violent men of Europe to give up their worthless, adulterous and plundering ways, and sought to divert their marauding energy to the rescue of the Holy Land. A common theory which historians have used to explain the impetus for the crusading movement suggests that the Pope was attempting to drain off the excess energy of landless younger sons of feudal lords as

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<sup>14</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 2:12.

a way of maintaining peace in an increasingly violent Europe.<sup>15</sup> Many of the reports of Urban's speech are peppered with references to the crimes of the potential crusaders and their consequent need to redeem themselves. William of Tyre, describing, "the many forms of wickedness to which the world was subject at the time," writes that:

Every kind of fornication was practised openly and without shame, as though it were legitimate. Not even among those connected by blood or marriage were the ties of matrimony safe. Continence, dear to the angels and to God, had been bidden to depart like a worthless thing.<sup>16</sup>

According to William the social fabric of pre-Crusade Europe had fallen apart and the principles of the people were bankrupt. Immoral sexual indulgence was rampant and, as a consequence, medieval Europeans, especially the men, were sorely in need of both redemptive actions and chastening. According to Balderic of Dol, the Pope indicted the Franks for their worthless ways.

You, the oppressors of children, plunderers of widows; you, guilty of homicide, of sacrilege, robbers of another's rights; you who await the pay of thieves for the shedding of Christian blood -- as vultures smell fetid corpses so do you sense battles from afar and rush to them eagerly.<sup>17</sup>

The bloodthirsty crowds of Europe were completely unscrupulous

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<sup>15</sup>The practice of primogeniture in feudal Europe created a class of younger, landless, sons with military training but without an outlet for their energy or time. According to Georges Duby, this created difficulties in Europe, with increased marauding, violence, thefts, and so on because of the lawlessness which resulted from the undiverted energy of these men. See Georges Duby, The Chivalrous Society, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 120, 130-32.

<sup>16</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:75-76.

<sup>17</sup>Balderic of Dol, Historia Hierosolymitana, as quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 35.

and indiscriminate in their behaviour, causing anguish for their spiritual leaders and for those who would remain at home during the First Crusade. Guibert of Nogent reports that Urban ended his speech with a fierce admonition that the families of the crusaders were to be inviolate.

Furthermore, the Pope condemned with a fearful anathema all those who dared to molest the wives, children, and possessions of these who were going on this journey for God . . .<sup>18</sup>

The unprotected women and children left behind were to remain unmolested by the men who remained, both as a method of facilitating the movement and of restraining the lawless at home. Another part of the strategy to ensure internal peace in Europe was the 'Truce of God' reading, "Be it enacted, that monks, clergymen, women, and those who may be with them, shall remain in peace every day . . ."<sup>19</sup> This was a declaration of peace and order in Europe instituted at the Council of Clermont as a means of enforcing order upon those who remained at home, again specifically the men. Through moral and emotional suasion, the Pope hoped to protect the defenceless women and children who remained at home from the marauding bands of men by both instituting the Peace of God and by sending the troublemakers to

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<sup>18</sup>Guibert of Nogent, Gesta Dei per Francos, as quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 40.

<sup>19</sup>In The First Canon of the Council of Clermont; William of Malmesbury, Book IV, Chapter 2, Rolls Series, Latin; as quoted in D.C. Munro, ed., "Letters of the Crusaders," Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History (Philadelphia: Department of History, University of Pennsylvania, 1897), 2:8. Also see H.E.J. Cowdrey, "The Peace and Truth of God in the Eleventh Century," Past and Present 46 (1970), 42-67.

the Holy Lands. In this way, the call for crusading forces is reinforced by the image of defenceless women who theoretically will be released from the oppressive threat of violence at home by the purgative crusading movement.

Many of the chronicles, furthermore, make it plain that Urban did not encourage women to go along with the earliest crusaders, especially alone. Robert the Monk reports Urban's conditions:

And we do not command or advise that the old, the feeble, or those unfit for bearing arms, undertake this journey; nor ought women to set out at all without their husbands, or brothers, or legal guardians. For such are more of a hindrance than aid, more of a burden than an advantage.<sup>20</sup>

While Urban may have been expressing concern about the potency of female sexuality, specifically of the perceived power of women to corrupt the fighting men with overpowering sexual temptation, he also might have been uneasy about his own images of sexually harassed Christian women. Women were perceived to be vulnerable to attack and, thus, inevitably they required protection. Robert stated openly that every woman should be accompanied by a man, making it clear that he was anxious about unattended women who had the potential to divert the energies of the army away from the capture of Jerusalem by their seductive presence.<sup>21</sup> There is an implicit understanding in this passage by Robert the Monk that it was men alone who were being called to fight for the Holy

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<sup>20</sup>Robert the Monk, quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 32.

<sup>21</sup>Also see Chapter 4, "Nuisances and Tempresses: Sexual Purity and Military Victory," for a fuller discussion of this topic.

Land. The presence of women would only impede the enterprise.

Robert the Monk's work also suggests that men had to be careful not to be overly materialistic or, it would seem, too attached to their families.

However, if you are hindered by love of children, parents, and wives, remember what the Lord says in the Gospel. 'He that loveth father, or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.' 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundred-fold and shall inherit everlasting life.' Let none of your possessions detain you . . .<sup>22</sup>

The man who is struck with the desire to engage in crusade, is also the man who is not attached to his worldly possessions or his family. A total and supreme devotion to the needs of God are not only required, but will in the end yield a greater return. Odo of Châteauroux writes that it is a symbol of a man's enthusiasm that he would leave all behind.

It is a clear sign that a man burns with love of God and zeal for God when he leaves country, possessions, house, children and wife, going overseas in the service of Jesus Christ. . . . Whoever wishes to take and have Christ ought to follow him; to follow him to death.<sup>23</sup>

This thirteenth-century passage is illustrative of the need to forsake wholly everything worldly and, further, to be prepared to sacrifice one's own life for the purpose of the crusade. It would seem, moreover, that this is not an extraneous request but the simple requirement for those wishing to serve the Lord.

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<sup>22</sup>Robert the Monk, quoted in Krey The First Crusade, 31.

<sup>23</sup>Odo of Châteauroux, "Sermones de tempore et sanctis," J.B. Pitra, ed., Analecta novissima spicilegii solesmensis, altera continuatio (Farnborough, 1967), 2:310-15.

The account of the crusade against the Moors in Lisbon is more stringent about the need for men to forsake all for the crusade.

The alluring affection of wives, the tender kisses of sucking infants at the breast, the even more delightful pledges of grown-up children, the much desired consolation of relatives and friends -- all these they have left behind to follow Christ, retaining only the sweet but torturing memory of their native land. Oh, marvellous are the works of the Saviour!

This sermon goes even further.

Whence it is said in the Law, 'If thy brother and thy friend and the wife of thy bosom wish to pervert thee from the truth, let thy hand be upon them and shed their blood.' It is something like that which is being spiritually fulfilled in you.<sup>24</sup>

The essential difference in this passage is the tone of violence it assumes in reference to the desire that *absolutely nothing* should stay one's calling to crusade. Thus, the loving husband, good father and doting son is encouraged to realize that all is worthless in comparison to sacrifice for God's greater glory. These are the men who were considered prime candidates to join the crusades.

On the other hand, in his account Fulcher of Chartres neither mentions women nor makes provisions for the poor or non-combatants. He does provide, however, an extended description of the tearful farewell of a valiant crusader and his wife which presents many sentiments similar to those of Robert the Monk.

Oh what grief there was! What sighs, what weeping, what

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<sup>24</sup>De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi - The Conquest of Lisbon, trans. Charles Wendell David (New York: Octagon Books, [1936] 1976), 83. The author is referring to Deut. 13:6.

lamentation among friends when husband left his wife so dear to him, his children, his possessions however great, his father and mother, brothers and other relatives. Then husband told wife the time he expected to return, assuring her that if by God's grace he survived he would come back home to her. He commended her to the Lord, kissed her lingeringly, and promised her as she wept that he would return. She, though, fearing that she would never see him again, could not stand but swooned to the ground, mourning her loved one whom she was losing in this life as if he were already dead. He, however, like one who had no pity -- although he had -- and as if he were not moved by the tears of his wife nor the grief of any of his friends -- yet secretly moved in his heart -- departed with firm resolution.<sup>25</sup>

Whether an authentic account or the product of Fulcher's imagination, this scene clearly demonstrates the appropriate roles for men and women and corroborates Robert the Monk's view of the ideal crusader family. The brave and worthwhile crusader, a patriarch with many possessions and a loving wife, forsakes all in service of his holy ideal. The woman, heartbroken and swooning, remains to take care of the hearth and home, carrying the burden of fear that her husband will never return but maintaining his lands for his homecoming in quiet rectitude and acquiescence to God's will. This woman accepts her husband's decision without contention even though it leaves her alone to manage his lands and defend them against potential depredation. Ideally, then, men leave their home in all its abundance to serve God's army, while women remain and pray for safety.

This model is supported by William of Tyre's account of the

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<sup>25</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 74. In late twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature, this theme of the "sweet parting" to crusade would become an extensive motif. See D.A. Trotter, Medieval French Literature and the Crusades, 1110-1300 (Genève: Libraire Droz, 1988), 178-86



parting of crusaders and their families for the First Crusade.

When those who had been named as leaders of the various bands summoned the rest, these tore themselves from the embraces of their dear ones with sobs and sighs, and, after exchanging last farewells and kisses, departed. With tears and wailing, mothers accompanied departing sons, daughters father; and sisters brother, while wives, carrying suckling babes in their arms, attended their husbands. After the last farewells had been said, they followed with fixed gaze those whom they could not accompany farther in reality.<sup>26</sup>

Comparable to Fulcher of Chartres' account of the parting scene, this passage reinforces the crusader ideal of passive wives, sisters and mothers who remain at home while their menfolk depart for war. William of Tyre's account is accentuated by the image of suckling babes in the arms of weeping, feeble and delicate women. Unlike the passage written by Fulcher, this one insinuates that the women are simply too weak to carry on without male support. They are unable to accompany the crusade but are vulnerable and despair at their precarious situation without their men.

Similarly, in the preaching of the Second Crusade in 1147, it is understood that women would remain at home in Europe.

Meanwhile the king [Louis VII], who was ever active in the undertaking, sent messengers concerning it to pope Eugenius at Rome. They were received gladly and sent home glad, bearing letters sweeter than any honeycomb, which enjoined obedience to the King and moderation in arms and clothing, which promised those taking the easy yoke of Christ the remission of all sins and the protection of their wives and children, and which contained certain other provisions that seemed advisable to the popes holy wisdom and

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<sup>26</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:97.

solicitude.<sup>27</sup>

During the period of the Second Crusade, women must remain at home and their security is still a matter of concern. That protection for those left at home is yet provided, insinuates that women's presence was not welcomed on this expedition. In other words, the fact of the implicit protection of the women who, as a matter of course, would remain at home and therefore need assurance of protection from attack, implies that the women were naturally unwelcome participants in the crusade.

In the letters of Bernard of Clairvaux to Pope Eugene, there is a similar tacit understanding of the role of women.

As for the rest, you have commanded and I have obeyed, and the authority of him who gives orders has made the obedience fruitful: whenever I have announced and spoken of the crusade, the crusaders have been multiplied beyond number. Cities and castles are emptied, and seven women now can hardly find one man whom they may apprehend, and so women everywhere remain behind in a widowed state while their husbands are still alive.<sup>28</sup>

The foundation of the crusading movement, according to these accounts, is the abandoned wife, struggling to manage without her husband. The perception of the chronicles, then, is that the role of women is static - they are to remain at home with the children and manage the family estate. Conversely, though, a woman's role as homemaker is fundamental to a successful venture, as there must be someone caring for the material possessions,

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<sup>27</sup>Odo of Deuil, De profectione Ludovic VII in orientem, ed. and trans. by Virginia G. Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 9.

<sup>28</sup>Bernardi epistola ad Eugenium, quoted in Odo of Deuil, De profectione, 10.

especially in violent and uncertain times. Therefore, despite the inherent restrictions on women's participation in the crusading movement, the contributions of the women who remained in Europe was inestimable and fundamental to the war effort. Furthermore, in reality the women might conceivably have cherished these roles and the freedom and power that are inherent in them. Indeed, as David Herlihy suggests, the incidence of female, single-parent households on large estates as a result of the crusades contributed to the greater incidence of the use of matronymics and beneficially raised women's status in Europe in general in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>29</sup>

The construction of gender is further revealed in an incident described in the chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres. During the early period of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, Joscelin, a crusader who had been made Count of Edessa, was taken prisoner by the Turks but managed to escape. He was alone, hungry and desperate in the desert when a friendly Armenian peasant recognized him and offered him a mule and food. Joscelin was going to return to his family and home at Tell Bashir in the principality of Antioch, but both he and the peasant were worried about his conspicuousness travelling through the desert. The peasant gave his child to Joscelin as a travelling companion and a means of concealing his identity. Thus:

He carried in front of him the little child, a girl [6 years of age] and not a boy. Thus he who had not been permitted

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<sup>29</sup>See David Herlihy, "Land, Family, and Women in Continental Europe, 701-1200," Traditio 18 (1962), 89-120.

to father her was permitted to carry her as if he were her father. This was in order that, although he did not have a daughter of his own, he could cause those who did not know to think he really had hope of descendants. . . . However, the infant began to worry Joscelin by constant crying and screaming he was not able to quiet her in any way. There was no nurse to suckle her or soothe her with lullabies.<sup>30</sup>

Joscelin considered abandoning her but decided not to because the peasant had been so helpful. The story continues, but there is no further mention of the child in Fulcher's account.

And when he arrived at Tell Bashir joyful was the reception of such guests. His wife rejoiced, his household exulted. Nor can we doubt with what great joy all rejoiced, what tears flowed for very joy, and what sighs there were.<sup>31</sup>

Odericus Vitalis recounts the same tale, adding a note about the fate of the peasant family.

Causing the whole family to be regenerated in the waters of baptism, he [Joscelin] conferred great wealth on the husband and wife, and, as for the girl he had carried in his arms and thus passed undiscovered through the gentile tribes, he espoused her honourably to a Christian knight.<sup>32</sup>

Thus the family was suitably rewarded for their role in Joscelin's safe transportation back to his family

This account has several important features. First, Fulcher makes it clear that although the child was not Joscelin's, and *in spite of the fact that she was a girl*, he was permitted to carry her, something Fulcher portrays as unusual. Indeed the reason the incident was noted was likely the gender of the child; if it were a boy, it might have been an unremarkable event. The

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<sup>30</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 250.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 251.

<sup>32</sup>Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, 3:398.

association of a man with a female child, then, is presumed to be a dangerous one. The only reason Joscelin made it through the desert was because the girl acted as a disguise, yet carrying her was a violation of social codes as evidenced by Fulcher's distress and the father's explicit permission for the deed. Despite her age, the six year old was seen to be both a source of sexual temptation and sexually vulnerable, yet the necessity and justness of the cause could override any social customs which might prevent the incident.

Furthermore, Fulcher repeats twice the fact that Joscelin was both childless and fatherless. He interpreted the event as an omen to tell Joscelin's friends and family that he would have children someday. Joscelin was also apparently not accustomed to children and had no idea what action to take when the child became restless, though according to Odericus Vitalis' account, he "cheerfully" carried the girl. In the second portion of Fulcher's story, we are given no hint of what happened to the child and while Joscelin's household may have been happy to see him because he was carrying the girl, it is more likely that they were rejoicing at his safe return from Turkish captivity. Fulcher sees the child as dispensable; she was little more than a disguise like a false moustache. Odericus Vitalis embellishes the tale with Joscelin providing an engagement to a Christian knight for the girl, despite the fact that she was only six.<sup>33</sup> The subsequent betrothal may also be seen as a camouflage for any

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

sexual impropriety which may have taken place, despite the fact that the girl was just under seven years old, the age required for a legal betrothal.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the portrayal of womanly traits is inherent in the discourses of war, and the chronicles of the crusades are no exception. There are several references to men acting as women through vain, selfish, 'soft' and vulnerable action. For example, Odericus Vitalis describes of the capture of the Frankish leader, Bohemond, and other leaders of the crusade in the year 1100.

Tancred, the commander of Bohemond's troops, was much distressed when he learned the calamity of his lord and kinsman; but he did not give way to a woman's weakness and content himself with vain regrets and lamentations.<sup>35</sup>

Tancred was a man of action and immediately set about devising a plan of escape for Bohemond, apparently unlike a woman who could but have passively lamented the disaster. In Odo of Deuil's account, remembering that he has an excessive hatred for the Greeks, he writes:

And the Greeks degenerated entirely into women; putting aside all manly vigour, both of words and of spirit, they lightly swore whatever they thought would please us, but they neither kept faith with us nor maintained respect for themselves . . . Whoever has known the Greeks will if asked, say that when they are afraid they become despicable in

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<sup>34</sup>For a discussion of medieval noble marriage practices see Georges Duby, "Lineage, Nobility, and Chivalry in the Region of Mâcon during the Twelfth Century," Family and Society: selections from the Annales, trans. Patricia M. Ranum, 27 (July-October 1972), 16-40. Also, Charles Donahue Jr., "The Canon Law on the Formation of Marriage and Social Practice in the Later Middle Ages," Journal of Family History 8 (1983), 144-58.

<sup>35</sup>Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, 3:307.

their excessive debasement and when they have the upper hand they are arrogant in their severe violence to those subjected to them.<sup>36</sup>

According to this account, the Greeks were acting duplicitously, vainly, and unmanfully; in Odo of Deuil's opinion, they were like women. The construction of woman, then, includes such malicious traits as dishonesty, indifference, spitefulness and scheming behaviour. In other words, all the traits the crusaders hate to encounter in an enemy or an ally, are traits attributed mainly to women.

In another example from the account of the crusade in Lisbon, the Moors taunted the Franks -- and preformed even greater feats in battle -- by slandering their wives at home.

And they taunted us with numerous children about to be born at home in our absence, and said that on this account our wives would not be concerned about our deaths, since they would have bastard progeny enough.<sup>37</sup>

There are several assumptions at work in this statement. The first is that maligning the sexual purity of the crusaders' wives will be a effective taunt. Clearly the Franks were sufficiently angered by these suggestions of adultery, promiscuity and illegitimacy that they were jealous, enraged and spurred on to greater military prowess. Also, it is presumed that the women would be promiscuous in their husbands' absence; it is the fault of the man, somehow, that their wives both find it necessary to

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<sup>36</sup>Odo of Deuil, De profectione, 57-59.

<sup>37</sup>De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi, 131.

seek affection elsewhere, and are not bound by conjugal fidelity.<sup>38</sup> The women alluded to here remain at the level of abstraction, never really entering the discourse but forming it by their expected or feared behaviour. There is, furthermore, an underlying misogynistic assumption that women are more lustful and prone to illicit sexual activity since they have less control over their sexual drives than men.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the chronicles of the First and Second Crusades, despite the implicit theoretical exclusion of women from the war venture, there is an underlying subtext which is predicated on contemporary medieval understandings of 'man' and 'woman' and which moulds the war experience. By stating that the crusaders went forth into battle 'manfully', it is assumed both that a woman was weak and could not fight in a battle victoriously and therefore that no women participated in battles. In a scene to be discussed more comprehensively in the following chapter, William of Tyre reports that in the monumental battle for Jerusalem (7 June 1099) even the women were involved.

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<sup>38</sup>For a discussion of how this same attitude towards women's inevitably promiscuous nature shaped the canon laws governing a husband taking a crusader vow, see James A. Brundage, "The Crusader's Wife: A Canonistic Quandry," Studia Gratiana 12 (1967), 425-41.

<sup>39</sup>This impression abounds in the canonistic, medical and popular literature of the period. See James A. Brundage, "'Alas! That Evere Love Was Synne': Sex and Medieval Canon Law," Catholic Historical Review 72 (January 1986), 3-21; Joan Cadden, "It Takes All Kinds: Sexuality and gender differences in Hildegard of Bingen's 'Book of Compound Medicine'," Traditio 40 (1984), 157-73; and Vern L. Bullough, "Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women," Viator 4 (1973), 495.



There was not one person in that great throng, whether aged or sick or even very young, who did not fervently and zealously long for battle. Even women, regardless of sex and natural weakness, dared to assume arms and fought *manfully* far beyond their strength. Thus the Christians advanced with one accord to battle.<sup>40</sup>

William tells us the women in exceptional circumstances, denied their very womanhood to take up arms. The situation was desperate and extreme thus providing the context for the exception. The women "fervently and zealously" overcame the handicap of their sex, indeed became like men, to join in the battle.

That the women perched on the edge of battle in Jerusalem had to overcome their natural weaknesses and become as men, highlights the themes constructed in the gender imagery of the crusades. The concept of femineity embodies generalized concepts used by the propagandists of the crusade for several purposes. By accentuating the violation of the women and territories of the Holy Land, the preachers of crusade were attempting to elicit socialized male-protector traits as a means of enlisting men in their war. The image of the women, children and homeland breathlessly and hopefully awaiting news of holy victory was further used as much to revitalize sagging morale in the Holy Land as it was to illustrate the proper gender arrangements during crusade. The loving and sometimes strong-but-swooning wife remains at home with her suckling babes to care for her husband's material possessions while he valiantly marches to

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<sup>40</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:361 (my emphasis).

glory and probable death in the holy war in far away and elusive lands. The imagery of the female in the First and Second Crusades, then is as weak, vulnerable, passive and violated, and often contrary to the actual activity of the women who did venture to the Holy Land.

**Chapter 3**  
**Diplomats, Warriors, and Settlers:**  
**The Participation of Women in the Crusades**

The catalytic quality of Urban II's speech at Clermont surprised many in the eleventh century, including Urban himself, who had never intended to spark a grassroots movement.<sup>1</sup> When Urban chastised the crowd for adultery, murder and fornication then promised them 'instant salvation', many were overcome with enthusiasm for crusade, causing what was tantamount to a spiritual upheaval. The pope's eloquence is obvious:

The intention of committing adultery or murder, begets many fears . . . Of these labours, of these fears, the end was sin; the wages of sin is death; the death of sinners is most dreadful. Now the same labours and apprehensions are required from you, for a better consideration . . . the wages of charity will be the grace of God; the grace of God is followed by external life. Go then prosperously: Go, then, with confidence, to attack the enemies of God.<sup>2</sup>

In addition he told them, "Let us all unite in Christ's faith and the victory of the holy cross, for, God willing, today we shall be made rich."<sup>3</sup> The hope of spiritual, emotional and material wealth was ample justification for most to embark. And while

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<sup>1</sup>See for example Frederic Duncalf, "The Peasants' Crusade," American Historical Review 26 (December 1921), 440-453; Dana C. Munro, "Urban and the Crusader," in Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1897), section 4; and Steven R. Runciman, A History of the Crusades, Vol.1, The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 101-20.

<sup>2</sup>The speech of Urban II as reported in William of Malmesbury, Chronicle of the Kings of England from the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen, ed. by J.A. Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), 359.

<sup>3</sup>The speech of Urban II, quoted in Ronald C. Finucane, Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Moslems at War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 39.

Urban had not intended to summon women to crusade,<sup>4</sup> they swelled the ranks of the crusading army, causing more than a little consternation because of the problems they posed for leaders to the army's discipline and safety.

The trip to the Middle East, moreover, was arduous, exhausting and lengthy, the thought of which might have deterred both women and men. The expedition would have been doubly onerous for women, especially those with families or without male guardians. As Professor Finucane has observed:

Women suffered while on ordinary pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and they could hardly expect lighter treatment on the crusades. And yet they went.<sup>5</sup>

There is abundant evidence in the chronicles, especially of the First Crusade, that not only did women participate in crusade, but also that their presence in the Holy Land was desirable in many respects, especially in regard to the actual roles they fulfilled. Women in the crusading movement functioned as warriors, as campfollowers, as emotional supports, as an impediment to battle, as settlers and, finally, as important diplomatic links with the Greeks, Armenians and Arabs.

Albert of Aix describes how the reaction to Urban's speech was somewhat opposite to that which he had desired.

In response to his constant admonition and call, bishops, abbots, clerics, and monks set out; next most noble laymen, and princes of the different kingdoms; then all the common people, the chaste as well as the sinful, adulterers,

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<sup>4</sup>See for example Dana C. Munro, "The Speech of Urban II at Clermont, 1095," American Historical Review 11 (January 1905), 237.

<sup>5</sup>Finucane, Soldiers of the Faith, 174 (his emphasis).

homicides, thieves, perjurers, and robbers, indeed, every class of the Christian profession, nay also women and those influenced by the spirit of penance -- all joyfully entered upon this expedition . . .<sup>6</sup>

Not only did the sinful and the adulterous enlist, but also the women, those who were believed to have the power to make the rest sinful and sexual. Albert of Aix, furthermore, in listing the women last in his formulation, was attempting to display sincerely the widespread fervour for crusade, an intensity which spread even to women, apparently the least likely to be affected by the movement. Albert betrayed his valuation of women and their prospective contributions to crusade, a military movement inspired by penitential behaviour in which women yet had no proper place but in which they were moved to participate.

William of Malmesbury writing of the same event believes that the participation of women was a welcome sight.

Joy attended such as proceeded; while grief oppressed those who remained. But why do I say remained? You might see the husband departing with his wife, indeed with all his family; you would smile to see the whole household laden on a carriage, about to proceed on their journey.<sup>7</sup>

He cheerfully reports the spectacle of whole families embarking for the Holy Land without censure, though he does subtly refer to those who remain, or that normally the wife and household would be the parties which remained. Still, William accepted the

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<sup>6</sup>Albert of Aix, Liber Christianae expeditionis pro ereptione, emundatione, restitutione Sanctae Hierosolymitanae, quoted in August C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants (Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press, 1958), 48 (my emphasis).

<sup>7</sup>William of Malmesbury, Chronicle of the Kings of England, 364.

unavoidable presence of women in the First Crusade.

Odericus Vitalis, furthermore, describes how women set out on crusade with an ardour equal to that of their male counterparts.

No sooner had Pope Urban eloquently poured forth these complaints in the ears of Christians, than, by the inspiration of God's grace, thousands were inflamed with excessive zeal for undertaking the enterprise, and resolved to sell their lands and leave all they had for the sake of Christ . . . Husbands were ready to leave their beloved wives at home, and wives were equally desirous to leave their children and all their substance, and accompany their husbands on the journey.<sup>8</sup>

The supposed order of embarkation on crusade was disrupted by the overwhelming enthusiasm of both women and men. Not only were men ready to desert their estates and families, but their wives were also subject to the altruism of the crusading spirit in sacrificing their children and their possessions for the holy war. Odericus was effectively telling us that everyone was susceptible to the spirit of the crusade, no one was exempt, regardless of gender.

Odo of Deuil, writing about the initial vow taken by Louis VII at St. Denis in 1147, says:

The crowds and the king's wife [Eleanor of Aquitaine] and his mother [Adelaide of Maurienne], who nearly perished because of their tears and the heat, could not endure the delay; but to wish to depict the grief and wailing which occurred then is as foolish as it is impossible.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, trans. by Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856), 3:67.

<sup>9</sup>Odo of Deuil, De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem, ed. and trans. by Virginia G. Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 19.

The two women were overwhelmed by their emotions and overpowering sympathy for the crusading movement. They became physically impaired as a result of the intensity of their desire to follow God's will and were subject to anguish and tears such that Odo could not begin to depict the entire scene. It was specifically the women who were overcome by these 'feminine' frailties, but the point is that fervour and devotion to the purpose of a holy war did not discriminate according to gender.

Fulcher of Chartres alone recounts several episodes in which he describes the presence of women in the Holy Land or on the journey. For example, he relates the drowning of pilgrims who had set out for the Holy Land from the Port of Brindisi. Four hundred voyagers of both sexes perished, and their bodies were miraculously imprinted with crosses on their flesh.<sup>10</sup> Further, he delineates the numbers of crusaders participating in the first official drive to the Middle East -- 700,000 men in addition to those not bearing arms, including the clerics, monks, women and children.<sup>11</sup> When the crusader kingdom in the Levant was in the early stages of organization, Fulcher reports, "Of those thus assembled in friendship we estimated the number to be twenty-five thousand of both sexes, mounted and on foot."<sup>12</sup>

The most striking and vivid involvement of women in the

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<sup>10</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127, trans. Frances Rita Ryan, ed. Harold S. Fink (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 76.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 130.

crusading movement was their participation in battle. Reference to their military activities are few but significant. During the First Crusade, when Joppa was besieged by the Babylonians, the women played a central role. According to Fulcher, "The women of Joppa were constantly ready with generous aid for the citizens who were struggling mightily. Some supplied stones, and others water to drink."<sup>13</sup> Not only did the women aid the warriors in a perilous battle, they also endangered their own lives in a more serious manner than usual thus attracting the notice of stolid, moralizing clerics such as Fulcher.

Similarly, the Gesta Francorum and other chronicles discuss the aid the women from the crusader camp gave to the crusaders during the Battle of Dorylaeum in 1097.

The women in our camp were a great help to us that day, for they brought up water for the fighting men to drink and gallantly encouraged those who were fighting and defending them.<sup>14</sup>

Peter Tudebode writing of the same event, says:

Although we had no hope of resisting them [the Turks] or of bearing the pressure of such a superior force, yet we persevered steadfastly there with unanimity. The women who accompanied us assisted our forces greatly on that day by bringing drinking water to the warriors and at all times bravely shouting encouraging comment to those who fought and defended them.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 241.

<sup>14</sup>Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum or The Deeds of the Franks and the other Pilgrims to Jerusalem, ed. by Rosalind Hill (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 19.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Tudebode, Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere, trans. J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974), 34.



From the perspective of these two authors, the women played a vital role in this battle, both morally by encouraging the soldiers and militarily by providing them with water. While the second function is certainly of importance, more significant is the expected purpose women fulfilled as moral encouragement. The women greatly helped the men who were "defending them" with their words and their trust in their military proficiency. As such, the battle turned in a decisive manner and the Christians, edified by the words of the women, went on to gain victory over the Saracens. This type of spiritual and emotional support was an important motivation for the fighters, and thus an extremely consequential role for the women.

Also at Dorylaeum, William of Tyre recounts the physical military involvement of the women in battle.

Four thousand of our common people and those of the lowest rank, both men and women, fell in that battle, but according to the recollection of aged men, only two of higher rank perished.<sup>16</sup>

Presumably the women who perished were not simply campfollowers, although some may have been. William says that both men and women fell in battle, therefore the women must have been involved in the fray. William of Tyre also writes of the remarkable involvement of women in the battle for Jerusalem in 1099.

At daybreak, according to arrangement, the entire Christian army stood before the city, fully armed and ready for the attack. One single purpose fired the hearts of all -- either to restore Jerusalem to the enjoyment of Christian

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<sup>16</sup>William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, trans. E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 1:173.

liberty or to give up their lives for Christ's sake. There was not one person in that great throng, whether aged or sick or even very young, who did not fervently and zealously long for battle. Even women, regardless of sex and natural weakness, dared to assume arms and fought manfully far beyond their strength. Thus the Christians advanced with one accord to battle.<sup>17</sup>

These women, overwhelmed by their fervour for victory, took up weaponry to save Jerusalem from infidel hands. In doing so, William of Tyre points out, they were denying their gender, and indeed their *natural* inclinations.

Imad ad-Din, an Arab writer and biographer, in his description of the behaviour of the Franks, believes that there were often women who participated in battle, even those who dressed like men to confuse the enemy. He claims that:

. . . there were indeed women who rode into battle with cuirasses and helmets, dressed in men's clothes; who rode out into the thick of the fray and acted like brave men although they were but tender women . . .<sup>18</sup>

Again, and in spite of the fact that Imad ad-Din speaks from the perspective of another culture, the women's martial activity was seen as meriting mention, but was still a clear denial of their gender. In order to participate, it was necessary for the women to dress and fight as men, to disguise and transform their sexuality.

Indeed, while their participation in battle may have been minimal, the presence of 'woman warriors' is meaningful beyond

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 361.

<sup>18</sup>Imad ad-Din quoted in, Francesco Gabrieli, trans., Arab Historians of the Crusades, trans. E.J. Costello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 207.

the simple consequence of the victory of the battle at hand. Undoubtedly the behaviour of a woman who participated directly in battle was seen as unnatural and anomalous, yet the figure of the woman warriors was a recurring one. Megan McLaughlin believes that since defense was not yet recognized as a part of the public, and therefore male, sphere of activity, women could and did participate in battles at home and in the crusades without consequential backlash.<sup>19</sup> Helen Solterer further asserts that the image of female militancy represented by the crusading movement was an important potentiality in medieval France. She writes:

And yet, in whatever partial and mediated terms, these texts [canonical discourse and the crusading vow] still flag the presence of the woman warrior. They illustrate various attempts to reckon with her and the tension and disquietude generated by such attempts.<sup>20</sup>

The opportunity to represent female military activity is important, she believes, because the image spills over (or rather is reinforced) in other areas of medieval society, for example, in literature. Solterer, furthermore, asserts that in the writings on the crusades, especially the chronicles, in order for women to be portrayed as military actors, it was fully necessary to masculinize them. By dressing them in men's clothes, as in the example from Imad ad-Din, they are:

. . . render[ed] apparent replicas of their male cohorts.

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<sup>19</sup>Megan McLaughlin, "The woman warrior: gender, warfare and society in medieval Europe," Women's Studies 17 (1990), 195, 204-5.

<sup>20</sup>Helen Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," Signs 16 (Spring 1991), 537.

The result of these various strategies of de-sexing them is to blur, if not eliminate all trace of, their sexual identity. The women are deemed proper warriors insofar as they display no ostensible sign of their bodies.<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, these women are always anonymous as well.

Obviously, the chroniclers were uncomfortable with the image of the woman warrior and found it necessary to undermine them by removing their sexuality from the image, though in the final analysis the import of a woman in battle was significant as evidenced by their appearance later in literature such as Li Tournioement as dames.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps, then, the more socially acceptable role was that played by women as moral inspiration, a role recognized during the seige of Antioch in 1098. The long and weary battle between the besieging crusading forces outside the city walls and the Turks defending the city had turned in the Christians' favour.

Christian women of Antioch came to loopholes on the battlements, and in their accustomed way secretly applauded as they watched the miserable plight of the Turks.<sup>23</sup>

The applause of women was taken to be a Christian symbol of approval, especially in the dangerous presence of Turks.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, at the seige of Jerusalem, after a rousing speech by

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 541.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 522-49. Also see Sarah Westphal-Wihl, "The Ladies Tournament: Marriage, Sex, and Honor in Thirteenth-Century Germany," Signs 14 (Winter 1989), 371-398.

<sup>23</sup>Peter Tudebode, Historia de Hiersolymitano Itenere, 55. This story is also told in the Gesta Francorum, 41.

<sup>24</sup>Peter Tudebode, Historia de Hierosolymitano Itenere, 55, n. 10.

the male leaders of the battle,

The women also, that they might have their share in the work, cheered the fighters to renewed courage by their words and brought them water in small vessels that they might not faint upon the field of battle.<sup>25</sup>

From these two incidents, it is apparent that women performed the role of moral encouragement. Similar to the tournament tradition described by Solterer<sup>26</sup>, the interaction between the women on the sidelines and the men in the thick of battle, served to incite and arouse the fighting passion of the men. These women engaged in a sex-specific, sanctioned and structured behaviour which reinforced gender roles -- women on the periphery and men fighting -- and fueled the war against the Muslims. In this manner the women were clear and necessary participants in the crusades.

In a comparable fashion, during the siege and capture of Antioch, the misery of the besieged Muslim women buoyed the spirits of the warriors.

The matrons of Antioch, their daughters, and little ones had gathered on the walls and in the towers with the old men and all the defenceless population. From there, they looked down upon the massacre and with groans and tears deplored the slaughter of their friends. 'Happy are the times that are passed,' they cried, 'and fortunate those to whom kindly

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<sup>25</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:367.

<sup>26</sup>Solterer cites a mid-twelfth century text describing the gendered interaction in the model for a tournament, which parallels the description of the siege of Antioch: ". . . the knights planned an imitation battle and competed together on horseback, while their womenfolk watched from the top of the city walls and aroused them to passionate excitement by their flirtatious behaviour." Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1969), 206; as quoted in Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy," 528.

death granted the privilege of departing before they looked upon calamities like these.'<sup>27</sup>

What is most striking about this situation is the perceived psychological effect the slaughter had on the women's lives.

Mothers of many children who had formerly been considered fortunate were now regarded as far otherwise, while barren women were thought lucky and much happier than mothers.<sup>28</sup>

The emotional state of these women was cause for comment, since their lack of well-being was a direct consequence of the crusaders' victory in battle. The immediate effect of the women's distress was the virtual surrender of the Turkish leader, Yaghi Siyan, and his forces, and the continued valiant fighting of the crusaders. The men of the crusade had prompted the women of Antioch to regret their gender and their generative capability, what defined their beings as mothers, and this provoked a critical turn in the battle. The women, distressed at both the bloodshed and the impending loss, grieved so conspicuously that it provoked renewed military fervour from the crusaders who delighted in their distress.

Similarly, Odericus Vitalis reports that at the seige of Jerusalem, when fortune had turned against the Franks, the Muslim women climbed to the rooftops and sang an encouraging song to their warriors.

Praise be to Mahomet our god! Sound the glad timbrels and offer him victims, that our terrible enemies may be overcome and perish . . . Valiant Turks, repel by your courage the assaults of the Franks! Be mindful of the glorious deeds of

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<sup>27</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:233.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

your forefathers! This very day, your enemies will either flee or perish.<sup>29</sup>

The response of the Franks to these "shrill voices" was that of astonishment, then outrage. A German count is reported to have said:

When the men faint with toil and apprehension, the women rouse themselves and heap reproaches on our heads, to the shame and discredit of their warriors, daring to terrify and mock us by their empty cries; but they will suffer for it; let us be roused to manly, nay, to heavenly resolution. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . let us fly to arms, and making a signal assault on the city, go this very day to the sepulchre of our Lord.<sup>30</sup>

These Muslim women, who were not fighting actively, had the temerity to taunt the struggling crusaders, an act which aroused their 'manly' spirit, causing them to fight more intensely and achieve a definitive victory. The Muslim women's taunts were probably designed to arouse the Muslim men to greater action, but they produced a result counter to what they expected and indirectly caused the Muslim loss.<sup>31</sup> In their provocation, however, the division between male and female roles in war becomes evident. The women in the crusader camps were to act as inspiration and motivation for the crusaders, just as similar activity from the women in the enemy camps could equally provoke outrage and military arousal.

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<sup>29</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History, 3:176.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., (my emphasis).

<sup>31</sup>On the role of the image of Muslim women as moral inspiration to Islamic warriors, see Hadia Dajani-Shakeel, "Jihad in Twelfth-Century Arabic Poetry: A Moral and Religious Force to Counter the Crusades," The Muslim World 66 (April 1976), 101-02.

The evidence of the chronicles describes the more usual role for women as that of campfollower.<sup>32</sup> According to Albert of

Aix:

It is not to be doubted that along with so many distinguished captains there were present campfollowers of a lower sort: serfs and serving-maids, married and unmarried, and men and women of every station. The bishops, abbots, monks, canons and priests took charge of these to keep them in order, and keep up their courage.<sup>33</sup>

Domestics, prostitutes and poor women not only followed the crusaders but also warranted special disciplinary measures which fell under the jurisdiction of the clerical hierarchy. Writing of preparations for the Battle of Dorylaeum (1 July 1097), William of Tyre says:

That the troops might advance to battle without encumbrance, all the infirm and the aged men and women, a helpless throng, were placed with the baggage in a neighbouring thicket of reeds. This place was further protected by the chariots and other vehicles and seemed to afford a safe refuge . . . Thus everything in Bohemond's camp had been arranged in good order according to the rules of military science.<sup>34</sup>

The Gesta Francorum makes similar reference to a hole or "laager" into which the crusaders placed their non-combatants in order to defend them.<sup>35</sup> Often the campfollowers would remain separate from the main battle along with the baggage and supplies. During

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<sup>32</sup>Prostitution obviously falls into this category but will be discussed more fully in the following chapter on sexual purity.

<sup>33</sup>Albert of Aix, Liber Christianae expeditionis, 2:24; in Recueil des historiens des croisades, historiens occidentaux (Paris: Académie des belles-lettres, 1841-95), 3:317B-C.

<sup>34</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:160.

<sup>35</sup>Gesta Francorum, 19 and n. 1.



the battle of the Field of Blood, William of Tyre writes, "The rest of our people who had been left with the baggage and impedimenta had fled to a hill near by."<sup>36</sup> Peter Tudebode describes the tragic death of a woman in the encampment before the campaign for Antioch.

At this time some of the besieged climbed a gate above us and rained arrows into the camp of Bohemond. In the course of this action one woman lay dead from the wound of a speedy arrow.<sup>37</sup>

It has been suggested that the relative number of non-combatants was greater than the actual combatants, indicating that the power of the word was much greater than the power of the sword in inducing pilgrims and non-combatants, rather than warriors, to undertake crusade.<sup>38</sup> This created enormous problems for the leaders of crusade, especially as they prepared to enter combat, since the large numbers of people not participating in battle would be a natural impediment to swift movement, a vulnerable spot for attack by the enemy and a generally a cumbersome burden.

Perhaps as a result of this, women in general were not highly valued by the leaders of crusade. Often women were perceived to be dispensable and certainly extraneous to the military venture. For example, in an attack by the Turks, sometime around 1120 on what he describes as a pseudo-castle, Fulcher of Chartres remarks that, "Our soldiers had escaped by a

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<sup>36</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:530.

<sup>37</sup>Tudebode, Historia de Hierosolymitano Itenere, 44.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Porges, "The Clergy, the Poor, and the Non-Combatants on the First Crusade," Speculum 21 (January 1946), 4.

very clever egress during the night, leaving their wives and children, preferring to save part than lose nearly all."<sup>39</sup> This callous action was calculated as a legitimate risk. Women and children were perceived as expendable and their presence was a nuisance, especially in delicate or dangerous situations. The women and children were dispensable and, presumably, replaceable. Moreover, Fulcher never detailed the fate of the women and children, betraying his clearly masculinist if not misogynist bias. He simply did not reckon their fate sufficiently important to record.

There is, however, incontrovertible evidence that, despite what were perceived to be their inhibiting qualities, women's presence in the Holy Land was both necessary and desirable, especially in the settlement stage of the crusade, between 1105 and 1147. Quite late in the First Crusade, Fulcher of Chartres refers to king Baldwin carrying out unfinished business in the Levant before moving on to new conquests.

However, the king remained in Antioch because necessity demanded it until he granted out the lands of the deceased nobles in legal form to the living, until he had united widows of whom he found many, to husbands in pious affection, and until he had reorganized much else in need of restitution.<sup>40</sup>

The king was apparently interested in settling the conquered territories with crusaders in order to solidify his hold on the Holy Land by uniting those who held lands and allotting others.

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<sup>39</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 295.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 231.

The importance of women for the colonization and security of the Holy Land is substantiated further in two letters of 1098. Both were written in the thick of the battle and both were intended to summon supplementary forces to join the crusade. The Patriarch of Jerusalem wrote, "Bring nothing with you except what may be of use to us. Let only the men come; let the women, as yet, be left."<sup>41</sup> The clergy of Lucca went even further.

We, moreover, dearest brethren, pray and beseech you who are in charge of the people to recount and explain to your sons the victory of Christ, and by admonishing and enjoining remission of sins to prevail upon all who are fit, **paupers and women excepted**, to go and join their brothers.<sup>42</sup>

While the latter was definitely a request to and for men, both letters recognize the presence of women in the Holy Land at some point in the future. Victory was not yet assured, but there was an understanding that there would be a summons for women when the situation became stable. The leaders of crusade did not want to be hampered by women during the fighting, although they recognize the certain need for women to settle the area after it had been captured.

Toward the very end of his chronicle, in an overt appeal for settlers, Fulcher of Chartres describes the idyllic pastoral setting of the kingdom:

Some already possess homes or households by inheritance.

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<sup>41</sup>The Patriarch of Jerusalem to all the bishops of the West, written from camp at Antioch, January 1098, quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 143.

<sup>42</sup>The Clergy and people of Lucca to all the faithful, written from Lucca, October 1098, quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 192 (my emphasis).

Some have taken wives not only of their own people but Syrians or Armenians or even Saracens who have obtained the grace of baptism. One has his father-in-law as well as his daughter-in-law living with him, or his own child if not his step-son or step-father. Out here there are grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Some tend vineyards, others till fields.<sup>43</sup>

This passage illustrates the growth and potential of the new land, a place where Christian values and productivity would flourish. Fulcher was demonstrating the pressing need for women in the Holy Land, as well as the marital potential of the women already there.

This passage also indicates that it was possible for men to marry outside of their traditional European alliances, as long as the woman were Christian or had received baptism. This also provided opportunities for landless second sons with no hope of marriage in Europe to get land and marry. It is perhaps surprising, given that the crusading enterprise was a war against Muslims, that baptized Saracen women were considered appropriate brides. Marriage was, of course, considered to be an economic and social alliance, especially important in forming stable links to indigenous populations and further linking European outsiders more closely to the surrounding people. Similar strategies were found in Spain, where marriages between Muslim women who converted and Christian men were socially acceptable and served to cement the ties between two cultures living side by side.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 271.

<sup>44</sup>See Heath Dillard, Daughters of the Reconquest: Women in Castilian town society, 1100-1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Nor can the sexual politics of the situation be overlooked. It would be most insulting to the Muslims to see one of 'their' women married to a Christian and embracing Christian doctrine. The prospect of Christian women marrying baptized Saracen men, or even Syrians or Armenians, was never discussed. That would have been a breach of the honour of Christian men and reflects the deeply entrenched double standard which prevailed. In a study of Castilian town society, Heath Dillard has found that this taboo on Christian-Muslim relations could be especially difficult for women, as it extended to all sorts of contact and produced a fringe group of women, mainly prostitutes, who would work for or have relations with Muslim men. She writes that, "No stigma was attached to the Christian man who consorted or cohabited with Jewish or Muslim women," but that "Christian society naturally reproached most vehemently its women who ignored injunctions to remain aloof from Jewish and Muslim men."<sup>45</sup>

Finally, a crucial role which women in the crusading movement filled was that of political intermediary. At the level of the feudal elite, marriage in the Middle Ages served the sober economic and political function of uniting patrimonies and establishing bonds of peace between nations. This was also true for the western nobles who brought their feudal values with them

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<sup>45</sup>Heath Dillard, "Women without honour: harlots, procuresses, sorceresses and other transgressors," in her Daughters of the Reconquest, 206-7. Also see the discussion of relationships with Muslim women in chapter 5, "Crusader Encounters with Muslim Women and Men."

to the Holy Land. For women, the leverage they could control as a result of their marriages could sometimes amount to a great deal of power.

The most conspicuous example of this is the Countess Adele of Blois. Her husband, Stephen, Count of Chartres and Blois, was one of the leaders of the First Crusade. Adele remained at home in France to manage their holdings in his absence.

That honourable lady, on her husband's pilgrimage, took upon herself the government of his county, and carefully educated their children to become protectors of the holy church.<sup>46</sup>

Stephen's letters to his wife have been preserved and have been described as "among the most charming pieces of writing of this period."<sup>47</sup> Stephen writes regularly, apprising his wife of the course of the crusade.

These things which I am writing to you dearest, are indeed few of the many (that have happened), and since I cannot express to you all that my heart holds dearest, I (only) bid you do well and make excellent arrangement for your land, and treat your children and your vassals with honour, as befits you, for you will surely see me as soon as I can possibly come. Farewell.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately, Stephen did not flourish in the harsh conditions of the Holy Land and joined the ranks of the "ropedancers" -- those who escaped at night over the walls of Antioch, to his everlasting shame and disgrace, ". . . and thus brought never-

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<sup>46</sup>Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, 3:345.

<sup>47</sup>Emily Atwater Babcock and August C. Krey, in William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:148, n. 31.

<sup>48</sup>Stephen of Blois to his wife, Adele. Written from Antioch, March 19, 1098, quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 157.

dying infamy upon his name by such an ignominious flight."<sup>49</sup>  
To redeem himself from this infamy, he decided, or rather was admonished, to undertake a fresh crusade. Odericus Vitalis tells us that his wife played a pivotal role in making this decision.

Among others his wife Adele often urged him to it, reminding him of it even amidst the endearments of conjugal caresses. 'Far be it from you, my lord,' she said, 'to submit any longer to the jibes you receive from all quarters. Pluck up the courage for which you were renowned in your youth, and take arms in a noble cause for the salvation of thousands . . . .'<sup>50</sup>

These sweet words were the envoy which changed Stephen's mind about the terrors of crusade. Adele appealed to Stephen's 'manly' virtues -- the reverence he was accorded as a youth, the excessive scorn of his peers and her regard as his wife, all from the bedchamber, a place where Stephen may have been somewhat vulnerable, to achieve the ends she desired. Adele's mediation was of no small consequence.

This was the sort of language that clever and spirited woman often addressed to her husband. He certainly had already sufficiently experienced the perils and difficulties of the enterprise to make him shrink from undergoing such toils again. At length, however he took courage, and putting himself on his march at the head of many thousand French, persevered against most formidable obstacles until he reached the tomb of our Lord.<sup>51</sup>

In this manner the feminine, seductive voice of Adele was used to

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<sup>49</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:431. Also see, James, A. Brundage, "The Errant Crusader: Stephen of Blois," Traditio 16 (1960), 38-95.

<sup>50</sup>Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, 3:289.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 289.

serve as a "conduit of divine grace in the private sphere."<sup>52</sup> Thus, Adele was able to wield a great deal of influence over her husband's fate, while maintaining control at home in the management of the estate.

The description of Baldwin I's progress to the Holy Land provides another tale of the diplomatic usefulness of women, this time as passive hostages. When Baldwin first set out on crusade in 1096, he was accompanied by his household including his wife, Godehilde, an English woman of noble origin and the daughter of Ralph II, seigneur of Toëny and Conches. During the passage through Hungary, Baldwin gave Godehilde, his brother and his household over to the king of Hungary to insure their orderly passage through his country.<sup>53</sup> The hostages were promptly returned when the army left Hungary in a peaceful fashion. While on route to Nicea, however, they passed through a region, Lycaonia, which was made barren and purposely spoiled by the Turks. The crusaders suffered desperately from lack of food. It was here that Godehilde, after a long and exhausting illness, "fell asleep peacefully in the Lord."<sup>54</sup> She was buried at the crusader town of Marash.

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<sup>52</sup>Sharon Farmer, "Persuasive Voices: Clerical Images of Medieval Wives," Speculum 61 (January 1986), 541. Also see Sharon Farmer, "Softening the Hearts of Men: Women, Embodiement, and Persuasion in the Thirteenth Century," in Paula M. Covey, Sharon A. Farmer, and Mary Ellen Ross, eds., Embodied Love, Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 125-37.

<sup>53</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:120.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 177-78.



Baldwin, never disheartened by the death of a good wife, went on to win acclaim at the seige of Jerusalem, was adopted by the duke of Edessa and eventually inherited that profitable county, and accordingly, attracting the interest of a local wealthy Armenian dynasty. In 1098, he made a highly lucrative marriage to Arda, the daughter of Armenian prince, Thoros I.<sup>55</sup> Their short marriage ended in 1104 when Baldwin repudiated Arda for Adelaide of Sicily, a wealthier woman of higher rank. This action caused some scandal, especially with the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Some factions believed the king did it for the obvious economic reasons. Those loyal to Baldwin said otherwise. "Others claim that the queen was indiscreet and careless in observing the bonds of marriage and thus had incurred the anger of her husband."<sup>56</sup>

Arda's fate, however, was not decided by Baldwin's actions. He put her away in the convent of St. Anna at Jerusalem where, initially, she seemed to adapt well to her new life. According to William of Tyre, though, she quickly tired of the convent and schemed for her release.

She claimed that she wished to obtain the means to relieve the poverty of her community and under this pretext, left the realm. But she at once laid aside the habit of religion and began to abandon herself to a sordid and immoral life. Without regard for her reputation and the queenly dignity of her former estate, she prostituted herself to all who came.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 415-16.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 461.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 462.

The highly partisan William suggests that Arda lost her dignity because Baldwin deprived her of it. He sees the 'sordid' end as inevitable as she could not preserve her honourable status without the marriage to buoy her along. This example illustrates how few options there were for women alone to support themselves.

Immediately after repudiating Arda, Baldwin married Countess Adelaide of Sicily, the widow of Roger of Sicily. Adelaide was neither an insincere nor imprudent woman and bargained for the best marriage contract she could manage. Since it was obvious to all that Baldwin was marrying for her wealth, she stipulated that any children from their marriage would be the heirs to the kingdom of Jerusalem, or failing offspring, that her son from her previous marriage, Roger, king of Sicily, would be named heir. Adelaide arrived at Acre with a full entourage.

The ships were loaded with grain, wine, oil, and salt meat, and equipped with armed men and splendidly mounted knights. The countess carried with her an immense sum of money and, followed by all her belongings, arrived in our land . . .  
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Their marriage was ill-fated from the start, however, and according to Fulcher of Chartres, was presaged by earthquakes, a red and black moon and frightening disturbances in the sky.<sup>59</sup> These were compounded by the fact that the patriarch refused to grant them a "blessing of fecundity."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 497.

<sup>59</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 208, 219, 220.

<sup>60</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:497.

In 1116, Baldwin started to feel pangs of guilt because of his errant marital past.

Fearing he was about to die, he was pricked in conscience because he had wrongfully cast off his legitimate wife and married another woman. Full of remorse and penitence, he made known his scruples to certain religious and God-fearing men, confessed his guilt, and promised to make amends.<sup>61</sup>

So, despite the aspersions cast on Arda's character, Baldwin recalled her and repudiated his illegitimate wife, Adelaide of Sicily. William of Malmesbury believes that Baldwin's reason for recalling his wife, and putting Adelaide away, was more than purely moral anxiety.

And at this time [at their initial marriage], indeed, he received her to his bed but shortly after he put her [Adelaide] away. It is said that she was afflicted with a cancerous complaint, which preyed upon her womb.<sup>62</sup>

It was somehow the fault of Adelaide that the marriage was terminated. Adelaide was "highly indignant that she should have been called from her country to no purpose, after being deceived by the trickery of the lords of the realm," and though she returned to Sicily, she had a revenge of sorts. Her son, the king of Sicily, was "angered beyond measure" and "conceived a mortal hatred against the kingdom and its people," which lasted for the entire twelfth century.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 513. According to William of Tyre, who is ever the champion of Baldwin, the king did not have an innocent past: ". . . he is said to have struggled in vain against the lustful sins of the flesh." But, ". . . so circumspectly did he conduct himself in the indulgences of these vices that he was a stumbling block to no one." (1:416)

<sup>62</sup>William of Malmesbury, The Kings of England, 412.

<sup>63</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:513-14.

A twelfth century writer, Vincent of Prague, has suggested that the manifest failure of the Second Crusade was obviously due to the lack of restraint of the crusading forces to "leave off mingling with certain kinds of women [*consortia muliercularum*]." <sup>64</sup> He was certain that the downfall of the crusaders lay not in military defeat but in sinfulness and lascivious behaviour directly caused by the presence and temptation of women, specifically prostitutes. This sort of attitude toward the participation of women in crusade informed the attitudes of the chroniclers toward women, from the Pope who was cautious about women taking a crusading vow, to the clearly misogynist clerics who wrote casually about the sacrifice of women and children for greater military ends.

The participation of women, however, while never explicit or detailed, is evident in the chronicles in a number of notable and elemental ways. Significantly, the crusades provided an outlet for the image, if not necessarily the large-scale reality, of the woman warrior, an image which would impact in areas far beyond the Holy Land. Women also served the important functions of domestic and campfollower to the crusading army, which often entailed the role of serious impediment to battle, as well as their traditional role as moral inspiration for the fighting men. The presence of women was equally necessary for the settlement

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<sup>64</sup>Vincent of Prague, Annals (A.D. 1148) in Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Surtees Society, 17, 663; quoted in Finucane, Soldiers of the Faith, 177.

and colonization of the vanquished Holy Lands and for the security and propagation of the Christian settlement. Finally, noble women in the Holy Land and from Europe served the weighty role of diplomatic link with Europe, and between the Christians and the indigenous people, Arabs, Greeks and Armenians. Regardless of the negative and pejorative image of women expounded by the chroniclers, women attended and appropriated many roles in the First and Second Crusades.

**Chapter 4**  
**Nuisances and Temptresses:**  
**Sexual Purity and Military Victory**

A most important theme in the chronicles is that of sexual purity, especially the influence of the perceived licentiousness of the crusaders, on the outcome of battles.<sup>1</sup> Women were viewed as inherently sexual, tempting and unclean. They were the "devil's gateway", the entrance for the impurities of sin and the influence of the devil.<sup>2</sup> Women represented a demoralizing force which diverted the soldiers' attention from battle and obstructed the process of war and the reclamation of the Holy Land. Women, furthermore, symbolised sexuality and the omnipotent potential for the draining of precious male semen, or the depletion of their strength and fortitude in battle.<sup>3</sup> As a means of controlling the sexual behaviour of the crusaders, strict sexual law codes and austere penitential practices were enforced. The result was an enmity for the corrupting presence

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<sup>1</sup>The theme of sexual purity as a path to the grace of God is a lingering one. Recently the drought stricken North African nation of Niger arrested people caught making love claiming that their illicit activities were "hampering the effectiveness of collective prayers for rain." Scantily-clad young women were publicly stripped and punished by Muslim clerics for holding off the rain with their "indecent" dress. Apparently anyone suspected of arousing the wrath of God is denounced and chastised and held responsible for the disastrous lack of rain. It would seem that clerical zeal for purity is a cross-cultural phenomena. See "Drought Debauch," The Windsor Star (July 18, 1992), E2.

<sup>2</sup>Page Ann DuBois, "'The devil's gateway': women's bodies and the earthly paradise," Women's Studies 7 (1980), 43-58.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Delany, "Constantinus Africanus' De Coitu: A Translation," The Chaucer Review 4 (January 1970), 55-65; and Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

of women which characterized the whole of the First and Second Crusades.

Fulcher of Chartres, who wrote vitriolic denunciations of sexuality and womanhood, was adamant about the hazards women presented. He described them as nuisances and temptresses. For example, during the long seige of Antioch the tired, hungry and war-weary crusaders, frustrated by their inability to defeat the Muslims, felt it would be pragmatic to reduce their numbers.

We felt that misfortunes had befallen the Franks because of their sins and that for this reason they were not able to take the city for so long a time. Luxury and avarice and pride and plunder had indeed vitiated them. . . . Then the Franks, having again consulted together, expelled the women from the army, the married as well as the unmarried, lest perhaps defiled by the sordidness of riotous living they should displease the Lord. These women then sought shelter for themselves in neighbouring towns.<sup>4</sup>

On this occasion, the women were considered to be a source of sin and distraction, a source of 'weakening' of the warriors' potency and virility. They deterred the soldiers from their goal and impeded the progress of the battle. Consequently, the women were expelled and compelled to roam in foreign and hostile territory. Moreover, this was the fate of both married women, the wives of crusaders, and unmarried women, perhaps prostitutes and servants. The fear of women's sexuality extended to the legitimately married along with the illicit fornicator and adulterers. Women, married or single, chaste or promiscuous, were a physical

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<sup>4</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of The Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, trans. by Frances Rita Ryan, ed. by Harold S. Fink (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 95. Also see the incident on p. 109 wherein the crusaders decide to minimize their losses and abandon the women and children in a castle.

and moral threat to the crusaders' prowess in battle and their ability to retain divine favour. Thus, all women were perceived to be sources of lust and defilement, and were expelled from the camp and left at the mercy of the enemy.

The presence of women, whether as a hindrance to battle or as an impediment to forthright living and diligence, was a sufficiently serious obstacle to victory to cause their expulsion at the seige of Antioch. Similarly, when Bohemond returned to the West to raise more men in France to crusade, Fulcher reported specifically, that, "Then too he allowed no women to cross [to the Holy Land] with him lest they be an impediment and a burden to the army."<sup>5</sup> The presence of women was a double handicap in this instance, hampering quick travel and distracting the crusaders from their main purpose by their sexual temptation. Invariably, the blame for succumbing to sexual temptation was always placed on the women and never on the men.

Indeed, the First Crusade was a period of flux and instability for all the participants, and despite the religious overtones of the event, the crusaders were frequently discouraged as a result of the often miserable conditions. Ekkehard of Aura describes with a mixture of incredulity and dismay, the strange circumstances of the crusader forces early on.

Why should I mention the fact that in those days a certain woman continued pregnant for two years and, at last, brought forth a boy who could speak from birth? Likewise, a child was born with a double set of limbs, and another with two heads. . . . While by these and like signs all creation was

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<sup>5</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 192.



being summoned into the army of the Lord, that enemy of men, the evil one himself (ever on the watch, even while others are sleeping) did not delay to sow his own tares, to rouse false prophets, and, under the guise of religion to mingle, with the army of the Lord false brethren and shameless women. And so, through the hypocrisy and falsehoods of some and the gross immorality of others, the army of Christ was polluted to such an extent that, according to the prophecy of the good shepherd, even the elect were led astray.<sup>6</sup>

Ekkehard's language was almost resigned, as though this were the inevitable fate of the army. It is interesting to note, furthermore, that the two tools of the devil were identified as false brethren and shameless women. Persons accused of having heretical beliefs were often accused of deviant sexual behaviour, indeed the two are frequently associated in the medieval mind.<sup>7</sup>

The moral standards of the crusading forces are a consistent theme throughout the chronicles. In accord with the religious overtones of the crusades, the chroniclers are always able to trace any military loss to the sins of the crusading army.<sup>8</sup> Fulcher alludes to the disgrace that resulted when the crusaders were not attentive to Christian ways.

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<sup>6</sup>Ekkehard of Aura, Hierosolymita, quoted in August C. Krey, The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants (Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press, 1958), 40.

<sup>7</sup>See James A. Brundage, "The Politics of Sodomy: Rex V. Pons Hugh de Ampurias (1311)," in Joyce E. Salisbury, ed., Sex in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 243; and Brundage, "Playing by the rules: sexual behaviour and legal norms in medieval Europe," presentation at Sex and Sexuality in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Conference, Victoria University, Toronto, Ontario, 23 November 1991.

<sup>8</sup>For a discussion of the crusader fear of sin and its potentially devastating consequences for the military agenda see Elizabeth Siberry, Criticism of Crusading, 1095-1274 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 69-94.

Oh great sadness! On that day our great sins brought great shame. The King fled losing his flag and his fine tent with many furnishings and silver vessels. Likewise the patriarch who was present also fled. We lost nearly thirty of our best knights and about twelve hundred footmen.<sup>9</sup>

Great defeats and reversals were considered the direct consequence of the crusaders' sinfulness and lack of shame. Material losses were augmented by casualties and the depletion of the strength of the army. Otto of Freising laments that the same adversities caused the fall of Edessa in 1144.

But now, because of our own sins and those of the people, the city of Edessa, which we cannot mention without great grief and lamentation, . . . has been taken by the enemies of the cross of Christ . . .<sup>10</sup>

All the chroniclers were firm in the belief that the obstacles to their continued victories lay in their sinfulness and the need to retain the grace of God.

Thus, whenever there was a military reversal or a hard-won battle, the chroniclers generally place the blame on the sinfulness of the crusaders, resulting especially from the corrupting presence of women. Peter Tudebode reports how, when the seige of Antioch was not going well, Jesus Christ appeared in a dream to a crusader. Jesus spoke to the crusader, saying:

Furthermore, with timely and great effort I delivered you safe and sound in Antioch. But many Christians have committed numerous evil acts in that they lie with pagan

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<sup>9</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 206.

<sup>10</sup>Otto of Freising, The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa by Otto of Freising and his continuator, Rahewin, trans. C.C. Mierow (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 71.

women, and as a result a great stench arises to heaven.<sup>11</sup>

All women, pagan and Christian, represented the potential for wretched carnality and the consequent downfall of the morals and military ambitions of the crusaders, though according to Church authorities, it was considerably worse to fornicate with a pagan woman, specifically a Muslim. Marriage between Christians and non-Christians was unequivocally prohibited in the Holy Land, except in the case of conversion. But the Council of Nablus in 1120 went a step further. It enacted strict penalties for casual liaisons between a crusader man and a Muslim woman: he was to be castrated and she was to have her nose removed.<sup>12</sup>

Such sexual liaisons required acts of contrition if the odds were to turn in the crusaders' favour. In the vision Jesus enjoined several forms of penance, also a recurring theme in the chronicles. Often penitential practices could be a preventative measure against ill-fortune before a large battle. Fulcher of Chartres, writing of the same scene before Antioch, says:

Those who remained . . . gave themselves up zealously to prayers, alms and tears. Up to the noon hour they continuously visited the churches. Chanting they wept, and weeping they chanted for the priests in the procession were doing this. I, too, barefooted, was praying with the rest. The old men fasted until the ninth hour of the day nor did the infants suck the breasts of their mothers until they

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<sup>11</sup>Peter Tudebode, Historia de Hierosolymitano Itenere, trans. J.H. Hill and L.L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974), 74.

<sup>12</sup>Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society, 196, 207; also, Brundage, "Prostitution, Miscegenation, and Sexual Purity," 60-61. For a fuller discussion of relations with Muslim women, see Chapter 5, "Crusader Encounters with Muslim Women and Men".

cried from hunger. Generous alms indeed were bestowed upon the poor.<sup>13</sup>

This penitential behaviour, situated in the holy city of Antioch, evoked emotional and intense responses. Fasting, prayer, almsgiving, barefoot processions, weeping and confession were undertaken, thus insuring that God's grace would be with them in battle. Odericus Vitalis reports the same penitential behaviour:

The multitude immediately gave way to lamentations, and exhorted one another to the confession of their sins. They were seen on all sides praying to the churches, with tears in their eyes and ashes on their heads and naked feet, imploring help and counsel from the Lord.<sup>14</sup>

Their penitential entreaties were communal, taking up all of their energy and engaging laypeople and clergy alike. Their activities, furthermore, became mutually enforcing; they 'exhorted' each other to repentance, thus ensuring that no one escaped the ritual purification of sins and guaranteeing the grace of God.

In a letter from the clergy and the people of Lucca to the West, they report that after finding the Holy Lance in Antioch in 1098, they engaged in a period of repentance.

Moreover, after a fast of three days had been prescribed, they devoted themselves to prayer, confessed what wrongs they had done, and marched around the city with bared feet. After this was done each army equipped itself for battle.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 184-5.

<sup>14</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, trans. Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856), 3:130.

<sup>15</sup>The clergy and people of Lucca to all the faithful, written from Lucca, October 1098, quoted in Krey, The First Crusade, 192.

The army and its leaders fully believed that beseeching God's mercy before the battle would be a factor in their favour. The ritual of confession, prayer, alms giving and barefoot processions became for the crusaders an act of purification, a return to a more 'pure', uncontaminated state of being. The crusaders seem to have believed that large-scale individual and communal acts of contrition would restore a state of purity and perhaps their virility and strength to face the battle ahead.

Often the clergy and the crusade leaders could be relentless in their insistence on strict discipline. Informed by the contemporary belief that sexual purity is equal to moral and physical fortitude, they therefore linked discipline with military victory. In 1137, after an alarming defeat to Turkish leader, Zenghi, the bishop of Jerusalem enlisted the aid of all the citizens for the "beleaguered martyrs."

He then enjoined [earnest prayers] on both the clergy and laity, and instituted a fast by all for three days, not exempting women and children, or even beasts, from the suffering, which resembled that of the Ninevites.<sup>16</sup>

But in the end the prescribed fasting, confession and alms-giving would, once undertaken, lead to ultimate victory and God's grace.

Thus, although the situation initially worsened after the women were expelled from Antioch, eventually the Franks did indeed triumph.

Just as gold is thrice fired in the fire and seven times purified [Psalms 12:7], so I believe the elect were tried by

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<sup>16</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History, 4:188.

the Lord and by such suffering were cleansed of their sins.<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, in an earlier battle when the situation was equally dismal, the crusaders repented their sins and victory was theirs.

We were all huddled together like sheep in a fold, trembling and frightened, surrounded on all sides by enemies so that we could not turn in any direction. It was clear to us that this happened because of our sins. For luxury had defiled some of us, and avarice and other vices had corrupted others. A great clamour rose to the sky, not only from our men and our women and children but also from the pagans rushing upon us. But now we had no hope of surviving. . . . We then confessed that we were defendants at the bar of justice and sinners, and we humbly begged mercy from God.<sup>18</sup>

The situation was as desperate as any Fulcher ever described and the only solution was to repent and throw themselves on the mercy of their Lord. They were well aware of their sins and could only hope to receive divine intervention. Again, Fulcher moralized on the fortuitousness of their consequent victory.

The Lord does not give victory to splendour of nobility nor brilliance in arms but lovingly helps in their need the pure in heart and those who are fortified with divine strength. Therefore He, perhaps appeased by our supplications, gradually restored our strength and more and more weakened the Turks.<sup>19</sup>

It seemed as though the crusaders needed to be brought to a level of sheer resignation before their pleas for assistance would be heard.

The overwhelmingly stern tone of the chroniclers became animated in the discussions of the prostitutes, of whom there

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<sup>17</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 96.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 86.

appears to have been many, among the crusader armies. In fact, prostitution was a chronic and persistent problem. When the army of the First Crusade arrived in Nicea, Odericus Vitalis reports that they were defensive initially about the purity of their conduct.

Splendid as was their array in arms, they were still more distinguished by the lustre of their virtues. They went forth to battle pure in their conduct, strong in limb, and stout in heart. Carefully watching for the good of their souls, they refrained from all fleshly lusts and forbidden indulgences. . . . The bishops preached daily against incontinence, and whoredom and debauchery were scouted out of the camp.<sup>20</sup>

The crusaders were careful about remaining uncorrupted and pure. Clearly, though, they felt they were highly susceptible to "forbidden indulgences" given their quotidian sermons against wanton behaviour. Balderic of Dol, writing about the same event, says that some women remained in the camps but these were either married women or servants. Balderic, however, was also equally adamant about the recurring nature of this problem. By the time the army reached Antioch five months later, the bordellos were back in full operation within the camps.<sup>21</sup>

As a means of combatting sexual license and prostitution, the leaders of the 1147 crusade to recapture Lisbon established explicit rules to ensure discipline and order before they ever left France.

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<sup>20</sup>Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History, 3:95-96.

<sup>21</sup>Balderic of Dol, Historia Hierosolimitana, in Recueil des Historiens des croisades, Historiens Occidentaux (Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 1841-1895), 4:66.

Among these people of so many different tongues the firmest guarantees of peace and friendship were taken; and furthermore, they sanctioned very strict laws. . . . They forbade costly garments. Also they ordained that women should not go out in public; that the peace must be kept by all. . . .<sup>22</sup>

In order to keep the peace and avoid disorder, the crusaders enacted a ban on all outdoor activity for women. Presumably they were to entertain themselves with some domestic occupation indoors, although the proscription seems to have been peculiarly directed towards the public activities of women, that is, prostitution. Similarly, before the gruelling seige of Antioch in 1097, the leaders and the papal legate met and decided to enforce exacting disciplinary regulations within the crusader camps as a means of ensuring the positive outcome of the struggle. They had determined that the famine they were then suffering, was a punishment from God, as a direct result of the sins of the people. In order to "speedily atone for these sins with due penitence," and to "appease the wrath of the Lord," they swiftly drew up strict regulations.

. . . they determined in like manner to put away from the camp all the light women of ill repute. Adultery and fornication of every description was forbidden under pain of death, and an interdict was also placed on all revelling and intoxication. Dangerous games of chance, heedless oaths, fraud in weights and measures, chicanery of every kind, theft and rapine were also placed under the ban.<sup>23</sup>

The new rules proved to be especially rigorous concerning sexual

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<sup>22</sup>De Expugnatione Lyxbonensi - The Conquest of Lisbon, trans. Charles Wendell David (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 57.

<sup>23</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, vol. i, 220. According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, *light*, when used to describe a woman, means "unchaste or wanton; fickle."



offenses. The leaders were very serious about their new program of moral austerity, thus they also instituted a method of prosecuting any transgression of their rules.

When these rules had been decreed and ratified by general consent, judges were named who were to be responsible for keeping track of these offenses, and upon them was conferred full power of investigating and punishing the same. Nevertheless, some violators of these laws were afterwards found. These sinners were solemnly accused and convicted by the judges and were sentenced to punishment with the full severity of the law, according to the kind of crimes committed. Their fate, therefore, deterred others from committing the same offenses.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the new restrictions entailed not only expelling all prostitutes, but also outlawing all morally dubious activities -- alcohol consumption, games, mercantile fraud and all types of deception, in addition to rigorously punishing sex offenders. At this very critical juncture in the First Crusade, the leaders were unwilling to jeopardize their situation in the slightest. Accordingly all moral transgressions they could think of fell under the ordinance. The regulations remained in effect during the whole of the seige which lasted from 21 October 1097 to 3 June 1098, a not inconsequential period of time.

The enacting of austere ordinances governing all types of behaviour was not restricted to the early years of the crusades nor to extreme situations. In the year 1120, because of the "sins of the people", the kingdom of Jerusalem was afflicted with swarms of locusts, a scourge of devouring mice, crop failure, famine and multiple injuries caused by the enemy. The patriarch

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 221.

of Jerusalem, Gormond, called a public meeting and general assembly to preach an admonitory sermon.

Since it was evident to all that the sins of the people had provoked God to wrath, it was decided by common consent that they must amend their wrongdoing and restrain their excesses. . . . To raise the standard of morals and maintain discipline, they established, by common consent, twenty-five articles with the force of law.<sup>25</sup>

And, it seems, the crusade leaders were not afraid to force compliance with their sober rules. Guibert of Nogent recounts the tale of unmarried pregnant women who underwent savage tortures for their obvious misconduct.<sup>26</sup> Guibert of Nogent also discloses the punishment of a monk and his mistress who were found guilty of adultery. They were tried by the ordeal of the glowing iron and whipped naked through the crusaders' camp.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, Albert of Aachen describes the punishment of adulterers in the crusader camps:

A man and woman taken in adultery were stripped naked before the whole army. After their hands had been tied behind their backs, they were forced to walk around the whole army, while being roughly beaten with sticks by the executioners, so that when others saw the barbarous blows that they suffered, they might be frightened away from such nasty wickedness.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps because they were in the Holy Land, perhaps because they

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 536. Unfortunately, William does not list the 25 articles, but does list their location in the archives of various churches of Antioch.

<sup>26</sup>Guibert of Nogent, Gesta Dei per Francos, quoted in Brundage, "Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity," 59.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Albert of Aachen, Historia Hierosolymitana, in Recueil des historiens des croisades, Historiens occidentaux (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 1841-1895), 4:379.

were under the close scrutiny of the many clerical participants in crusade or because their example was to be an example for the surrounding infidels, offenders were swiftly punished.

Fornication and adultery were mortal sins as well as crimes thus requiring both penance and punishment. This point could not be emphasized strongly enough by the clerical authors of the chronicles, who, ". . . seldom tired of reminding their readers that God was perfectly capable of reaching out and exacting terrible retribution from the sexual offender," in the form of natural or individual disasters.<sup>29</sup>

The disaster of the Battle of Bloody Field in 1119, where the entire Norman army was almost completely annihilated, was, according to Fulcher of Chartres, the direct result of the marital indiscretions of Roger of Antioch. Furthermore, adultery could, in Fulcher's terms, be more dangerous if practised by noble men.

Nor is it to be wondered at that God permitted Roger and his men to be confounded since revelling in riches of all kinds they in their sin did not respect God or man. . . . The prince himself shamefully committed adultery with many others while living with his own wife [Cecilia]. He deprived of his inheritance his own lord, the son of Bohemond, then living in Apulia with his mother. He and his leading men, living in pride and luxury were guilty of many other sins. To them that verse of David may be appropriately applied: 'Their iniquities came forth as it were from their fatness.' [Psalm 72:7] For moderation was scarcely preserved in the midst of copious delights.<sup>30</sup>

Fulcher may have been exaggerating Roger's shortcomings for

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<sup>29</sup>Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society, 206.

<sup>30</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 227.

political reasons, but the point is more than a partisan one. William of Tyre also says, "The same Prince Roger had a very unsavoury reputation. Rumour said that he was a common libertine who had no respect to the marriage tie."<sup>31</sup> Thus, Roger was an example because of his status as a leader and his behaviour could influence the outcome of the whole enterprise. His lax attitude and numerous sins were explicitly connected to the poor position of the crusaders. Walter the Chancellor also comments on the immorality not only of Prince Roger, but of all the knights under his command. He wrote that:

. . . not only the defeat of the army, but also a plague or locusts and an unprecedented visitation of snakes, were caused by the wickedness of the people of Antioch who 'studied not to live well but to eat well', gave themselves up to all kinds of profligacy, and allowed their women-folk to spend whole nights at parties, frequenting dubious company and drinking the most delicious wines.<sup>32</sup>

According to Rosalind Hill, the approach of Il-Ghazi's army inspired a repentant attitude in the Norman camps but to no avail.<sup>33</sup> Again, the chroniclers stressed the immense influence that sinfulness, especially sexual impurity, could have on the outcome of battles. "Thus, because of our sins, scarcely a man of the many thousands who had followed the lord that day escaped to

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<sup>31</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:531.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Rosalind Hill, "Crusading Warfare: A Camp-follower's View, 1097-1120," in R. Allen Brown, ed., Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies I 1978 (Haverhill: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1979), 80.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 80.

tell the story."<sup>34</sup>

Finally, the story of the escapades of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Louis VII and Prince Raymond of Antioch serve to illustrate the pervasive attitude towards women in the crusading east.<sup>35</sup> In March 1148 the King of France arrived in Antioch with his troops and entourage, including his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Raymond, prince of Antioch and uncle of Eleanor, played the generous host to the royal couple, motivated by what William of Tyre calls his desire to enlist Louis and his forces in his ambitious land wars.<sup>36</sup> John of Salisbury, an observer not particularly sympathetic to Eleanor, reports the incidents which eventually caused many to question the behaviour of the queen.

But whilst they remained there to console, heal and revive the survivors from the wreck of the army, the attentions paid by the prince to the queen, and his constant, indeed almost continuous, conversation with her, aroused the king's suspicions.<sup>37</sup>

Raymond had turned against Louis, William of Tyre believes, and plotted against him. Raymond's plan was to get at Louis'

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<sup>34</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:531.

<sup>35</sup>For a complete discussion of Eleanor's role in the Second Crusade see Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 29-72; Curtis H. Walker, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Disaster at Cadmos Mountain on the Second Crusade," American Historical Review 55 (July 1950), 856-61; Curtis H. Walker, Eleanor of Aquitaine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950); Régine Pernoud, Eleanor of Aquitaine (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968); Marion Meade, Eleanor of Aquitaine: a biography (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1977).

<sup>36</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 2:179.

<sup>37</sup>John of Salisbury, Historia Pontificalis: Memoirs of the Papal Court, trans. Marjorie Chibnall (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 52.

sensitivities through Eleanor.

He resolved also to deprive him of his wife, either by force or by secret intrigue. The queen readily assented to this design, for she was a foolish woman. Her conduct before and after this time showed her to be, as we have said, far from circumspect. Contrary to her royal dignity, she disregarded her marriage vows and was unfaithful to her husband.<sup>38</sup>

Eleanor went so far as to suggest to Louis that they annul their marriage because they were too closely related. Louis was deeply distressed and humiliated and would not allow Eleanor to remain at Antioch as she requested. According to John of Salisbury,

. . . the king [would] not suffer her to dally longer at Antioch, both because 'guilt under kinship's guise could lie concealed' [Ovid, Heroides, iv 138] and because it would be a lasting shame to the kingdom of the Franks if in addition to all the other [military] disasters it was reported that the king had been deserted by his wife, or robbed of her.<sup>39</sup>

William of Tyre continues that Louis left under cover of the night in a most ignominious fashion. Eleanor's infamous behaviour was never forgotten, and as long as 20 years later fantastic rumours about her exploits circulated in both the Orient and the West.<sup>40</sup>

The attraction of this tale lies in the enormous effect it

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<sup>38</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 2:180-81.

<sup>39</sup>John of Salisbury, Historia Pontificalis, 53.

<sup>40</sup>E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 2:180, n. 53. The editors write that Eleanor's indiscretions became so legendary that it was believed that she seduced Saladin, a famous Turkish leader, who was only ten years old at the time. Interestingly enough, Odo of Deuil, whose admitted purpose for writing his account of the crusade was to venerate Louis and whose chronicle took the form of a letter to Abbot Suger of St. Denis, the man who facilitated the marriage of Eleanor and Louis, does not mention the fiasco at all.

had both on the tone and, evidently, on the outcome of the Second Crusade. The Second Crusade was an admitted fiasco, militarily and personally, for Louis VII. The whole endeavour was ravaged by factionalism, treason and calamity. Eventually the marriage of Louis and Eleanor was annulled, under suspicious circumstances. The frivolous behaviour of Eleanor of Aquitaine has been blamed as the main cause of the patent failure of this venture. For example, the Dictionnaire de biographie française explicitly lays the blame directly at Eleanor's feet.<sup>41</sup>

Bernard of Clairvaux, the main spiritual driving force behind the Second Crusade, does not specifically link it to either Eleanor or Louis VII. Rather he attributes the failure of the Second Crusade to the irreverence of the crusaders.

We have fallen on evil times; it seemed as though . . . the Lord, provoked by our sins, were almost judging the world before the time, with equity indeed, but forgetful of His mercy; . . . We all know that the judgements of the Lord are true.<sup>42</sup>

The sins of the crusaders, an elusive and generalized concept, were at the root of the failure of the crusade. Speaking of the failure of the crusade in general, William of Tyre declares, "Because of our sins, the kings and princes who had gathered in untold numbers were compelled to retreat without accomplishing

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<sup>41</sup>"Aliénor fut probablement, par sa légèreté, cause de la première défaite de l'armée royale un peu de la de Laodicée." J. Salvini, Dictionnaire de biographie française (Paris, 1936), 2:2; quoted in Walker, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Disaster at Cadmos Mountain," 857.

<sup>42</sup>Bernard of Clairvaux, On consideration, trans George Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), 1:37-38.

their purpose."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, their followers lost faith in their leaders.

Henceforward, as long as they [pilgrims] remained in the Orient, and, indeed ever after, they looked askance on all the ways of our leaders. They justly declined all their plans as treacherous and showed utter indifference to the affairs of the kingdom. Even when permitted to return to their own lands, the memory of the wrongs which they had suffered still rankled, and they regarded with abhorrence the wicked conduct of those nobles.

According to William, crusading was never again the same.

As a result, fewer people, and those less fervent in spirit, undertook this pilgrimage thereafter. Moreover, even to the present day, those who do come for fear lest they be caught in the same toils and hence make as short a stay as possible.<sup>44</sup>

The sexual transgressions of the leaders of the Second Crusade had an irreparable and degenerative effect on the morale of all subsequent crusading movements.

William of Tyre was not the only chronicler to blame the failure of the Second Crusade on the immorality of the crusaders. Henry of Huntingdon, writing from England shortly after the end of the Second Crusade, says:

. . . their incontinence, which they practised in open fornications, and even in adulteries, . . . and finally in robbery and all worst of evils, came up before the sight of God. . . , Who withdrew his favour from the armies, which consequently were defeated.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 2:192.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 192-93. Present day for William is the decades of the 1160s and 1170s.

<sup>45</sup>Henry of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum, ed. Thomas Arnold (Rolls Series 74: London, 1879), 280-1; quoted in Giles Constable, "The Second Crusade as Seen By Contemporaries," Traditio 9 (1953), 271.



No clearer illustration could be given for the influence that the perception of sexual purity could have on the morale of the crusades. Its absence or abuse led to complete disarray.

James Brundage has suggested that the implementation of strict policies regarding sexual behaviour was inconsistent. There were, he contends, critical outbursts of febrile penitential behaviour, almost always preceding an important battle. The rules regarding sexual discipline, he believes, were unevenly enforced according to the need for sexual purity, as for example during times of crisis. The cumulative effect of this erraticism is what he terms a "fundamental ambivalence concerning sexual conduct."<sup>46</sup>

On the contrary, the consistent stance the leadership took towards sexual behaviour, especially during periods of crisis or preparation for combat, belies their acceptance of wider cultural values which are suspiciously preoccupied with the stifling of sexuality. The organizers of the First and Second Crusade wholly subscribe to the contemporary belief in woman as "nuisance and temptress." In order to preserve the strength and virility of the crusader forces, the secular crusade leaders, in close accord with the church, consistently enforced stringent rules aimed at preserving, or failing that, re-claiming sexual purity. From the perspective of the clerically-authored chronicles, there was no ambivalence regarding sexuality or women; adultery and

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<sup>46</sup>Brundage, "Prostitution, Miscegenation and Sexual Purity," 61.

fornication were intolerable sins likely to destroy the crusader forces, and women represented that potentiality.

Chapter 5  
**Crusader Encounters With Muslim Women and Men**

The crusading movement was, in part, a religiously inspired and spiritually motivated venture which was transmuted into a violent, pillaging war in the name of the Christian God. The crusaders were relentless in their lack of mercy towards the peoples they vanquished, especially and specifically the Muslims. The record of the meetings between east and west provides a fascinating window into the social and cultural values of medieval European society, particularly the prevailing attitudes toward women. Muslim women, when they were not killed outright or sold into slavery, were a source of labour for the crusaders, and when they accepted Christianity were potential brides. Muslim men, on the other hand, were perceived to be inherently sexual, destructive and duplicitous creatures whose primary aim was to corrupt the virtue of the Christian women in the crusader forces. Not all of the chronicles deign to mention the opposing forces, except to delineate the numbers killed in battle. This, too, is telling of the Western attitude towards the 'pagan infidels'. Many believed, either through fear, hate or ignorance, that as non-Christians they were not worth mention.

The chroniclers had nothing but disdain and disgust for the Muslim faith and this colours their every reference.<sup>1</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup>See Hans Eberhard Mayer, "Latins, Muslims, and Greeks in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," History 63 (June 1978), 175-92; and Benjamin Z. Kedar, Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 99-111. On the development of enmity between Muslim and Christian, as a prerequisite for war, see Carl Erdmann, The Origin of the Idea of Crusade, trans. Marshall W. Baldwin and Walter Goffart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 108-12

example, William of Tyre laments that, "The cradle of our faith, the native land of our Lord, and the mother of salvation, is now forcibly held by a people without God, the son of the Egyptian handmaiden."<sup>2</sup> As far as the Christians were concerned, the Muslims were a lawless, godless people who deserved no mercy or consideration. All of the chroniclers who describe battle scenes detail the murder of the Saracens, both male and female. For example, Peter Tudebode reports without judgement or disapproval that:

Finally, after having overwhelmed the pagans, our men grabbed a large number of males and females in the Temple, killing some and sparing others as the notion struck them . . . Another group of crusaders climbed to the roof of the Temple and rushed the Saracens huddled there, decapitating males and females with naked sword blades. They caused some to plunge from the Temple roof and others found their death above.<sup>3</sup>

The pillaging of the city and the murder of the Saracens was, according to Peter, a somewhat arbitrary and extremely violent event. At the seige of Jerusalem, Fulcher of Chartres records that the crusaders were full of zeal for their task, and neither Muslim women nor children were spared at the massacre at Mosque al-Aqsa.<sup>4</sup> He accounts for the excessive violence by explaining

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<sup>2</sup>William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, trans. E.A. Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), 1:89.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Tudebode, Historia de Hierosolymitano Itenere, trans. J.H. Hill and Laurita L. Hill (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1974), 119.

<sup>4</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127, trans. Frances Rita Ryan, ed. Harold S. Fink (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 122.

that the crusaders needed to cleanse the city of paganism.

With drawn swords our men ran through the city  
Not sparing anyone, even those begging for mercy.  
The crowd fell just as rotten apples fall  
From shaken branches and acorns from swaying oaks.<sup>5</sup>

Fulcher was convinced of the righteousness of their venture. Similar scenes of ruthless violence are repeated in the accounts of most other chroniclers.<sup>6</sup>

The ultimate example of moral crisis in the crusader camps is found in Fulcher of Chartres' report of a conversation between a Persian infidel and a crusader knight. Fulcher has the Muslim utter slanders against the Christian faith and the degenerate ways of the crusaders, an unparalleled insult considering that the Christians perceived themselves to be the moral, social and spiritual superiors to the Muslims. Fulcher writes:

I say to you, Frank, why make a fool of yourself since you labour in vain? You can in no wise prevail against us, for you are few and we are many. Indeed your God has abandoned you seeing that you do not keep your law as you should, nor preserve faith and truth among yourselves. We know this, we have learned it and take note of it. Tomorrow without a doubt we shall conquer and overcome you.<sup>7</sup>

The mocking tone of the Persian is unmistakable. Fulcher's intentions were undoubtedly intended to provoke reaction. He was

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>For a few other examples see, Odericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, trans. Thomas Forester (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 3:125; Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 122; Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum or The Deeds of the Franks and Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem, trans. Rosalind Hill (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 75; William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:258.

<sup>7</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 228.

attempting both to illustrate the negligent behaviour of the crusaders and to elicit a reaction against the disdainful Persian who ridiculed both the power of the Christian god and the moral weakness of the crusaders. Europeans reading Fulcher's chronicles would have been appalled by the treatment of the Christians in the Holy Land, enough to take up arms against their enemies. Fulcher further says:

Oh! what a great shame to the Christians that the faithless reproach us about our faith! For this reason we ought to be exceedingly ashamed and by being tearful and penitent correct our errors.<sup>8</sup>

It is apparent that suffering the ridicule of pagans is the supreme injury, intended to rouse repentance and renewed vigour.

This disdainful attitude toward the Muslims, at once a result of the propaganda of war and the ethnocentrism of the crusaders, is continuously revealed in the accounts of encounters with Muslim men and women. Late in the First Crusade, after the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was established, Fulcher of Chartres refers to a potential disaster, entitled "The Melancholy Invasion of the Men of Ascalon." This episode reveals several interesting aspects of the First Crusade. During the seige of Tyre, the Christian women and children remained at a fortified town to await news and, presumably, to keep themselves out of the warriors' way. Fulcher relates that, "When the men of Ascalon [Muslims], who could never curb their usual perversity, heard

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

this they did not hesitate to do us as much harm as possible."<sup>9</sup>  
He goes on to tell how the men of Ascalon attempted to 'molest'  
and 'devastate' the crusader town.

The women and children got into a certain tower built there  
in our time and thus saved themselves. Thus the Ascalonites  
roving through the land stole, killed, captured, and did  
whatever damage they could, nor was there anyone to resist  
them.<sup>10</sup>

The women in the tower were not captured though the land was  
ravaged.

There are several assumptions underlying this passage. The  
Muslim invaders were not only perverse, and predictably so, but  
were molesting the belongings of the Franks, including the women  
and children. The language that Fulcher employed carried sexual  
overtones suggesting the Muslims did not limit themselves to  
military aggression. This was especially so as the men were  
absent and the women were essentially unprotected. The invaders  
were attacking and 'molesting' women and children who, according  
to Fulcher, were defenceless. The Muslims, in Fulcher's view,  
were not observing the code of honour which should have prevailed  
by invading while the men were away, yet the resourcefulness of  
the women saved the day. The women and children hid in the tower  
and the Muslims were unable to find them. The language employed  
by Fulcher suggests that the women were not expected to defend  
themselves, and similarly, that the Muslims were expected to  
ravage the area, ('thus the Ascalonites . . .').

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 256.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 266.

There are frequent references to the equally 'depraved' Turkish habit of kidnapping Christian women, presumably to sell them into slavery. The Gesta Francorum says, "They [the Turks] also kidnapped Christian women and children and burned or destroyed everything that might be helpful to us . . ." <sup>11</sup>

Often these references are brief allusions to the loss of Christian women followed by details of other material losses.

Albert of Aix says:

And going within the tents, they destroyed with the sword whomever they found, the weak and the feeble, clerics, monks, old women, nursing children, persons of every age. But they led away young girls whose face and form was pleasing in their eyes, and beardless youths of comely countenance. They carried off to Nicea money, garments, mules, horses, and all valuable things, as well as the tents themselves. <sup>12</sup>

As is evident from this passage, the Muslims were interested only in the pretty and young women and boys, presumably for slavery and obviously for sexual purposes. Often, captured Christian women would be used as chattels in negotiations between Saracen leaders, and were accorded a high value for their beauty and appearance, therefore their sexual worth. <sup>13</sup> The Muslims were not so perverse that they kept the old women alive, as these women were too weak to work and were not sexually attractive, but

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<sup>11</sup>Gesta Francorum, 23.

<sup>12</sup>Albert of Aix, quoted in August C. Krey, ed., The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eye-Witnesses and Participants (Gloucester, MA: Princeton University Press), 76.

<sup>13</sup>See the discussion of slavery in Zoé Oldenbourg, The Crusades, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Pantheon Books 1966), 572-78.



they clearly coveted their beauty and splendour of youth, male or female. The reference to the capture of Christian women was clearly intended to arouse hostile feelings toward the Turks and to rekindle the fighting spirit in the crusader camps and all those reading the chronicles in Europe.

The reference to young boys, moreover, is revealing of more deeply engrained fear and intolerance of male homosexuality. More than the rape and degradation of women, the sexual appropriation of Christian men was both offensive and unnatural, according to the Christians. The accusation of homosexuality, a hated sexual 'deviation', was a means of pointing out the immorality of the Muslims, in addition to being a rallying point for further crusading zeal. That is, the fear inspired by the image of unwillingly sodomized Christians would motivate further crusading ventures against the depraved and unnatural infidels.<sup>14</sup> These were subtle, or not so subtle, ploys intended to strike the reader where his sensitivities lay, and to cut to the heart of why the Franks were in the Holy Land in the first place: to fight off the infidel threat.

The Muslims, furthermore, were not only lawless and godless but were irrepressibly immoral and likely unnaturally sexual. William of Tyre relates an incident during the siege of Antioch

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<sup>14</sup>For a discussion of this theme and the spirit of intolerance surrounding the crusades, see John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 278-84. Also see Ronald C. Finucane, Soldiers of the Faith: Crusader and Moslems at War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 157-72.

in June 1098, in which a key Armenian-Christian, Firüz, secretary of the palace of Antioch, found his wife in an illicit embrace with a Turkish chief. Firüz was "touched to the quick with horror" and reacted with renewed and fervent hatred for the Muslims. Firüz is reported to have said:

It is not enough for the filthy dogs that they crush us under the yoke of unjust servitude and deplete our patrimony by daily exactions, but they must needs violate the laws of wedlock and destroy the bonds of marriage. If I live, I will put an end to such insolence and, with the help of the Lord, repay them as they deserve.<sup>15</sup>

Muslim men were subject to constant moral debasement from the self-righteous Christians for their immorality and lack of faithfulness as well as licentiousness. This particular Turk was slandered and berated in a personal as well as religious manner for the adultery, an act for which Firüz then betrayed his Muslim employers into crusader hands.

In keeping with contemporary western attitudes, women, Muslim and Christian, were discussed as material possessions, as property of the men they were affiliated with, fathers, husbands or brothers. Firüz' wife was seen to be the victim of the 'filthy dog' who ravaged her, despite her apparent complicity. As a result of the adulterous act, Firüz was impelled to avenge the slight against his character for the defilement of his property. Similarly, Muslim women were regarded as the personal effects of the Muslim warriors, prizes to be coveted by the crusaders. At Antioch, Fulcher's disparagement of the Muslims

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<sup>15</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:249-50.

and his attitude toward women in general is betrayed by his description of the battle scene. He says:

We slew Cassianus, the tyrant of the city, and many of his soldiers, and kept their wives, children, and families, together with their gold and silver and all their possessions.<sup>16</sup>

According to Fulcher, in this instance the Muslims deserved to die, but their precious things such as jewels and women were kept for their value and utility. The women could be sold as slaves, used for manual labour or exploited for their sexual value. In this blunt manner, Fulcher reveals his flippant evaluation of women as chattels.

Fulcher's less than benevolent attitude toward Muslim women is revealed in another incident at Antioch. The crusaders, after achieving a hard-fought victory were filled with marauding zeal and went through the tents of the Turks to search out anything of value. In addition to finding jewels, money and foodstuff, the raiders found Turkish women. Fulcher describes their discovery in these words: "In regard to the women found in the tents of the foe, the Franks did them no evil but drove lances into their bellies."<sup>17</sup> This sentence reveals an interesting side to both Fulcher and the intent of the crusaders. In their plundering fervour, the Franks chose to forego the sexual pleasure of these women, who were apparently spared 'evil' by simply being killed rather than raped. They were either too despicable to be

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<sup>16</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 108-9.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 106.

sexually assaulted or sold into slavery, or the marauding Franks were so overcome by fanaticism for their task that they did not have time or inclination to distinguish between male and female infidels. Regardless, Fulcher believes that the Turkish women escaped the fate of women in wars by not being taken for slaves or raped. As Muslims they could expect no better fate than murder. Of course, Fulcher never entertained the reverse possibility that the women may have actually preferred death to rape, slavery, and possible forced conversion at the hands of their enemies.<sup>18</sup>

Despite Fulcher's apparent hatred of Muslims and his derogatory attitude toward women, he did not deny that Muslim women might have a useful purpose. Shortly after a serious Saracen defeat, Fulcher reports:

Very few of the male sex were left alive. But a great many of the women were spared because they could always be used to turn the hand mills. When the Franks captured the women they bought and sold them, the comely and the ugly, among themselves, and the men also.<sup>19</sup>

The crusaders chose to spare the lives of the Muslim women since they did not pose a serious security threat and their labour could contribute to the welfare of the crusader camp. This in no way indicates, however, an acceptance of or empathy with Muslim

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<sup>18</sup>For a discussion of Christian virginity and the lengths to which women would go to protect their virginity, see Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "The Heroics of Virginity: *Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation*," in Mary Beth Rose, ed., Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 29-72, esp. 41-60.

<sup>19</sup>Fulcher of Chartres, The Expedition to Jerusalem, 154.

women. The fact that both 'the comely and the ugly' were captured indicates that this may not have been the usual practice. Both types of women were traded although the more physically appealing might attract a larger profit because of their sexual appeal to slave traders. Clearly, then, the women's skills and work were needed as much as their usefulness as sexual objects. Pragmatically Muslim women were enslaved for a variety of sexual, slave and labour-oriented purposes.<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere, Fulcher of Chartres displayed disgust with the behaviour of the Muslim women in the aftermath of a battle. It was a common crusader practice to burn the corpses of slain Saracens in order to retrieve the valuables which they had swallowed to keep them out of Frankish hands. Saracen women practised an ingenious method of hiding money from the crusaders within their uteri, a practice which caused Fulcher great distress. "The women also shamelessly hid bezants [coinage] within themselves in a way that was wicked and which is more shameful for me to tell."<sup>21</sup> He was appalled by their flagrant immorality and lack of decorum in hiding the money where they did. Clearly Fulcher's delicate clerical mind could not handle this outrage. He did not expect such behaviour from women, even Muslim women. One is, however, left to speculate as to how the crusaders retrieved the hidden bezants.

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<sup>20</sup>There are also references to the capture of prisoners of both sexes. For example see, *Ibid.*, 253. See discussion of slaves and sexuality on page 109 of this chapter.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 154-55.

Despite the apparent hatred all Christians shared for the Muslims, there is an underlying sense of detachment when the chroniclers speak of Muslim women. They treat these women as profoundly 'other' because they were outside of, or beneath, the boundaries of the traditional discourse on women. Consequently, they are subject to secondary, almost unconscious contempt as both women and Muslims. Often the perception of difference, along with the nonchalant attitude of the crusaders, combined to effect strange images of Muslim women engaged in what would seem to be forbidden activities. For example, William of Tyre reports a fascinating scene wherein the Saracens decide that their military power was no match for the benevolent and omnipotent Christian God. As a result they, ". . . brought two sorceresses to bewitch it [a hurling machine] and by their magic incantations render it powerless." The women who were "engaged in their magic rites and divinations" and attended by three girls, presumably apprentices or servants, were killed by a crusader millstone.<sup>22</sup> William reports the incident without comment, except to detail the Muslim's extreme sorrow over the deaths of the women; specifically there was no criticism of the blasphemy of sorcery, or anything of the sort. This is slightly surprising since most of the chroniclers take every advantage to slander the Muslims. Most likely, the crusaders expected deviant behaviour from the infidels, especially from the women, and therefore it was not worth comment. They were already heretics and women, so their

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<sup>22</sup>William of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 1:387-88.

behaviour was anticipated. In other words, Muslim women would have appeared to be the worst of all evils and their sins were no cause for alarm. The lack of comment on the part of the chroniclers is due to the inconspicuousness or inconsequence of Muslim women in the larger scheme of crusade. They were irrelevant, especially as the crusaders went to do battle against the men, the vigorous representatives of the heathen faith, not the weak-willed, sorcery-practising women.

Odericus Vitalis, in an explication on this same theme, wrote an extended version of the events surrounding Melaz, the daughter of the Turkish leader Daliman, who held Bohemond, a Frankish leader, and several of his knights captive. Although the editor believes the story to be a romantic fiction, it is further exemplification of a common disdain for Muslim women.<sup>23</sup> Melaz was a "beautiful and accomplished princess" who possessed great power in all her father's houses and also had "the command of abundant wealth and a number of slaves to do her will." She was so intrigued by the bravery of the Franks that she would sneak into their jail cells to engage in "acute discussions . . . concerning the Christian faith and the true religion." Odericus Vitalis took care to point out that her father either did not notice her behaviour or placed blind trust in her abilities to judge her own deportment.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>See also F.M. Warren, "The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 29 (1914), 341-58.

<sup>24</sup>Odericus Vitalis, Ecclesiastical History, 3:310-12.

Melaz proved to be a very powerful woman who decided that the imprisoned Franks could help her father in the civil war against his brother in which he was currently engaged. Melaz arranged to release the crusaders to aid her father, on their word that they would return to the jail at the conclusion of the battle. The Franks returned, true to their word, but immediately incarcerated those Turks who remained in the castle. Daliman returned from the battle and, incensed at the actions of his daughter, spurned her "perfidious congratulations" and "deceitful flatteries" and promised to kill Melaz and her comrades on the morrow. Melaz, to the amazement of the Christians, defied her father, saying:

My dear father, your anger against me is unjust; you frighten me with terrible threats, and overwhelm me with reproaches for the timely succour which, in my great regard, I adroitly provided for you in your hour of need . . . <sup>25</sup>

Melaz recounted the braveries of the Christian fighters in service of her father, concluding with a demand that the Christians be set free with military decoration. Seeing that her advice to her father was not having an impact, she implored the Christians to take over the castle and imprison her father and his men. Eventually an equitable peace was negotiated between Daliman and his captives. Melaz who "prudently" left her father's household and took the grace of baptism was awarded by Bohemond, who said:

Noble virgin, who while you were yet a pagan unexpectedly succoured us in a wonderful way, and have wisely left your

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 315.



kindred for the sake of the Lord Jesus . . . select from amongst us a husband of your choice, in the name of Christ; for it is not right that we should in the slightest degree oppose your reasonable wishes, debtors as we deeply are to your past deservings.<sup>26</sup>

Melaz chose a husband who was killed three years later on the battlefield, and we hear nothing more of her fate.

The utility of this tale, whether or not it is true, lies in its expected conclusion. Melaz was a beautiful and brave woman who was also able to see the 'true religion' and embrace it, and when it especially counted, in the thick of battles and intrigues, she was supportive of the aims of the crusaders. She was a strong woman who, through her alliance with the crusaders, was forced to relinquish her family and way of life. In the end she was rewarded with marriage, the suitable compensation for bravery from a woman. The crusaders, and Odericus Vitalis, saw marriage as the highest gift they could bestow upon her. It is also singularly important to realize that Melaz was able to attain this great honour because she was a woman and not a man. While there were incidents of Muslim men earning respect in battles, Melaz was uniquely able to assimilate into crusader society because, as a woman, she was more mutable since she gained her identity through men. She could marry and attain respectability, being the baptized wife of a Christian man.

Underlying this account is the theme of woman as a saviour. In fact, the purpose of this story is to convey a sense of hope, perhaps a fairy tale sense of optimism, to the crusaders even in

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 321.

the depths of despair. Bohemond and his knights, imprisoned for over a year, were freed through the intervention of a woman. Melaz possessed heroic attributes only because she became as a Christian woman through her infatuation with Christianity. She was raised from the level of a Muslim woman, to receive praise and reverence for her deeds, in spite of her unlucky start in life as both a Muslim and a woman. The esteem accorded Melaz was reward for her betrayal of her father, an act which the crusaders, in the grips of a developing chivalric code, would never condone in their own culture. Melaz, then, overcame the handicap of her religion, illustrating the inherent disregard for women of the Muslim faith.

The chroniclers report several instances of Muslim women offering heedless advice, as in the case of Melaz and her father. In another incident in 1123-24, Odericus Vitalis recounts the story of the three wives of Balad, a Saracen leader. This tale reveals the crusaders' indifference for the fate of Muslim women and their disdain for the advice of women in general. Baldwin II, king of Jerusalem, had taken a castle which contained Balad's three wives, one of whom sent a letter by carrier pigeon to her husband telling him of their fate. Balad then asked the crusaders to have mercy and set his wives free.

Much to your shame, you treat with cruelty and outrage the feelings of noble matrons, in a manner unbecoming your royal dignity and Christian profession . . . Your conduct is the deepest disgrace to your nation, and will reflect dishonour on your religion throughout all ages. Harden not your heart, I beseech you, but have compassion on my grey hairs

and the feebleness of women.<sup>27</sup>

Balad promised Baldwin various liberties and powers if he would comply with his wishes. One of Balad's wives, however, was not fooled and implored Baldwin not to pay heed to Balad's demands. Queen Fatima told Baldwin that the wrath of the many allied nations will hurl itself upon Balad if he were to allow the marauding crusaders to leave without a fight. She told him that, furthermore:

. . . the glory of the warriors of the West is universally celebrated, and the fame of the Franks has even penetrated to the Persian realms. It does not grieve us to be confined with you, although King Balad taunts you with it as a thing to be ashamed of . . . . [We hope] that if, through divine favour, we safely make our escape from hence in your company, we shall speedily be admitted to the heavenly sacraments of the Christians.<sup>28</sup>

Baldwin paid no heed to the advice of Fatima and sent the three women back to their husband, whence Balad promptly took four of Baldwin's knights prisoner for four years.

Throughout this story, the men denounce the feebleness and simpleness of women, by disregarding their advice and their demands, and through their open ambivalence toward the fate of the Muslim women. The women at the same time displayed wisdom and cleverness that is seemingly 'unnatural.' Fatima rightly advised Baldwin not to trust the promises of her husband. Another of his wives was astute enough to send a carrier-pigeon with a message to gain help for the women in their captivity.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 399.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 400.

Such examples of articulate eloquence and powers of persuasion, furthermore, are not found in descriptions of Christian women, even the wives of leaders, except the notable exception of Adele of Blois. Eleanor of Aquitaine, for example, has no voice in these chronicles, nor do any of the women from the west. And yet, words of import and power are attributed to Muslim women, usually wives or daughters of leaders, in ways which may characterize both their power and their position within society, at least as perceived by the chroniclers from the west.

The subtleties involved in the text, however, reveal a more discordant attitude. The Muslim women who were accorded power and eloquence by the chroniclers were patently disloyal to their faith and their families. Whereas the chroniclers may have been frightened of speaking about or giving speeches to the powerful women of the west, they are unafraid of creating characterizations for the Muslim women. There were neither substantial losses nor gains to be made. Muslim women, furthermore, could have been seen as fodder for the chivalric fire: to conquer an infidel woman in love and regenerate her in the waters of baptism was a feat of some significance for a Christian knight. The vested interest in the story of Melaz, therefore, is the depiction of the conversion of the Muslim woman by love. As Benjamin Kedar writes, "Saracen conversion became entwined with two essential components of the chivalrous culture: the good fight and the pursuit of ladies."<sup>29</sup> Their traitorous

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<sup>29</sup>Kedar, Crusade and Mission, 70, and pp. 57-73.

nature, their mutability, their misguided religion and their gender are all factors which combined to create an intense indifference to the fate and essence of Muslim women.

In general, Ronald Finucane characterises the Christian perception of Muslim culture in the period between 1095 and 1200 as hysterical and strident.

The brew of xenophobia, long fermenting and spiced for example with Spanish conflicts, exploded in and after the First Crusade: in the West Mohammad was now known as a magician, a sexual libertine, his religion an evil caricature of Christianity or a demonic inspiration of the Antichrist.<sup>30</sup>

He also believes that relations with Muslims either before or after this period were not so inimical. This special blend of hatred and xenophobia, then, culminated in unique First and Second Crusade attitudes toward Muslim women and men. Muslim men, first, were viewed as a direct threat to Christianity and especially to that coveted possession of the West, the virtue of Christian women. Inherently perverse, immoral and sexually deviant, the image of Muslim men became the meat of war propaganda.

The crusader position on Muslim women varied slightly, but in an important, gender-based way. Being both Muslim and female meant that Muslim women were poorly evaluated by western chroniclers. But, as they were women, they were also explicitly

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<sup>30</sup>Ronald C. Finucane, Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Moslems at War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 157. Also see J. Kritzeck, "Moslem-Christian Understanding in Mediaeval Times: A Review Article," Comparative Studies in Society and History 4 (April 1962), 388-401.

redeemable. It was entirely possible for Muslim women to be a baptised and thus become accepted into Christian society. Their status as women, furthermore, caused them to be viewed by Christian knights, perhaps only figuratively, as the targets of chivalric conquests. On the whole, the chroniclers were indifferent to the fate of Muslim women, except as potential Christians, or as possible lovers for Christian knights. Evaluated according to their usefulness as sexual partners or as slaves, Muslim women were not viewed in a way very different from Christian women.

Conclusion  
**The Dualities of Woman**

Harold Lamb, in a 1930s fictionalized account of the First Crusade, drew extensively on traditional stereotypes of women in the crusades. He depicted them as weak, soft, vulnerable and unsuitable to the climate or conditions of the Holy Land. He describes their status as feeble and transparent.

Into the church thronged the women of His flock with wan faces. Their number had diminished in pitiable fashion, since they were not able to endure hunger as well as the men. The wives of the nobles and the children of the peasants went about together, bearing themselves calmly when the men looked at them, but agonized in their confessions to the priests. There were women who had lost their husbands and had taken, perforce, other protectors. Their sheltered life in the feudal manors was a thing of the past, only half remembered. . . . Would not He offer them a sign?<sup>1</sup>

The soul of compassion, Lamb also describes the ongoing desecration of the Christian women who had the misfortune of accompanying the crusaders.

[The Muslims] pulled the women from the pavilions, flung them down, and violated them, passing their curved knives through their bodies as they drew away. The screaming of children, the sobbing and hysterical laughter of the struggling women, shrilled above the shouting of the Turks.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, he describes the true and 'happy' role that women of the eleventh century were meant to play. Describing the crusaders' arrival back in Europe and the prosperous homes that awaited them, he writes:

The lady of the castle had seen to everything, and now she

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Lamb, The Crusades: Iron Men and Saints (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1930), 174

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 125.

was waiting, in her long blue robe with a white coif and embroidered girdle, to greet her husband on the steps. . . . her place was at the steps, to give the welcome. . . . It was a joyful hour when the village boys ran up, and the women shaded their eyes and whispered prayers, and the heart of the lord's lady quickened at a familiar hoof-beat and the jangle of steel. "They are home!"<sup>3</sup>

Lamb explicated three conventional themes of the crusade historiography. First, he believed that Christian women were patently unsuited to crusade, both physically and emotionally, and that the whole experience was far too draining for them. In his schema, they tried to put on a brave countenance in order to bolster the spirits of their men, but inside they were crumbling and dying. And, if these woeful creatures made it through their immediate predicament, there was still the ever-present threat of rape and death at the hands of the godless infidels. But, the author kindly points out, the woman left at home, while yearning for her husband and actually suffering palpitations at the sound of his horse, had fared no worse for staying home. She was respectful of her place, did not appear over anxious and took special pains with her appearance on this fateful day. In fact, the estate is in fine condition, the children yearn for their father and the conjugal bond of love has been strengthened by the crusader's absence.

An examination of the chroniclers of the First and Second Crusades does not immediately refute the interpretations offered by traditional historiography. The women who accompanied the crusaders were certainly seen as weak and pliable, highly

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 271-72.



susceptible to the fluctuations of a military enterprise and the whims of the marauding enemy. Indeed, the violated and vulnerable women were akin to the raped territories of the Holy Land, the pervasive image utilized by preachers from Pope Urban II to Bernard of Clairvaux to motivate and facilitate the movement to the east. The conception of the weak woman in need of hearty masculine defense, inspired the crusaders both to undertake the journey to the east and sustained them in fearful battles against the Muslims. The image of femineity informed the language of war, and, furthermore, was the subtext which defined and maintained the venture, contrary to the stated wisdom of the mass of the traditional historiography on the crusading movement. The recollection of the women left behind in Europe to take care of the hearth and home, the strong-but-swooning mainstay of the crusading movement, was nourishment and inspiration for the crusading men.

These same chronicles, however, also yield the much more sustainable and active positions women assumed in the crusades. This is in stark contrast to the opinion of Maureen Purcell who believes that while there is evidence of women's involvement, they were never a sanctioned or necessary part of the crusading movement; in fact, she believes the woman crusader was an "aberration".<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, women did indeed accompany the crusaders *en masse*, playing the campfollower, diplomatic envoy,

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<sup>4</sup>Maureen Purcell, "Women Crusaders: a Temporary Canonical Aberration?" in L.O Frappell, ed., Principalities, Powers and Estates (Adelaide: Adelaide University Union Press, 1979), 57-64.

warrior, settler and moral inspiration in the war for the Holy Land. At times their participation was crucial, such as at the Battle of Dorylaeum where they carried water to the fighters and urged them on in battle. On other occasions, however, the women were considered a nuisance and essentially a liability to the military endeavour because of their cumbersome and indefensible nature. Yet, while their presence was undesirable, they were indisputably a necessary element for the continued success of the colonizing venture in the Holy Land. To establish a feudal hierarchy required women to provide marriage partners and heirs, as settlers and diplomatic links for the political continuation of the Latin Kingdom.

Of course, the permissible though officially undesirable presence of all types of women in the military venture caused a great deal of consternation for the crusade leaders and especially for the clergy. The positive outcome of any battle or hope for long term stability depended, the clerics believed, on the sexual purity of the crusading hordes. The leaders of crusade, imbued with medieval ideas about sexuality, believed that the unnecessary expenditure of male semen would debilitate a man physically and therefore detract from the potential for a military victory. As a counter to what was reported to be the continuous fornication and adultery of the crusaders, strict regimens of fasting, alms giving, prayer, processions and general penitential behaviour were enforced, especially before large battles, to ensure the triumphant outcome of the undertaking. In

order for these austere standards to be successfully enforced, women's presence and movement were restricted. The clergy and the church hierarchy found it difficult to maintain order within the crusader camps or to deny women the opportunity to embark on crusade; thus the theme of sexual purity is an incessant one in the chroniclers' accounts, contrary to James Brundage's assertion that the crusades were characterized by a fundamental ambivalence toward the sexual purity of the crusaders.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the presentation of Muslim men and women in the chronicles reinforces the image of Christian women as weak, gullible and passive. Muslim men, the perverse and sexually deviant defenders of Islam, were portrayed as men whose primary aspiration was the rape and degradation of virtuous Christian women. Such an image multiplied the need for sturdy Christian men to defend the purity of Christendom. The image of Muslim women, conversely, was essentially one of indifference to their activity, deviant or otherwise. Because they were categorized as different from Christian women, they were often accorded large roles in the crusades, as in the case of Melaz. But this depiction was dependent on their "Christianization", which was often the goal of the knights who were then able to combine two chivalrous activities, fighting and pursuing women. Converting a Muslim woman to Christianity was equal to saving her soul and

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<sup>5</sup>James A. Brundage, "Prostitution, Miscegenation, and Sexual Purity in the First Crusade," in Peter W. Edbury, ed., Crusade and Settlement: Papers read at the first conference of the society for the study of the crusades and the Latin East and presented to R.C. Smail (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), 57-65.

elevating her status, though in fact she remained a woman.

The more generalized effect of the crusades on the image of women in Europe was multifaceted. The women who remained at home, such as Adele of Blois, assumed great responsibilities and therefore power. These women, the foundation of any war venture, were responsible for the daily functions of the household - childrearing, food production, material enrichment, defense, marketing and so on, in addition to short term planning. The management of great or small feudal estates fell to them, leading to an increase in the use of matronymics, thus, bolstering the perception of the status and capabilities of woman.<sup>6</sup>

The image of the woman at home defending her own or her husband's property from intruders became a more common if not more acceptable image, in those violent and uncertain times.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the crusades and the military power they represented facilitated the growth of the ideal of a woman warrior engaged in actual battle or portrayed in the literature of period, for example engaged in jousting tournaments.<sup>8</sup> Effectively, the expansion of potential roles for women, in reality or as metaphor, was stimulated by the crusades.

The cumulative effect of these images of women in the

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<sup>6</sup>See, David Herlihy, "Land, Family, and Women in Continental Europe, 701-1200," Traditio 18 (1962), 89-121.

<sup>7</sup>See, Megan McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: gender, warfare and society in medieval Europe," Women's Studies 17 (1990), 193-209.

<sup>8</sup>Helen Solterer, "Figures of Female Militancy in Medieval France," Signs 16 (Spring 1991), 522-49.

crusades is an enigmatic perception of woman as subject to crucial dualities in her nature. She was at once weak and strong, vulnerable and clever, impure and innocent, passive and active, hated and necessary. The image of assiduous women is in stark contrast to the few instances of women as vigorous and militant participants in the crusades. Thus, the process of rescuing the image of women in the crusades from oblivion has involved concessions to traditional historiography's categorization of woman as weak, vulnerable and feminine. But, conversely, the limited knowledge about the role and image of women in the crusades belies that characterization and fortifies our knowledge, if at once creating an inherently contradictory and dichotomous persona.

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