Re-evaluating the Representation of Saracen Women in Middle English Romance: Influences from the East

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Abstract

This thesis discusses Middle English romances that feature prominent Saracen characters, in particular Saracen women. Although the composers of these Middle English romances change and adapt the romances, they are to a great extent redactions of Anglo-Norman romances written during the time of the later Crusades; as such they also incorporate some of the prevalent Crusading ideologies of the period. As both the Frankish and English Crusading armies stayed in the Levant for a significant amount of time, interacting with Levantine Muslims, these romances may give a glimpse of how European Christians viewed the Muslims of the East and what they knew about them through their encounters with them in the Levant. Despite being previously labelled as orientalised helpers by scholars, Saracen women play an indespensible role in these romances and are portrayed in contrast to their demonised male counterparts. They possess agency and practice medicine and magic which were commonly associated with the East in the later Middle Ages. The first part of this thesis deals with this representation of Saracen women and the second part of this thesis explores the origins of the conversion topos which lies at the centre of these romances. Overall, this thesis questions how much Western Europeans knew about Muslims in the Levant and whether there could have been any literary influence from Arab culture and literary tradition after the long period of contact with the Muslims during the Crusades.

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Note on Transliteration

All Arabic and Persian names, place-names, and book titles conform to the guidelines provided by The International Journal of Middle East Studies. Names of dynasties such Abbasid, Umayyad, Fatimid, Ghaznavid, Sasanian, and Ayyubid have established spellings in English and will not be transliterated. The same rule is applied to the names of well-known cities with Arabic names, such as Baghdad and Beirut. Furthermore, all authors' names of secondary literature used and names of books in quotation marks will be quoted as published. In addition, as the names of Seljuk Turks have been taken from primary texts in Arabic, they have been transliterated according to the Arabic text. Lastly, the title Sultan has been used both by the chronicles and Middle English romances; therefore for the sake of consistency, it will not be transliterated.

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To my grandfather,
who taught me the value of knowledge

Introduction

Saracens have had a strong presence in the later medieval literary imagination with representations in *chansons de geste*, Old French epics, and medieval romance. The literary representation of Saracen men has varied from worthy opponents to black, bumbling rulers unsteady of their faith, and at times the representation is a mixture of the two stereotypes. *Chansons de geste*, such as *Chanson de Roland* and *Fierabras*, represent Saracen knights as equal in prestige and bravery to Christian knights. Suzanne Conklin Akbari gives an apt example from the *Chanson de Roland*; in the *chanson* the Christian force led by Charlemagne mirrors the Saracen force led by Marsile, with both sides composed of a corps of twelve knights, the kings surrounded by retainers and seated on opulent thrones. Both sides also include distinguished warriors: the only difference is their faith.[1] Perhaps the most suitable description of the worthy representation of Saracen warriors is the line from the *Chanson de Roland*, highlighted by William Comfort: "Deus! quels vassals, s'oüst chrestientet!" (Roland, 3164).[2] Therefore, the only thing preventing the Saracens from true greatness is their pagan religion.

Taking inspiration from this one failing, *chansons* like *Fierabras* and the subsequent three Middle English romances based on *Fierabras* eliminate this deficiency through the conversion of the great Saracen hero of the romance to Christianity. Some versions and redactions of *Fierabras* represent Fierabras as giant-like, such as *Sir Ferumbras* in which he is described as 'fifteuene fet' (l. 547) tall; other versions describe

[1] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 208. For a discussion of worthy Saracens see also: William Wistor Comfort, "The Character Types in the Old French Chansons de Geste", *PMLA*, 21:2 (1906), pp. 279-434; Richard W. Southern, *Western View of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962); *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes: Characters in Medieval Narrative Traditions and their Afterlife in Literature, Theatre and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Willem P. Gerritsen and Anthony G. van Melle, trans. by Tanis Guest ((Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998).

[2] *Le Chanson de Roland*, ed. by Theodor Müller, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Dieterich'sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1878); Comfort, "The Character Types", p. 410.

him simply as an impressive knight.[3] Even though he is giant-like in some versions, he does not possess any of the other quintessentially monstrous features associated with Saracen giants, and most importantly he always converts to Christianity. This conversion further highlights the superiority of the Christian faith as Fierabras abandons his destructive belligerence for a life of religious devotion, even changing his name to Florien (496).[4]

Despite this worthy representation, other Saracen men are black, ridiculously comical figures like Balan in *Sir Ferumbras* and the other Middle English redactions of *Fierabras*. Despite being 'doughty' Ferumbras (SoB, l. 207) and fair Floripas's father, he is described as black, gullible, and temperamental in his faith of his gods. Even the deceptively generous sultan in *Beues* is reduced to a dishonourable figure, almost as if treachery is a part of his nature just waiting to be revealed. Even though he appreciates Beues at first, ultimately he ends up betraying him, much like Beues's later Saracen companion Ascopard.

While there often seems to be a polarised representation of Saracen men in Middle English romance, the depiction of Saracen women is very consistent. Saracen women, mainly princesses, are fair in complexion, resourceful, often to the point of violence, possess knowledge of medicine or own miraculous objects, hold their fathers' confidence, and fall in love with Christian knights and convert to Christianity for their sake. This stereotype has been labelled the enamoured Muslim princess topos in scholarship on Middle English romance. This thesis will mainly discuss Saracen women in four romances: the three Middle English redactions of *Fierabras*, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, *Octavian*, and *Floris and Blauncheflur*. All the romances except *Floris and Blauncheflur* feature a prominent Saracen princess who falls in love with a Christian knight; however, *Floris and Blauncheflur* provides a fascinating contrast in its reversal of the conversion

[3] Akbari, *Idols in the East*, p. 164; *Sir Ferumbras*, ed. by Sidney J. Herrtage, E.E.T.S e.s. 34: English Charlemagne Romances, Part I (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1879). This edition will be used for all subsequent quotations from *Sir Ferumbras* with the abbreviation SF.
[4] Akbari, *Idols in the East*, p. 166.

topos within these romances. It is typically the Saracen princess who falls in love with a Christian; however, in this romance it is Floris who falls in love with a Christian slave Blauncheflur. Apart from the gender variation, Floris fulfils the role of the Saracen princess – he is also described as fair, falls in love with Blauncheflur and resourcefully saves her, and even converts to Christianity in one version of the romance. Floris is even connected to the miraculous through the gift of a protective ring from his mother. This casual substitution suggests the gender of the Saracen lover is not important as long as the superiority of Christianity is exemplified in the romance through the devotion of the Saracen lover. Yet Saracen women play an important role in these romances: although these romances are named after prominent knights within the romance, without the help and intelligence of Saracen women the Christian knights would not be successful in their endeavours. This indispensible role also extends to the women discussed in the fifth chapter.

The representation of Saracen men in chronicles of the Crusades and later medieval vernacular literature has usually been at the centre of scholarship dealing with Saracens; however, a great deal of attention has also been paid to the depiction of Saracen women. Within the dialogue and discussion concerning Saracen women in existing scholarship, however, the emphasis is largely on Old French literature, rather than the later Middle English romances, some of which are adaptations of their earlier counterparts. Yet even though some of these Middle English romances adapt earlier Old French romances, the writers make intelligent, calculated changes often adding, altering, or removing details. As will be discussed in detail in this thesis, these differences are also visible within different Middle English versions of the same romance.

Most of the current scholarship on Saracen women emphasises the westernisation of these women and the removal of alterity in medieval romance. Jacqueline de Weever discusses the polarisation of Saracen women in *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic*. De Weever discusses the

whitening, and overall westernised physical description of Saracen women in French epic, which results in an 'erasure of Saracen identity'.[5] As the title of her book suggests, she also discusses the demonization of certain black Saracen warrior women who stand in contrast to their counterparts, essentially tricking the Franks. Although de Weever very briefly admits that Saracen women in the epics possess knowledge of medicine, the kind of knowledge associated with the East at the time, and emphasises the representation of Christian superiority through the treasonous behaviour of the white Saracen, she maintains the 'world view of black and white', in which white Saracen women are westernised and black women are depicted as the other.[6] Although the Saracen women in Middle English romances are whitened, they do not possess blond hair, as in the case of the women de Weever discusses in her first chapter. In contrast to de Weever's book, this thesis argues that their overall representation can be seen as more complex than either completely westernised or entirely the Saracen other.

In contrast, Dorothee Metlitzki discusses the representation of Saracen men and women in both Old French and Middle English romances.[7] Metlitzki's *The Matter of Araby* offers some discussion of the conversion theme in Old French and Middle English romance and is one of the few works that suggests the influence of medieval Arabic literature on European medieval romance. Even though Metlitzki's book is regularly referenced in any publication dealing with the representation of Saracens, and the work discusses an impressive number of medieval romances, Metlitzki's discussion of Saracen women and Arabic literary influence on the theme of conversion in medieval romance is far from detailed and the subject requires a more comprehensive examination. Taking a similar approach, Warren discusses the conversion theme in French epics, tracing the origins to Ordericus Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and suggests a possible influence

[5] Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 5.
[6] Ibid., p. 111.
[7] Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977).

from the tale of the capture of Al-Āʾsad and his release through the help of his captor's daughter in the *The Thousand and One Nights* collection of stories.[8] While Warren suggests that Ordericus Vitalis could have been influenced by this tale, Warren does not examine the many other instances of betrayal and conversion in Arabic and Persian literature which are discussed in detail in the last chapter of this thesis.

In contrast, Niall Christie provides an extensive study of non-Muslim women who betray their families and convert to Islam in medieval Arabic literature.[9] Christie mostly discusses the conversion of non-Muslim women from *The Thousand and One Nights* and the *sīra* tradition, including well-known *sīra* such as *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baībars*, *Sīrat al-Āʾmīra*, and *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himmah*. While Christie makes a passing reference to similar instances of betrayal and conversion in medieval romance while referring to Jacqueline de Weever's book, a close comparative analysis of the conversion theme in the two literary traditions is still needed.

Although the prominent paternal betrayal and religious conversion theme has been discussed in Old French, Middle English, and medieval Arabic literary traditions, the use of theme within the story of Shāpūr and Malika in the *Shāhnāma* has yet to be explored. Despite the brevity of the episode in which Malika betrays her father Ṭāʾir by helping Shāpūr overthrow her father's fortress, the episode is important as the mirroring of themes suggests a possible influence on medieval romance. This further suggests friendly interaction between Christians of the West and Muslims of the East.

Other scholarship dealing with Saracens, and in particular Saracen women, takes an Orientalist approach to their analysis. The most prominent critics who adopt this

[8] F.M. Warren, 'The Enamoured Moslem Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic', *PMLA*, 29:3 (1914), 341-358.
[9] Niall Christie, 'Noble Betrayers of their Faith, Families and Folk: Some Non-Muslim Women in Mediaeval Arabic Popular Literature', *Folklore*, 123:1 (2012), 84-98. Christie suggests *Sheba's Daughters* for the purposes of a comparison of a similar trope in medieval romance in Note 10 of her article.

approach are Geraldine Heng, Carol F. Heffernan, Suzanne Conklin Akbari, and Amy Burge.[10]

In her discussion of Saracen women, Heng uses the language of colonisation in her phrase 'empire of culture'. She analyses Saracen women as victims of cultural fantasy who are valued for their 'quirky spunkiness' and 'excess of libido'.[11] This description is largely based on the role that Saracen women play in medieval romance, often controlling their own agency, manipulating the men in the romance, and at times committing violent acts when the circumstances require it. Although the representation of Muslim women in medieval romance is indeed extreme, this thesis argues that they were not entirely figures of cultural fantasy. The examination of caliphs' wives during the early Islamic dynasties and other Muslim women demonstrates that women in the harem did hold influence over their husbands. These women also resorted to manipulation to fulfil their wishes, and in some cases, gain revenge.

Burge also takes an Orientalist approach in her book. The work discusses Middle English romances such *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, *Octavian*, and *The King of Tars*; however, Burge discusses these romances in comparison to modern sheikh romances like *The Sultan's Bought Bride* and *The Desert King's Bejewelled Bride*, with a greater emphasis placed on the analysis of the sheikh romances. Since these sheikh romances eroticise the Middle East, as is immediately discernable from their titles, Burge's use of Orientalist theory is unsurprising.

Akbari's book, dealing with the period between 1100-1450, is particularly influenced by Orientalist theory, with the book's introduction devoted to a discussion of

[10] Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Carol F. Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003); Amy Burge, *Representing Difference in the Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). See also Norman Daniel, *Heroes and Saracens: In Interpretation of the"Chanson de Geste"*(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'The Anxieties of Encounter and Exchange: Saracens and Christian Heroism in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*', *Florilegium*, 21 (2004), 135-158, and John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[11] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 186.

'medieval Orientalism'. The book addresses 'the pre-modern background of some of the Orientalist stereotypes still pervasive today – the irascible and irrational Arab, and the religiously deviant Muslim'.[12] As these Orientalist stereotypes are the product of colonial attitudes towards the Orient, it seems a little anachronistic to root them in the later Middle Ages. In general, Muslims are portrayed as idol-worshippers, strangely often represented as worshipping Greek gods such as Apollo: the derogatory imagery does not lie solely with the West, as Christian religious practices were also ridiculed by Muslims in the later medieval period.

Although scholars have adapted the theory of Orientalism to discuss the representation of the Saracens and the East in later medieval European writing, the use of Orientalism for any discourse related to the Middle Ages, and in particular the later medieval period for the purpose of this discussion, can be very problematic. Edward Said provides three definitions of Orientalism. The first is an academic one concerning the individual teaching, writing, or researching about the Orient. This discourse of Orientalism is connected to the authoritative attitude of European colonialism in which the orientalist is the main authority for information about the Orient. The second definition of Orientalism is the 'ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the orient" and (most of the time) "the occident"'. Said suggests writers such as Dante, Victor Hugo, and Karl Marx channel this branch of Orientalism in their works.

This suggests a misunderstanding of medieval works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy*. [13] As Pick rightfully states, Said's understanding of medieval Christian perceptions of Islam emphasises 'terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians'.[14] This depiction of Islam, and indeed the polarisation of Orient and Occident,

[12] Akbari, *Idols in the East*, p. 1.
[13] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 2-3.
[14] Lucy K. Pick, 'Edward Said, Orientalism and the Middle Ages', *Medieval Encounters*, 5:3 (1999), 265-71 (p. 267); Said, *Orientalism*, p. 59; Apart from Lucy Pick, Maria Georgopoulou,'Orientalism and Cruader Art: Constructing a New Cannon', *Medieval Encounters*, 5:3 (1999), 289-321 also provides a persuasive argument against the use of Orientalism for the discussion of the Middle Ages.

breaks down in face of the conflicting representations of Prophet Muḥammad, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Avicenna, and Averroes in the *Divine Comedy*. While all four figures were Muslims, Prophet Muḥammad is placed in ninth circle of Hell with the sowers of discord in canto 28, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, Avicenna, and Averroes are placed in limbo in canto 3 with other souls who are neither good nor evil.[15] This disparity in representation shows a more complex understanding of both Islam and the Orient than Said's second definition of Orientalism can accommodate.

Prophet Muḥammad, as the founder of Islam, is considered a heretical figure in the later medieval period, and therefore is placed in the ninth circle of hell. By contrast, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, despite his role in the Third Crusade and the reclamation of Jerusalem by the Muslims at the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn, was considered an honourable man on account of his fair dealings with the Crusaders in general and prisoners of war in particular. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's reputation as a man of integrity will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters. Even so, as he is still a Muslim, he is placed in limbo. Avicenna and Averroes are once again Muslims but because of their vast contributions to science and philosophy, they are once again placed in limbo.

Said's final definition of Orientalism is the 'corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, ruling it'; essentially it is a western way of dominating the Orient.[16] It is predominantly this description of Orientalism which is used as a point of reference to discuss and analyse Christian representations of the East and Muslims, both in Crusader chronicles and Western medieval romance. However, it is this particular explanation of Orientalism which proves most troublesome for the discussion of Western medieval literature. One of the most problematic aspects of using this understanding of the theory to discuss the later Middle Ages is that it is designed and discussed on the basis of

[15] Pick, 'Edward Said, Orientalism and the Middle Ages', pp. 267-68.
[16] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

attitudes to the East based on a unique set of power dynamics influenced by nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century ideas of European colonialism.

As Said himself explains, Orientalism is tied to the reality that 'Europe was always in a position of authority, not to say domination'; however, both politically and economically, this was not the case in the later Middle Ages. For Said, Orientalism is seated in ideas of cultural strength, whereas the Orient and everything in it is perceived as inferior.[17] The perception of the East was different during the later medieval period: as discussed in this thesis, the East was renowned for its knowledge of medicine and the sciences. This was partly due to the translation of Greek scientific manuscripts through the commission of Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs; however, the study of science did not end there, as Muslim scholars further added to knowledge translated from scientific manuscripts.

This is not say that Western Christianity did not portray the Muslims of the East as inferior, but that this representation was not based on cultural inferiority, which is the basis of Orientalism. Rather, it was based on ideas of religious inferiority. This can be seen in the portrayal of figures such as Ferumbras, as well as Saracen women, in medieval romance. When Ferumbras is first introduced in the *Fierarbras* tradition, he is described with admiration; it is only his height which marks him as a Saracen. When he is defeated in combat and converts to Christianity, he is openly welcomed into Charlemagne's fold of knights. The same is true for Saracen women in romance.

In contrast to the Orientalist discourse discussed by Said, medieval Muslim writers like ibn Munqidh mirrored this representation of religious inferiority in their depiction of Crusaders. Ibn Munqidh dedicates an entire section of his memoirs to the strange and inferior habits and practices of Frankish knights, including anecdotes about their lack of common sense, ineffective medicine, lack of marital jealousy, and strange cultural practices. Furthermore, as Georgopolou illustrates, the binary oppositions between the

[17] Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 40-41.

Crusaders and Muslims were not absolute in the twelfth-century and thirteenth-century Crusader states. Georgopolou demonstrates this through the examination of artefacts with Christian iconography commissioned to local Muslims by wealthy Crusaders.[18] In view of these differences to the state of affairs and attitudes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this thesis will not incorporate Orientalist theory in its discussion of Saracen women.

In contrast to the majority of scholarship on Saracen women, this thesis argues that although Saracen women were represented in terms of Western standards of beauty and converted to Christianity, they still retained attributes that distinguished them as Saracens. Based on evidence of contact between Western Christians and Muslims in the Levant both during the Crusades and as a result of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, this thesis suggests that the representation of Saracen women may have been influenced by Western knowledge of the East. Furthermore, the stereotypical inclusion of the conversion topos in Western medieval romance suggests further influence from Arabic and Persian literary traditons.

The first chapter establishes the grounds for the thesis by providing evidence of various avenues of contact between Muslims of the Levant and Western Christians. The chapter discusses both Muslim and Christian chronicles which range from accounts of diplomatic relations from the eight century onwards, to narratives of Christian pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land, Christian and Muslim narratives from the First to the Fourth Crusade, and finally a discussion of the translation of Greek medical and scientific manuscripts during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. The narratives examined in this chapter demonstrate that Muslims of the Levant and Western Christians were not always in conflict with each other; at times they had peaceful, even friendly relations with each other, while it suited their interests. The discussion of interaction in this chapter suggests

[18] Maria Georgopolou, 'Orientalism and Crusader Art: Constructing a New Canon', *Medieval Encounters*, 5:3 (1999), 228-321.

that contact would have allowed Muslims and the Christians to gain knowledge of each other's religions, cultures, and perhaps even literary traditions.

The second chapter provides a comparison of the representation of Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras*, *Firumbras*, and *The Sowdone of Babylone*. Although all three romances are redactions of the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras* they contain significant differences which are crucial to the stereotypical roles and depictions of Saracen women in medieval romance. The second chapter is foundational in highlighting thematic issues which will be further discussed and elaborated in the next three chapters, as well as identifying similarities between the depiction of Saracen women and the lives of Muslim women at court during the later Middle Ages. This comparison, along with the discussion of the association of the East with the miraculous in this chapter, will be used to inform the analysis of Saracen women throughout the thesis.

The third chapter continues the discussion of the representation of Saracen women through a comparison of stereotypical characteristics discussed with reference to the character of Josian. The third chapter elaborates Saracen women's quintessentially Eastern attributes through a discussion of Josian's unique medical training and healing abilities. The fourth chapter further establishes Saracen women's association with the East through a discussion of two romances: *Octavian* and *Floris and Blauncehflur*. The role of Marsabelle in *Octavian* in comparison to other Saracen women in Middle English romance has rarely been considered; yet while Marsabelle plays a minor role in the romance compared to those of Floripas and Josian, she still embodies the characteristics discussed in the previous chapters. In addition, this chapter discusses the role of Floris in *Floris and Blauncheflur*. It is particularly intriguing that certain attributes associated with Saracen women are transferred to the representation of Floris. *Floris and Blauncheflur* is also crucial to the discussion of Arab literary influence in the following chapter since there is a wealth of scholarship attempting to show its provenance in medieval Arabic literature, and most prominently in certain tales in *The Thousand and One Nights*.

The final chapter draws on the discussion of the interaction of Western Christians and Levantine Muslims at the start as well as the repressentation of Saracen women in the previous chapters to suggest an Arab literary provenance for the crucial theme of the conversion topos within the romances discussed. The chapter attempts to trace its origins both in medieval Western literature and in earlier instances in the works of al-Ṭabarī, Firdausī, and the widely circulated *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Chapter One: Pilgrimage, Trade, Translation, and the Crusades: Contact between Christians and Muslims

The Christians of the West and the Byzantine Empire and the Muslims of the East maintained a lengthy period of interaction during the Middle Ages, both in times of war and truce. The two peoples became acclimatised to each other and at times enjoyed a strange kind of friendship, especially during the long periods of contact in the later Middle Ages. These periods of contact varied from times of peace, from travel back and forth from Byzantium to the Middle East and trade on a grand scale, through pilgrimage to the Holy Land and finally to the Crusades. Even during the span of the Crusades there were diverse avenues of contact. During times of war, apart from the fighting itself, the handling of, interaction with, and ransoming of captives of war led to extended periods of contact which must have allowed captives to gain first-hand knowledge of the captors' culture and customs. In times of war, amities were fostered between the nobility within the Crusading armies and kingdoms and the Muslim nobility. It can be argued that such a degree of contact over such a lengthy period must have resulted in some exchange of cultural influence and knowledge. Indeed, such an influence can be denominated through various sources. This chapter will discuss contact between Muslims and Christians of the West from the eighth to the thirteenth century, exploring this extensive period of contact.

Diplomatic Relations before the First Crusade

While the several Crusades come to mind when thinking about extended periods of interaction between the East and West, there had been extensive contact between the two hundreds of years before the first Crusading expedition. The loss of Byzantine influence, in both the East and Italy in the eighth century led to reconciliation of the Papacy with the Carolingian monarchy, and triggered an interest in the welfare of Eastern Christians. This resulted in a series of diplomatic exchanges between the Franks, in accordance with Papal

interests, and the Abbasid Caliphate. Although very few details are available concerning the incentive of the first embassy to Baghdad, sent by Pepin III (741-68) in 765, it is known that the ambassadors spent three years in Baghdad. The details of the embassy's time in Baghdad are not recorded, but it can inferred that they were well-treated and successful in their negotiation with the Caliph al-Manṣūr. This deduction can be made on the basis that there was an exchange of gifts and that the embassy was accompanied back by envoys of the Caliph in 768.[19]

Another delegation of ambassadors was despatched to Baghdad by Charlemagne in 797. According to Atiya, the aim of both the delegations was to consolidate a sense of concord between the Abbasids and the Franks, and to acquire privileges for Western Pilgrims as well as create a Carolingian protectorate over Jerusalem and the Christians of the East.[20] The Abbasid Caliph had his own reasons for consolidating good relations with Charlemagne: one of these reasons was to use his influence with Charlemagne as a means of depleting the power of the remaining Umayyads in Spain.[21] Benedict, Monk of St Andrew, writing about 1000, chronicles Charlemagne's own visit to Jerusalem in which he is said to have adorned the Holy Sepulchre with gold and gems.[22] Benedict even goes as far as to write that Charlemagne travelled with King Aaron to Alexandria and the Franks and Hagarenes rejoiced together.[23] Although Eginhard, in his *Life of Charlemagne,* refutes any claim that Charlemagne visited Jerusalem, he does state that when the ambassadors reached Hārūn al-Rashīd "'not only did he grant their requests, but he also conceded that sacred and saving place [the Holy Sepulchre] should be assigned to his jurisdiction'".[24]

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[19] Aziz S. Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 35; Margaret Deanesly, *A History of Early Medieval Europe, 476 to 911* (London: Methuen & Co., 1969), p. 294.
[20] Ibid., p. 36.
[21] John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2002), p. 23.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., p. 24.

In 801 another embassy was dispatched, this time by the Caliph. The embassy disembarked at Leghorn and was granted an audience with the Emperor, in the province of Turin, on his way back to the German capital. The embassy brought with it illustrious gifts of jewels, gold, Christian relics, and a white elephant.[25] In addition, they informed the Emperor that the Caliph consented to his earlier request. A second and final set of delegates was dispatched by the Caliph in 806 and proceeded towards Aachen in Southern Europe with gifts of a polychrome linen tent, as well as a wonderful clock.[26] The clock is described as: 'horologium ex auricalco arte mechanica mirifice conpositum, in quo duodecim horarum cursus ad clepsidram vertebatur, cum totidem aereis pilulus quae ad completionem horarum decidebant' (a clock made of brass constructed with wonderful mechanical craft, which turns for twelve hours for the purpose of a clepsydra, with as many brass balls needed for the completion of the hours to be brought to a conclusion). The description goes on to explain how twelve brass horsemen emerge from the window of the clock at noon.[27] In addition to being a symbol of friendship between the Emperor and the Caliph, gifts of this nature consolidated Western perception of scientific eminence in the East.

The embassies of both sides that were sent overseas for negotiations remained in the foreign territories for lengthy periods of time; as a result they interacted closely with each other and possibly learned aspects of the other side's cultural customs while negotiating. This can be concluded from the showering of precious gifts by the Muslims, which suggests a warm welcome of the Christians in Baghdad. These interactions and ensuing good relations led to further contact between Christians and Muslims as the settled terms allowed Charlemagne to ensure the safe conduct of European Christians to the Holy Land. This, of course, would have increased the number of Christian pilgrims travelling to the East.

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[25] Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture*, pp. 37-38.
[26] Ibid., p. 38; *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. by G.H. Pertzii and F. Kurze, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, 81 vols (Hanover: Impensis bibliopolii Hahniani, 1895), VI, pp. 123-24.
[27] Ibid.

Pilgrimages to the Holy Land before the First Crusade

Even before diplomatic negotiations were complete, pilgrims were travelling to the Holy Land. Although these pilgrims did face difficulties, they managed to travel to holy places under Muslim dominion for extensive periods of time and complete their pilgrimages. The pilgrimage of an English pilgrim called St Willibald is one such example. There are two accounts of his pilgrimage: the *Itinerarium S. Willibald* is written by one of his companions and the *Hodœporicon* written by one of the nuns of the Abbey of Heidenheim through St Willibald's dictation. St Willibald travelled to the Levant in 724 and remained there for four years.

On first arriving in the Levant, St Willibald and his seven companions were faced with imprisonment. The Saracens had received news informing them that a band of strangers had arrived in Emesa, and they captured them and led them to an old man to verify their identity.[28] After asking a few questions, the old man stated, that he has seen other men from their country and that they do not wish to cause harm; they only wish to complete pilgrimage.[29] This response did not satisfy the other Saracens and they took the prisoners to the governor, who accused them of being spies and imprisoned them. St Willibald and his companions were forced to remain in prison until a merchant wished to deliver them. Finally, a man who had travelled from Spain spoke to the pilgrims and promised to deliver them with the help of his brother, who was chamberlain to the king of Saracens. The king, 'Emir al-Mumanim', inquired after their identity and eventually granted them freedom as they had caused no offence or insult to him or his people.[30] After this initial incident, St Willibald and his companions were able to complete the rest of their pilgrimage in peace without facing any opposition from the Saracens. They managed to travel the length of the Levant, visiting Jerusalem three times.

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[28] John H. Bernard, *The Churches of Constantine at Jerusalem: being translations from Eusebius and the Early Pilgrims*, trans. by Rev. Canon Brownlow (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society 18, 1891), p. 13.
[29] Ibid., p. 13.
[30] Ibid., p. 14.

Although St Willibald and his companions did not face any opposition, they had to procure a permit from the Emir each year they remained in the Holy Land. Eventually they faced some difficulty procuring a permit to travel after their third visit to Jerusalem as a result of the Emir having fled the country to avoid a sickness that had plagued the whole region. However, they were able to return to Emesa and beg a permit from the governor. Although the Muslims imprisoned St Willibald and his companions on their arrival, they were nevertheless dealt with justly once they appeared in front of the Emir. After this initial encounter, they were free to conduct their pilgrimage and stayed under the dominion of Muslims for several years. Judging from the statement of the old man in front of whom the pilgrims were brought, there were many other Christian pilgrims who visited the Holy Land.

After the negotiations of 801, there was an influx of Christian pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land for pilgrimage before and during the Crusades. Although Davids writes that there were very few pilgrimages to Jerusalem in the eighth and ninth centuries and only a slight increase in the tenth century, proof of such an increase exists in the *Commemoratorium*, a report written for Charlemagne after good relations had been sustained between him and the Abbasid Empire.[31] The exact date of this report is unknown; however, it is believed to have been written around 808. The report illustrates that due to the increase in the number of pilgrims, Christian institutions in the Holy Land were flourishing.[32] Later evidence for the number of Christian pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land in 1047 can be found in a statement made by a Persian Muslim in his *Book of Travels*. On arriving in Syria, he writes 'from the Byzantine realm and other places too come Christians and Jews to visit the churches and synagogues located here'.[33]

[31] Adelbert Davids, 'Routes of Pilgrimage', in *East and West in the Crusader States*, ed. by Krijnie Ciggaar, Adelbert Davids, and Herman Teule (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1996), I, pp. 81-101 (p. 82).
[32] Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, p. 24.
[33] Nāṣir-i Khusrau, *Safarnāma*, trans as *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels* by W.M. Thackson Jr. (Albany, N.Y: Bibliotheca Persica, 1986), p. 21.

A certain Bernard the Monk travelling to the Holy Land in 870 also chronicled his travels; Bernard's chronicle is the last extant account of a pilgrimage preceding the First Crusade.[34] Bernard's journey differed significantly from St Willibald's similar travels. Bernard and his two companions had to receive letters describing their appearance and the route they intended to take from 'the chief of the Saracen city of Barrium'. They then had to present these letters of permit to the chief man of Alexandria and Babylonia on their arrival at Alexandria.[35]

Unlike St Willibald and his companions, Bernard and his companions were not immediately imprisoned on their arrival; however, the pilgrims were constantly taken advantage of for their money. They had to take a ship in order to reach Alexandria but upon arrival the captain of the ship and his crew prevented them disembarking until the pilgrims paid them six golden pieces.[36] Once ashore, they presented the letters from the 'chief of Barrium' to the chief man of Alexandria; the chief refused to let them pass even though he acknowledged the validity of the contents of the letters. On being paid a sum of 300 denarii, he wrote another set of letters for them to present to the chief man of Babylonia, and allowed them to proceed.[37] Once again, they faced the same difficulty in Babylonia and were imprisoned for six days until they paid three hundred denarii each. They were finally presented with a new set of letters, the absolute authority of which prevented other chiefs from further extorting anything from them.[38] From hence they were given safe passage, occasionally having to pay 'a denarii or two' for an official sealed document to depart from certain cities.

Despite a difficult start, Bernard and his companions were also able to complete their pilgrimage at their own pace, devoid of any further difficulties. Bernard reports at leisure the condition of the Eastern Christians under Muslim rule and local businesses

[34] Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, p. 25.
[35] *The Itinerary of Bernard the Wise*, trans. by J.H. Bernard (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1893), p. 4.
[36] *The Itinerary of Bernard the Wise*, p. 4.
[37] *The Itinerary of Bernard the Wise*, p. 5.
[38] *The Itinerary of Bernard the Wise*, p. 5.

around the cities. It would seem that pilgrims to the Holy Land were initially harassed by Muslim rulers of the outlying cities, but were undisturbed by the local residents of the cities inland, having endured earlier difficulties. The growth of Christian institutions in the Holy Land, mentioned earlier suggests that the initial rough treatment did not discourage pilgrims from setting out on pilgrimage.

Whereas accounts by pilgrims before the Crusades suggest that Christian pilgrims were to some extent harassed by the Muslim authorities, Muslim accounts suggest otherwise. There is a surviving account that predates the First Crusade, by a Muslim scholar by the name of Ibn al-ʿArabī who travelled to the East from Spain in 1092. On arriving in Palestine, he was delighted to find that Jerusalem was a centre of learning; it was, in essence, 'a meeting place for religious scholars of all three faiths — Islam, Christianity and Judaism'.[39] When he visited Ascalon, he described a similar scholarly atmosphere.[40] As Ibn al-ʿArabī was a Muslim himself, it can argued that his testimony was not entirely objective. It would appear from this description that the followers and scholars of all three religions were in harmony with each other and therefore the local residents would not have agitated Christian pilgrims once they entered Jerusalem.[41] Although the local authorities harassed the pilgrims, their cooperation could be acquired through monetary means. However, Al-ʿAẓīmī's description for the year 1093-99 is in contrast to al-ʿArabī's statement of religious harmony in Jerusalem just a year before al-ʿAzīmī's textual testimony that: 'و منع اهل السواحل حجّاج الفرنج والروم العبور الى بيت المقدس' (the people of coast prevented Frankish and Byzantine pilgrims from crossing to Jerusalem).[42] Both descriptions seem extreme when compared with the narratives of the Christian pilgrims discussed earlier. These two Muslim testimonies seem to reflect the varied experience of

[39] Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 49.
[40] Ibid., p. 50.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAẓīmī, 'La Chronique Abrégée D'Al-Azīmī', ed. by C. Cahen, *Journal Asiatique: Recueil Trimestriel de Mémoires et de Notices Relatifs aux Études Orientales*, 230 (1938), 353-448 (p. 369); the translation is my own.

Christian pilgrims discussed earlier; they faced resistence from certain quarters while receiving help and moving freely at other times. However, it is important to acknowledge that this difficult experience did not prevent Christian pilgrims from travelling to the Holy Land and eventually coming into contact with Muslims of the Levant as well as their culture.

It would appear that, as difficult as it would have been for Christian pilgrims to go on pilgrimage within the Muslim dominion, it would have been even more troublesome to do so during the Crusades. There is, however, an account of an English pilgrim travelling to the Holy Land around 1101-1102 or 1102-1103, at the height of the First Crusade. During his pilgrimage there were still a few coastal cities in the hands of the Muslims, Acre being one of them; however, the Crusaders controlled Jerusalem. Saewulf mentions the perilous road from Jaffa to the city of Jerusalem, infested with 'Saracens, always laying snares for the Christians'.[43] He also mentions, with some astonishment, the bodies of several Christians on the road and by the roadside, left behind by their companions who feared being captured if they stopped.[44] Despite his hyperbolic descriptions of the perils on the road, he and his companions reach Jerusalem safely. While Saewulf mentions several places of importance laid to ruin by Saracens, he is able to complete his pilgrimage. However, on his return from the Holy Land, his ship which was full of pilgrims is threatened by six Saracen ships between Cayphas and Ascalon. On perceiving the threat, the pilgrims on the ship took arms; however, the Saracens took flight when threatened with opposition.[45] As Saewulf mentions two ships 'laden with pilgrims' when narrating the attack by the Saracens, pilgrimage even under precarious circumstances seems common.

A later account of a pilgrim risking the perils of war to go on pilgrimage in 1111 appears in the amalgamation of anecdotes, stories, and historical accounts of ʾUsāmah ibn

[43] Saewulf, *Saewulf, 1102, 1103 A.D.*, trans. by Canon Brownlow (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1892), p. 8.
[44] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[45] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

Munqidh in his *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*. Asbāsilār Mawdūd had camped in the suburb of Shīzar after Tancred's army had moved against him in 1111. Ibn Munqidh's father and uncle came out of Shīzar to help him push back Tancred's army for three days until they finally surrounded Tancred's forces.[46] At that point, one of their knights left the ranks and charged some of the Muslim forces. The Muslims killed his horse and inflicted severe wounds on his body and yet he fought his way to re-join his comrades. As more Franks entered the territory, the Muslim army retreated and ended the battle.[47]After a few months, the same courageous knight returned to Shīzar with a letter from Tancred informing ibn Munqidh's father that he was a revered knight who had completed the holy pilgrimage and was now returning home. Before he left the Holy Land he wished to see the Muslim knights who had taken part in the battle with Asbāsilār Mawdūd's army.[48] It would appear that this knight who had travelled to go on holy pilgrimage not only completed his pilgrimage but also performed his spiritual duty in Holy War. It is interesting to note that Tancred ends the letter with the words 'فاستوصوا به' (treat him well), with utter confidence that he will be treated thus by the same people who inflicted his body with 'جراح كثيرة' (several cuts).[49] This letter and the knight's presence in a Muslim court suggest that while the Muslims and the Franks were enemies on the battlefield, they had a cordial and honourable relationship outside periods of immediate war.

As demonstrated by the example above, the Muslims and Christians were not constantly at odds with each other throughout the Crusades. Ideas of chivalry allowed the opposing sides to interact with each other at times peacefully; interactions of this nature would certainly have led to a better understanding of the enemy. Numerous examples of honourable treatment of the enemy are available from accounts of the Third Crusade, especially with regards to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn; however, this anecdote from ibn Munqidh's *Kitāb*

[46] ʾUsāmah ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, ed. by Philip Ḥittī (al-Wilāyāt al-Muttaḥidah: Maṭbaʿat Jāmiʿat Brinstūn, 1930), pp. 68-69; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades*, trans. by Philip Ḥittī (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), pp. 97-98.
[47] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, p. 69; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman,* p. 98.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.; Ibid.

al-Iʿtibār suggests that a code of honour was prevalent in the earlier Crusades as well. The relationship between the Seljuk and Arab kingdoms, the caliphate in Baghdad, and the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt was a complex one. Their relationship and interaction with the Crusaders was even more complicated. During times of truce, and occasionally during times of war, the Muslim and Christian nobility could be deemed to maintain intimate, yet delicate friendships. Gabrieli, writing about the Crusades, comments that neither the Crusaders nor the Muslims were acquainted 'with the nobler aspects of the other's faith'.[50] He further writes that there was 'little exchange of men and ideas' between the Crusaders and the Muslims of the Levant.[51] On close examination of both the Crusades and the literature written around the Crusades, both statements fail to ring true.

The chronicles and other literature written during and around the several Crusades do suggest that Muslims and the Crusaders had certain misconceptions about each other and their religions. However, there were opportunities to exchange ideas, as well as perceptions of theology. Judging from evidence of social interaction, discussed further in this chapter, it seems unlikely that at least the nobility within the Crusaders and Muslims were not able overcome these misconceptions. Attiya provides one such example of Reginald, lord of Sidon and Beaufort. Reginald, who was a learned man, had hired a Muslim to teach him Arabic and with time he became well-versed in Arab history.[52] On learning Arabic, Reginald visited Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn on several occasions to wrangle over issues of theology and Islam.[53] Though it may not be recorded, there is a possibility of similar exchange of ideas between other rulers.

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[50] Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, trans. by E.J. Costello (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. xvii.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Hussein M. Attiya, 'Knowledge of Arabic in the Crusader States in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Journal of Medieval History*, 25:3 (1999), 203-13 (p. 206); In his article, Attiya mistakenly identifies the man who visits Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as Reynald of Sidon, however, Attiya's primary source, Ibn Shaddād, identifies the man as Reginald of Sidon; Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-Maʿrūf ibn Shaddād, *Kitāb Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: al-musammāt bi-al-Nawādir al-sulṭānīyah wa-al-maḥāsin al-Yūsufīyah* (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣabīh wa-Awlādih, 1927), pp.79-80; *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. by D.S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 90.
[53] Attiya, 'Knowledge of Arabic in the Crusader States', p. 206.

Complex Allegiances, Co-Existence, and Social Interaction During the Crusades

The Crusades fostered a complex set of ties and loyalties; these constantly fluid alliances cannot lightly be dismissed as conflict between Muslims and Christians. Apart from providing safe passage, the Crusaders and the Muslims occasionally worked and fought together. The example of a man named Ḥamdān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm demonstrates just how complicated relations were between the two sides during the First Crusade. Ḥamdān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, a Muslim who lived in twelfth century Levant, worked for both the Muslims and the Crusaders, without being excommunicated. Ḥamdān managed to heal Alan, the first Crusader lord of Atharib, who consequently rewarded him by making him the landlord of the village of 'Mar Buniya'.[54] The Franks later gave him administration of Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān; after a long career in the service of the Franks, Ḥamdān then joined the ranks of Zengī at Aleppo in 1128.[55] Not only did Ḥamdān join the service of the Franks, he, much like William of Tyre who wrote a history of the Orient, wrote a book called *The Way of the Franks who went out to Syria in Those Years.* Unfortunately, this book, which would have been a valuable tool in deciphering Muslim knowledge about the West, has not survived and only quotations from it survive in later works.[56]

Aside from this case, there were other instances in which the Muslims sided with the Crusaders. It is important to understand the labyrinth of relations between the different Muslim kingdoms within the Levant, not to mention their association with the two caliphates, to decipher their loyalties. The Muslim rulers of the Levant can be divided into the local Syrian rulers, the Kurds, the Seljuk Turks, and the Fatimids of Egypt. The Fatimids and the Caliphate at Baghdad were at odds with each other and the Caliphate

[54] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 258.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.; Benjamin Z. Kedar, 'The Subjected Muslims of the Frankish Levant', in *Muslims under Latin Rule, 1100 – 1300*, ed. by James M. Powell (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 135-74 (p. 137).

requested help from the Seljuks to prevent Fatimid influence from extending into Syria. The Suljuks eventually took control of several cities and reduced the Calipahte at Baghdad to a mere figurehead. Meanwhile, the local Syrian rulers of cities such as Aleppo and Damascus, who were more concerned with their own political interests, refused to trust the Seljuks.[57] Although the local Syrian rulers followed the Caliphate at Baghdad, they refused to allow interference from the Caliphate or the Seljuks in their own affairs. As can be judged from this state of mutual distrust, the Muslims were too busy fighting over their own political agendas to put up a united front against the Franks. As a result, instead of combining forces to protect their collective interests, some of the Muslims allied themselves with the Franks.[58]

The Fatimid dynasty, concerned with its own survival against the Seljuk Turks, welcomed the arrival of the Franks. Ibn Ẓāfir, a Fatimid writer around 1216, writes in his *Chronicle* that it would be beneficial if the Franks occupied Syrian ports, as Frankish occupation would 'مانعين من نفوذ الترك إلى ديار مصر' (prevent the spread of influence of the Turks to the land of Egypt).[59] Similarly, the local Syrian rulers, afraid that the Seljuks would encroach upon their territories, made alliances with the Franks. Hillenbrand mentions the example of Riḍwān of Aleppo forming an alliance with Tancred against what they perceived as 'military interference with their affairs by Jawali Saqao, ruler of Mosul'. [60] At other times personal political gain played a part in Muslim -Crusader alliance. It was this motivation that led Shams al-Khilāfah, Fatimid governor of Ascalon, to buy a truce with Baldwin of Jerusalem in 1111. When the Fatimid vizier of Egypt disapproved of this truce and sent an army to Ascalon to remove the governor from his position, Shams al-Khilāfah asked Baldwin for military support. Although the battle ended with the demise of Shams al-Khilāfah, both episodes demonstrate that the Crusaders

[57] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 80.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Ẓāfir, *Ahbār al-Duwal al-Munqaṭiʿah*, ed. by André Ferré (al-Qāhirah: al-Maʿhad al-ʿIlmī al-Faransī lil-Āthār al-Sharqīyah, 1972), p. 82.
[60] Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, p. 82.

and the Muslims were not always at loggerheads. Such alliances represented superficial friendships but presented ideal conditions for interaction, not only within the Muslim and Christian nobility but among their forces as well. As in the case of Shams al-Khilāfah's alliance with Baldwin, both rulers' armies would have combined forces to protect Ascalon from the leader of Eygpt's army.

A rich source of information for contact between Muslim and Crusader nobility outside the battlefield are the memoirs of ʾUsāmah ibn Munqidh, who belonged to the ruling family of Shīzar. Although Hillenbrand describes ibn Munqidh's memoirs as a genre termed 'adab', which 'aimed to please, divert and titillate', at times stretching the truth a little, there is a wealth of information to be discovered in his memoirs, if they are approached with caution.[61] Granted ibn Munqidh's accounts cannot be taken completely at face value; however, due to his high social standing, he had more diplomatic and social contact with the Franks than most of the other Muslim chroniclers of the Crusades.

Ibn Munqidh relates an occasion in 1116 on which Roger, the lord of Antioch, dispatched one of his knights on urgent business to Jerusalem. Before dispatching the knight, Roger wrote to ibn Munqidh's uncle, ʿIzz-al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAsākir Sulṭān, asking him to provide the knight with an escort to convey him safely from Āfāmīyah to Rafanīyyah and ʿIzz-al-Dīn conceded with his request. Once in Rafanīyyah, the knight confided to ʿIzz-al-Dīn that he had been sent on a secret mission; however, perceiving that ʿIzz-al-Dīn was an intelligent man, by evidence of the flourishing state of his region, the knight made him privy to the details of his mission.[62] Although the knight was carrying confidential information about a mission which may possibly have been detrimental to Muslim defence against the Crusaders, Roger had enough confidence in ʿIzz-al-Dīn to transport the knight safely to Rafanīyyah. This incident illustrates that the Muslim and the Frankish rulers were on a level of familiarity which allowed them to request diplomatic help from each other.

[61] Ibid., p. 260.
[62] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-Iʿtibīr*, p. 87; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, p. 117.

While events such as these are indispensible to an understanding of Muslim-Crusader relations, Robert Irwin rightly advises caution when approaching ibn Munqidh's memoirs. He proposes that ibn Munqidh's memoirs, much like the memoirs written by Robert of Clari, Geoffery of Villehardouin, and Jean of Joinville, are anything but simple.[63] He further emphasises that most medieval sources require delicate analysis, as they often turn out to be 'exercises in special pleading, full of rhetoric, slander, misdirection and evasion'.[64] True to the genre of his work ibn Munqidh has a habit of embellishing his narratives and anecdotes. Despite the hyperbolic tendencies of ibn Munqidh's narratives, other Muslim sources' description of friendly relations between Muslims and Crusaders makes Roger's request in the narrative seem less incredible. However, the account of the knight revealing confidential information does seem a little suspicious.

Ibn Munqidh provides another example of a mutual bond of familiarity between certain Muslim and Christian rulers that obligated them at certain occasions to accede to each others' behests. He narrates an instance in which Joscelin I of Tall Bāshir made a raid on al-Raqqah and al-Qalʿah and seized everything in the entire neighbourhood, along with taking several captives. After the raid, Joscelin encamped near the Euphrates, across from al-Qalʿah. When Najm al-Dawlah Mālik ibn Sālim, master of al-Qalʿah-Jaʿbar, got wind of this raid, he crossed the Euphrates with three or four companions and reached Joscelin's camp.[65] As Mālik and Joscelin were old acquaintances, on account of the former having performed certain favours for the latter, Joscelin received Mālik with special honours. In addition to the warm welcome, Joscelin also restored both the captives and the booty from

[63] Robert Irwin, 'Usamah ibn Munqidh: An Arab-Syrian Gentleman at the Time of the Crusades Reconsidered', in *The Crusades and Their Sources: Essays Presented to Bernard Hamilton*, ed. by John France and William G. Zajac (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 71-87 (p. 73).
[64] Ibid.
[65] The fortress of Qalʿat-Jaʿbar was not very far from al-Raqqah; therefore, Mālik did not have to travel a long distance to reach Joscelin's camp.

the raid to Mālik.[66] Mālik must have had complete confidence in his relationship with Joscelin to walk into a Christian camp with only a few companions.

Ibn Munqidh also relates two incidents that reveal his own friendly relationship with the Franks, which much like Mālik in the incident mentioned above allowed him certain privileges. In a cantankerous anecdote about a Frank who corrected the direction in which ibn Munqidh was praying, he recounts the special treatment that he received at the al-Aqṣā mosque. During ibn Munqidh's visit to Jerusalem the al-Aqṣā mosque was possessed by the Franks and had been occupied and converted into a church by the Templars. Ibn Munqidh describes the Templars as his 'أصدقائي' (his friends) and recounts how the Templars evacuate the adjoining mosque so that he may pray there in peace.[67] It is interesting to note that at the beginning of the anecdote, ibn Munqidh does not seem incensed by the constant arrival of Frankish emigrants to the Levant but rather at their lack of acclimatisation to the Muslims. This suggests that the Muslims and the Franks who had long been settled in the Levant had become accustomed to each other. This anecdote supports the idea that certain Muslim and Christian officials occasionally extended favours towards each other as a sign of friendship. However, it also demonstrates that Muslims faced similar conditions with regard to access to religious sites as the Christian pilgrims before the First Crusade.

He provides yet one more example of the level of friendship between himself and the Franks. In the army of King Fulk there was a reverend knight who had travelled to the Levant to perform pilgrimage. Ibn Munqidh and this knight developed such a close bond that he describes them as possessing 'المودة والمعاشرة' (an intimate fellowship). By ibn Munqidh's testimony, the knight remained his constant companion, on occasion referring to ibn Munqidh as "'اخي'" (My brother), going as far as offering to teach ibn Munqidh's sons the tenets of knighthood in his home country. It seems that ibn Munqidh had a peculiar relationship with this knight; on the one hand he described this knight as an

[66] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-Iʿtibīr*, pp. 89-90; *An Arab Syrian Gentleman*, pp. 119-20.
[67] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-Iʿtibīr*, pp. 134-35; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, pp. 163-64.

intimate friend and on the other, on hearing his suggestion he refused to believe that the knight could be deemed a sensible man and declares that losing his son to captivity would be a better fate than sending him to Frankish lands. Even preceding this narrative, ibn Munqidh describes the Franks as animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else.[68] He assumes a similar tone throughout his memoirs; at one moment describing friendship and loyalty between Muslim and Frankish rulers, and at other times ridiculing Frankish characteristics and behaviour. It can be assumed from these fluctuations in sentiment, as well as the complex web of loyalties described above, that the Muslims and the Crusaders eventually developed intimate yet complicated relations. This complex relationship is reaffirmed when the same events are narrated by both Christian and Muslim chroniclers, often providing a different view of events.

This event further begs the question of communication between the Muslims and the Franks. Ibn Munqidh describes an entire conversation with this knight, yet never mentions a translator intervening between them. This may suggest that either ibn Munqidh spoke French or the knight had learned Arabic. In fact, ibn Munqidh does not mention the presence of translators anywhere in his narrative.

Despite the rosy picture that ibn Munqidh paints, this was not altogether the situation. Although friendships were forged between Muslims and Crusaders, these friendships were not as stable as ibn Munqidh seems to suggest, as the case of Robert the leper demonstrates. After the second battle between Īlghāzī and Baldwin, Robert, a friend of the Lātābik Ṭughdakīn, was taken prisoner.[69] Friedman, consulting the chronicles of ʿImād al-Dīn and Bahāʾ al-Dīn, writes that it was customary for prisoners to name their ransom price, as they themselves were most aware of their worth.[70] Robert, according to this custom, fixed his own ransom at ten thousand dinars. Īlghāzī decided to send Robert

[68] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, p. 132; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, p. 16.
[69] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, p. 119; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, p. 149.
[70] Yvonne Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies: Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), p. 108.

to Ṭughdakīn in order to scare him into suggesting a higher ransom.[71] His plan went astray as Ṭughdakīn, despite their friendship, beheaded Robert as soon as he was presented to him. Apart from Ṭughdakīn's brash statement to Īlghāzī, 'أنا ما أحسن افزع الا كذا' (I have no other way of scaring but this), ibn Munqidh does not disclose a reason for the sudden animosity towards Robert.[72] However, this example serves to prove the changeable nature of Muslim-Crusader relationships. Even though certain friendly associations worked in favour of both sides of the conflict, these affable relations seemed inconsequential during periods of tension between the opposing sides. As ibn Munqidh provides no explanation regarding Ṭūghdakīn's behaviour, it can be assumed that he had no reservations about threatening and beheading a friend for the sake of ransom. Therefore, it seems that the rules of enagement changed constantly based on individual events.

Trade between Muslims and Christians

Trade also played a major part in facilitating Muslim and Christian contact. By the ninth century, the Arab conquest of the Asiatic shores of the Levant and the coast of North Africa, along with the subsequent seizure of Spain and Sicily closed off trade with the Muslims. The fortified Muslim bases at 'Bari' and 'Tarentum' restricted Christian ships from trading in the Mediterranean.[73] Areas under Arab control monopolised trade in the Mediterranean and cities such as Baghdad, Cairo, and Cordova gradually replaced Constantinople as major trade centres. In addition, Arabs also started to mint their own coins, the gold dinar and the silver dirhem.[74] All this was changed in the eleventh century by the capture of Bari by Robert Guiscard, Duke of Apulia, and the seizure of Sicily by his brother Roger I of Sicily.[75] These two events marked the re-Christianisation of the

[71] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, pp. 119-20; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, pp. 149-50.
[72] Ibid., p. 120; Ibid., p. 150.
[73] Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture*, p. 166.
[74] Ibid., p. 167.
[75] Ibid., pp. 169-70.

Mediterranean. With the advent of the First Crusade, trade between the East and the West was re-ignited with a new fervour.[76]

It can be argued that Italian sea power was a crucial element in conquering the Holy Land. Important trade centres such as Genoa, Pisa, and Venice were given special commercial privileges, tax exemptions, and quarters in the coastal cities of Palestine in exchange for their help in conquering Acre, Jaffa, Haifa, and Tyre.[77] At first, the Venetians showed interest in the estates producing sugar cane in Tyre; however, Tyre proved an unfit trading hub as it had poor access to the interior cities of Syria since the mountains in Southern Lebanon blocked all trade routes.[78] In contrast, Acre served the needs of the merchants as its location allowed goods to be transported through the rolling hills of Galilee and arriving in Damascus.

From the mid-twelfth century onwards, this trade route allowed Italian merchants to gather in Acre and conduct trade with Syrian Muslims and Christians.[79] Italian presence was not restricted to Syria but also extended to Alexandria in the twelfth century. Egypt, in addition to being a great exporter of alum to the West, was also known for its cotton, and therein lay its attractiveness for the Italian merchants.[80] The blossoming cotton industry of Lombardy depended on the material imported from both Syria and Egypt, and trade with the East played a large role in the flourishing of Western industries.[81] It was mutual need for goods that kept trade with the Italian merchants afloat. Until the Italians started exporting Flemish, north French, and English woollen cloths in the late twelfth century, there was little need in the Muslim world for western goods. The West in turn was dependent on Eastern markets for the import of alum and high quality dyes from Syria

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[76] Ibid., p. 170.
[77] David Abulafia,'The Role of Trade in Muslim-Christian Contact during the Middle Ages', in *The Arab Influence in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Dionisius A. Agius and Richard Hitchcock (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1994), pp. 1-24 (p. 5).
[78] Ibid., p. 6.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., p. 8.

and Egypt.[82] It was this need for goods that brought the Italian merchants into direct contact with Muslim merchants. Unlike the circumstances under which members of Muslim and Christian armies interacted, interaction between merchants would be more cordial and less changeable. The circumstances would have also forced both the Muslim merchants of the Levant and the Italian merchants to communicate with each other and learn the basics of each other's languages.

In the beginning, Christian rulers, as opposed to the Muslims, created difficulties for Italian merchants wishing to trade in the Holy Land. The Latin king of Jerusalem refused to uphold their agreement and denied the merchants trading rights outlined in the treaties signed before the conquest of the Holy Land.[83] Trading relations with the Muslims became strained after their defeat at Ascalon in 1123. Even after their defeat, however, the Italians continued to trade with Muslims. During that period, Italian merchants enjoyed restricted privileges and were confined under curfew at night.[84] A study of these relations shows that there was constant contact between the East and the West through Italian merchants. Even after their defeat at Ascalon, the Muslims did not completely cut off trade with the Italians; however, they did impose limitations on them. Such a constant flow of commodities between Italian merchants and the Muslims of Syria and Egypt must have been reliant on daily contact with each other. This degree of contact would inevitably result in an exchange of cultural practices and traditions. Perhaps the Italian merchants were unconsciously exporting Muslim culture along with commodities to the West.

Contact in Captivity

Another point of contact between the Muslims and the Crusaders outside the battlefield was dealing with captives of war. Interaction between the captives and their captors depended a great deal on the attitude towards captives in their own camp. As Friedman relates, all three religious traditions in the Levant, Judaic, Christian and Muslim,

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., p. 6.
[84] Ibid., p. 10.

viewed ransom of captives as 'a meritorious deed of charity rather than moral obligation of the leader who sent the soldiers to war'.[85]

The Qurʾān explicitly mentions treatment of captives taken during war, stating that they should be released out of captivity by the favour of the captor, or that they should be released through ransom. However, it proclaims no spiritual duty to rescue Muslims from their own camp by means of ransom.[86] Sūrah 47 of the Qurʾān states:

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثْخَنْتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا

> Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind (the captives) firmly: therefore (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are you commanded).[87]

Bahāʾ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, the chronicler of the life of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, also mentions a cultural courtesy extended towards prisoners of war. After the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn, King Guy, his brother, and Prince Reynald were presented to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn passed the king a drink of iced julep; after drinking his fill, he passed the rest of the julep to Prince Reynald.[88] Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had previously vowed to kill Prince Reynald, if he was ever taken captive, on account of his breaking a state of truce and attacking an Egyptian caravan that had halted in his territory.[89] When King Guy passed the drink to Prince Reynald, ibn Shaddād reports Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn stating, 'أنت الذي سقيته وأما أنا فما سقيته' (You are the one giving him a drink. I have not given him any drink).[90] Ibn Shaddād further explains that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn made this statement to protect himself against the Arab custom which declares that if a captive took food or drink from their captor, consequently the

[85] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 2.
[86] Ibid., pp. 2-3.
[87] *Roman Transliteration of The Holy* Qurʾān, ed. and trans. by ʿAllāmah ʿAbd Allāh Yūsuf ʿAlī (Lahore: Sh. Muḥammad Ashraf publishers, 2010), p. 498.
[88] Ibn Shaddād, *Kitāb Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī,* p. 63; *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, p. 75.
[89] Ibid., p. 63; Ibid., p. 74.
[90] Ibid.; Ibid., p. 75.

captive could not be harmed.[91] Therefore, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was able to fulfil his vow to punish Prince Reynald. With the exception of Prince Reynald, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn chooses to treat his noble prisoners with generosity; however, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had a reputation for honourable behaviour. As will be seen from other examples, noble treatment of captives was not always the case. Just as the experience of pilgrims who travelled to the Holy Land varied in each individual case, the treatment of captives of war was also diverse. Some situations allowed the opportunity to interact with the captives, while others resulted in the indifferent ransom, or torture and slaughter of prisoners.

The Bible, on the other hand, only overtly mentions the treatment of female captives of war, mandating that the women be allowed a month-long period of mourning before their captors sold them as slaves.[92] As mentioned earlier, ransoming of captives was viewed as a charitable deed, based on Jewish tradition. It was believed that 'the charitable visitor of a prisoner is, as in other cases of charitable deeds, visiting Christ himself'.[93] ʾUsāmah ibn Munqidh draws on this notion of ransoming Muslim captives for the sake of charity. Ibn Munqidh mentions that he used to visit Fulk V of Anjou, King of Jerusalem, during his truce with Jamāl-al-Dīn. He relates that on these visits, the Franks would bring forth their Muslim captives for ransom. He magnanimously states that he would 'اشتري منهم من سهَّل الله تعالى خلاصه' (buy off those of them whose deliverance Allah would facilitate).[94]

On one such occasion, owners of Maghrebi pilgrims, captured in a piratical raid by a Frank named William, were brought to ibn Munqidh to purchase. Ibn Munqidh mentions his dealings with one of the owners; buying a few captives for his own use and a few others, costing one hundred twenty dīnars, for the Amīr Muʿīn al-Dīn. He left the city paying the owner some of the amount, while leaving a bond for the balance. On returning to Damascus, ibn Munqidh informed the Amīr of his purchase and offered to pay the

[91] Ibid., pp. 63-64; Ibid., p. 75.
[92] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 3.
[93] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[94] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-Iʿtibīr*, p. 81; *An Arab Syrian Gentleman*, p. 110.

complete price himself. The Amīr resolutely refused, declaring the spiritual benefits of freeing prisoners.[95] Although some captives were freed through the charitable acts of their comrades, however, they were forced to spend a great deal of time in captivity.

Although some captives were ransomed, a considerable number of captives were slaughtered immediately after Crusader or Muslim victory. Ibn al-Qālanisī, writing during the First Crusade, provides an example of the fate of captives. Ibn al-Qālanisī narrates that in the year 1109 Ẓahīr al-Dīn Atābik marched with his army to Tiberias where he divided his troops into two detachments, sending one of the detachments to Palestine and the other conducted a raid on Tiberias.[96] Gervase, the lord of the town, retaliated and engaged them in battle. Eventually the Turkish cavalry surrounded Gervase and his companions were taken captives. While some of Gervase's companions were sent to the Sultan, Gervase himself, along with some of his companions, were executed. It is interesting to note that Ẓahīr al-Dīn decided to execute Gervase despite the fact that he offered to pay both his own and his companions' ransom price.[97] As noble prisoners were generally ransomed, Ẓahīr al-Dīn's decision to execute the priosners demonstrates that certain leaders did not always adhere to conventions of war. Ibn al-Qālanisī provides another example of the treatment of captives during the First Crusade. He narrates the details of a siege against Tarabulus in 1109, this time conducted by the Christians. After a description of the siege of the city, he mentions as an endnote that the Christians, led by Raymond, 'واسروا رجالها وسبوا نسائها واطفالها' (took the men captive, and enslaved the women and children).[98] In this instance, some captives were kept as prisoners of war perhaps to be ransomed as slaves in the manner that ibn Munqidh mentions in his chronicle. However, they were undoubtedly imprisoned for a long period before being ransomed.

[95] Ibid., pp. 81-82; Ibid., pp. 110-11.
[96] Abū Yaʿlaʾ Hamzah ibn al-Qālanisī, *History of Damascus*, ed. by H.F. Amedroz (Leyden: Brill, 1908), p. 161; *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, trans. by H.A.R. Gibb (London: Luzac, 1932), p. 86.
[97] Ibid., pp. 161-62; Ibid., p. 87.
[98] Ibid., p. 163; Ibid., p. 89.

Ibn Shaddād mentions a similar example of treatment of captives by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. After the defeat of the Franks at the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn, ibn Shaddād reports that among the Frankish commanders King Guy, Prince Reynald, the brother of the king, the son of Humfrey and the Master of the Hospitallers were taken captive. On the orders of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the rest of the commanders were killed, while the soldiers were either slain or taken into captivity: 'فأسر مقد موهم و قتل الباقون'. Ibn Shaddād further emphasises that the officers of the Hospitallers and the Templars were immediately killed, without exception.[99]

As can be ascertained from the examples above, there were different methods of treatment for the nobility and the common soldier. Prisoners of war were either killed or ransomed. Most nobles were kept aside for ransom; however, there were cases in which all the prisoners were killed without distinction. Nobles were usually able to pay their ransom, or were important enough to be ransomed; therefore, they were usually spared. Even so, Friedman assumes that most of the captives died without being ransomed, and those who were ransomed spent years in captivity.[100]As Friedman explains, the Franks at first considered the ransoming of captives as a last resort as it entailed carrying out negotiations with the enemy.[101]

Captives had to consider other methods of gaining freedom before they were ransomed. They either tried to escape with the help of comrades, or if the captives were high-ranking nobles, by means of military expedition against the Muslims.[102] It was only after persistent peaceful interaction with the Muslims that the Franks considered ransom as a viable option. Friedman suggests that the 'norms of ransom' were influenced by Muslim customs, especially in relation to technical details, such as the role and status of the mediators and the ransom price of the prisoners.[103] It would therefore appear that

[99] Ibn Shaddād, *Kitāb Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī*, p. 63; *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, ed. by D.S. Richards, p. 74.
[100] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 111.
[101] Ibid., p. 147.
[102] Ibid., pp. 130-35.
[103] Ibid., p. 147.

within a short period of interaction with the Muslism, the Franks were adhering to their customs.

It seems that exchange of captives was preferred to the ransom of individual captives, especially in the case of the Crusaders. One of the main reasons for this preference was that it required minimal expense for both sides.[104] Despite their reluctance to ransom prisoners of war, they were compelled to do so in the case of prominent leaders. Even when a prominent leader was ransomed, he was forced to remain in captivity for lengthy periods of time, as in the case of Baldwin II, who remained in captivity in 1123 for sixteen months.[105]

There are very few extant descriptions of life in captivity during the Crusades. Most chroniclers of the Crusades, Muslim or Christian, had not experienced captivity first-hand and therefore wrote from observation of the treatment of captives in their own camp.[106] There are, however, two first-hand Christian accounts of life in captivity.

A man named Walter, who was chancellor to Roger of Salerno in Antioch, is one of the primary sources for an accurate description of life in captivity. Judging from his account, he seems to have held the office of chancellor from 1114 to 1122. It appears that Walter accompanied Roger to 'Apamea, Rugia, and Tall Danith' in 1115.[107] It is also almost certain that he was present at the battleground named the Field of Blood and was taken captive after the battle. Walter mentions several times within the narrative that the Muslims held him captive and comments that captivity may have dulled his memory; however, he does not mention the exact moment of his capture.[108] Despite distancing himself from the other prisoners, he confirms that he will describe the treatment of

[104] Ibid., p. 76.
[105] Ibid., p. 77.
[106] Ibid., p. 105.
[107] Walter the Chancellor, *Galterii Cancellarii Bella Antiochena*, ed. by Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck: Verlag der Wagnerschenuniversitäts-buchhandlung, 1896); *Walter the Chancellor's The Antiochene Wars*, ed. by Thomas S. Asbridge and Susan B. Edgington (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 5.
[108] *The Antiochene Wars*, pp. 5-6.

prisoners ‘de quibus pro uisu et auditu rata discutiam’ (just as I saw and heard with my own eyes).[109]

After the death of Roger of Salerno at the battle of the Field of Blood and the Muslim victory that concluded the battle, a large number of Christians were taken prisoner. Walter’s ensuing narrative recounts a pathetic fate for the Christian prisoners. Immediately after the battle, about five hundred prisoners were bound in chains in a manner that Walter evocatively describes as ‘de more canum a collo bini et bini copulate funibas, coram magistro sceleris capitalem sententiam subire praestolantes, in gyro humi uersi, tenebantur’ (of dogs tied together two by two by the neck, waiting in a circle bent over to the ground before the master criminal to undergo the death sentence).[110] After the prisoners had been bound in chains, Īlghāzī, the commander of the Muslim army, ordered the captives’ wounds to be examined in a tent. Those whose wounds were found to be too severe were dragged from the tent by their hair, with the use of rods, and executed on the spot. Apart from execution, these severely wounded prisoners underwent the torment of having skin flayed from their half-severed heads.[111]

The rest of the soldiers were kept overnight, to be tortured the next day. Īlghāzī, or the ‘princeps sceleris’ (prince of wickedness) as Walter labels him, ordered the prisoners to be rounded up, strung together with ropes around their necks, and forced to travel through fields with thistles and brambles into a vineyard next to Sarmadā. The prisoners travelled in this manner in the blistering heat, overcome by thirst, having to feign falling onto the ground to somehow bite into a grape to quench their thirst.[112] Such was the wretched state of the captives. When water was finally ordered from a distant region, the muddy dregs were offered to the prisoners, who were then led two by two to the water-skin. Those who approached without permission were beheaded on the spot. Īlghāzī, ‘ualeant’ (the unholy one), decided to round up the captives in the middle of a field and

[109] *Bella Antiochena*, p. 94; *The Antiochene Wars*, p. 136.
[110] *Bella Antiochena*, p. 91; *The Antiochene Wars*, p. 132.
[111] *Bella Antiochena*, pp. 91-92; Ibid.
[112] Bella Antiochena, p. 92; *The Antiochene Wars*, p. 133.

massacre them together for his amusement. At this instance, a powerful emir advised the king to single out the rich and noble prisoners to be ransomed, used in astrological rituals, or sent to the sultan and other lords to demonstrate his glorious victory. He appealed to the king by asking 'his peremptis, quid triumphi exteris regibus et principibus nostrae legis praesentabis?' (once these men are dead, what glory shall you show to kings and princes of other countries under our law?). Affected by the emir's advice, Īlghāzī separated the noble prisoners and handed them to the care of his son in Aleppo, while the other prisoners were killed with utter brutality.[113] Even the noble prisoners were not saved from torture as Īlghāzī's son threw them onto a stone floor, scattered with thistles, and ordered halters to be bound onto their feet and necks. The next day, they were inflicted with various forms of torture; those who survived this ordeal were later ransomed.[114]

After King Baldwin came to the aid of the Christians following the battle of the Field of Blood, Walter recounts a similar account of cruelty towards prisoners. On the fifth day of the battle against Īlghāzī, Robert Fitz-Fulk was presented to Īlghāzī and mocked in front of the common people by having his hair and beard plucked by Īlghāzī.[115] He was then sent to Ṭughdakīn who condemned him further and sentenced him to death. Robert was then executed in public, after which his severed head was displayed in the streets, and finally returned to Ṭughdakīn. Walter relates that in the final act of cruelty, Ṭughdakīn commissioned a man to fashion a drinking vessel from the skull of Robert.[116]

The level of cruelty towards the prisoners and the maliciousness of Muslim leaders seem to suggest an element of hyperbole in Walter's account of the treatment of prisoners. The severity of violence towards the Christian prisoners is somewhat called into question by ibn Munqidh's account of the same encounter between Ṭughdakīn and Robert Fitz-Fulk. Ibn Munqidh mentions a bond of friendship between Ṭughdakīn and Robert Fitz-Fulk before the battle took place; Walter fails to mention this detail in his narration of

[113] Bella Antiochena, p. 92-93; *The Antiochene Wars*, pp. 134-35.
[114] Bella Antiochena, p. 94; *The Antiochene Wars*, p. 135.
[115] Bella Antiochena, p. 107-08; *The Antiochene Wars*, p. 160.
[116] Bella Antiochena, p. 108-09; *The Antiochene Wars*, pp. 160-61.

events. According to ibn Munqidh, this friendship was significant as Īlghāzī sent Robert to Ṭughdakīn for the purpose of scaring him into increasing his ransom price. Once again, ibn Munqidh makes no reference to any humiliation Robert suffered at Īlghāzī's hand; however, in keeping with Walter's narrative, ibn Munqidh's version of events does verify that despite any bond of friendship between the two, Ṭughdakīn did kill Robert, stating that he knew no other way of scaring him.[117] Despite the similar culmination of events, ibn Munqidh makes no mention of the public display of Robert's head, nor Ṭughdakīn's disturbing commission to turn Robert's head into a drinking vessel. The two versions of events from opposing sides demonstrate how the choniclers' narratives were coloured by their own agendas. Walter's omission of any bond between Ṭughdakīn and Robert may have been a strategic move to portray the Muslims purely as the violent and cruel enemy. Despite any desparities in the two accounts, prisoners of war were tortured, though perhaps not to such extremities. Walter's account further demonstrates that at times both nobles and common soldiers were killed without being ransomed. While a great many captives were killed, noble prisoners were more likely to be ransomed for money, as illustrated by the emir's advice to Īlghāzī to ransom the wealthy and noble prisoners.

The second personal account of captivity in the Muslim camp is in a chronicle of Jean de Joinville. Joinville's chronicle, titled *The History of St. Louis*, was completed in 1310 and narrates King Louis's efforts against the Saracens in the Seventh Crusade.[118] De Joinville acted as seneschal to the King and maintained a close relationship with him. He departed for the Levant in August 1248 and fought the Saracens alongside King Louis for two years and was eventually captured in 1250. De Joinville was then captured on a galley at the time when the King and the Sultan were negotiating a trade of Damietta in return for Jerusalem. In March of 1250, nine days after two successive battles with the Muslims, the dead bodies of soldiers that had drowned, resurfaced in the river due to the soldiers' galls

[117] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-I'tibīr*, pp. 119-20; *An Arab Syrian Gentleman*, pp. 149-50
[118] Jean Sire de Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, ed. by Jacques Monfrin (Paris: Dunod, 1995); *The History of St Louis*, ed. by Natalis de Wailly, trans. by Joan Evans (London: Oxford University Press, 1938).

rotting in their bodies.[119] The King hired a hundred men to separate the Christians soldiers' bodies and pull them ashore while allowing the Muslim soldiers' bodies to flow downstream. As de Joinville explains, the eels in the river fed upon the dead bodies, as they were 'glous poisons' (gluttonous fish), and the soldiers in turn ate the eels, causing an outbreak of what de Joinville terms 'maladie de l'ost' (illness of the host). This illness allowed the flesh on their legs to dry up, black and earth-coloured blotches to appear on the skin, and rotten flesh to develop on their gums.[120]

When the King and the Sultan were negotiating an exchange of property, the 'maladie de l'ost' came upon de Joinville, as well as King Louis. The King's council and the council of the Sultan came to an agreement under the terms that Damietta would be returned to the Sultan in exchange for Jerusalem.[121] The Sultan's council wanted to hold the King hostage as assurance that Damietta would indeed be returned to the Sultan, however, the King's council refused to allow them to keep the King hostage.[122] At the same time, the sickness had become so severe and widespread that the King believed that they could no longer stay in that camp if they wished to avoid death; therefore, he ordered the camp to be moved to Damietta.[123] De Joinville and his two remaining knights went aboard the ship the Tuesday after octave of Easter and ordered the sailors to take the ship downstream but they refused on account of the Sultan's galleys blocking the route to Damietta. The Sultan's galley forced them into a creek and even after de Joinville's ship managed to steer the ship out of the creek, the galley still blocked their route to Damietta. De Joinville and his companions were trapped as they were surrounded on sea and more Saracens awaited them on land.[124] De Joinville insisted that the sailors manoeuvring the ship anchor it as certain death awaited them on land. As the ship stood anchored, four of the Sultan's galleys approached them and de Joinville and his companions concurred that

[119] *Vie de Saint Louis,* p. 142; p. 144; *The History of St Louis*, p. 86.
[120] *Vie de Saint Louis,* p. 144; *The History of St Louis*, p. 87.
[121] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 148.
[122] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 148; p. 150; *The History of St Louis*, pp. 89-90.
[123] *The History of St Louis*, p. 90.
[124] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 150*; The History of St Louis*, p. 91

they would rather be taken captive by the men on the galleys as those on land would separate them and sell them to the Bedouins.[125]

As the first galley approached, one of the sailors proposed that de Joinville should be falsely labelled the King's cousin in order to protect him from the Saracens. This suggests that although ordinary soldiers, especially sick ones, were killed when a camp was attacked, nobles of importance within the enemy's army were normally taken captive. While the sick soldiers were immediately killed and the captives in Walter the Chancellor's account faced a gruesome fate, de Joinville was treated with a certain amount of respect. Just as the sailors and de Joinville came to a consensus on how to represent his identity, a Saracen came swimming to their ship, embraced him around the waist, and warned him that the Saracens' sole intent was to plunder the ship. On first introducing the Saracen, de Joinville describes him as a Saracen of the Emperor's country. It can be assumed that he may have been one of the dragomens used in negotiations as he spoke to de Joinville directly without the need of an interpreter. He advised de Joinville that since the other Saracens were only after the booty within the ship, they would not pay heed if he left the ship and came onto one of the galleys. Consequently, de Joinville was transported to one of the galleys where the Saracen protected him from the 'bien .IIII. homes de leur gens' (full thirteen of their host) by embracing him and telling them: "Cousin le roy!"' (Cousin of the King!).[126] The Saracen then bore him towards the castle of the ship where the Saracen knights resided.

In contrast to Walter's account, de Joinville was treated with kindness by the knights. Once amongst them, the Saracen knights took off his coat of mail and cast over him a scarlet coverlet that his mother had given him. In addition, one of the knights brought him a belt to gird over the coverlet, as well as a hood to cover his head. The knights looked after him and provided him with water when needed. However, de Joinville's condition seemed to be getting worse as water gushed out his nostrils whenever

[125] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 156; *The History of St Louis*, pp. 94-95.
[126] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 156; p. 158; *The History of St Louis*, pp. 95-96.

he attempted to drink. Communicating through the Saracen who had saved de Joinville, the Saracen knights discovered that he had terminal swelling in his throat. Once again taking pity on his condition, one of the Saracen knights offered to prepare a drink that would help him fully recover within two days. Not only were the knights considerate towards him, but they also carried the injured Raoul of Wanou to the privy.[127]

In time, the Grand Admiral of the galleys met him privately and inquired whether he was in reality the King's cousin. De Joinville replied in the negative; on hearing his reply, the Admiral informed him that if he had not disguised his identity, de Joinville and his knights would certainly have been killed. The Admiral then inquired whether he belonged to the lineage of the Emperor Frederick of Germany in any way. De Joinville replied in the positive; hearing this, the Admiral was pleased. They shared a meal together but halfway through the meal a burgher of Paris was brought before them who rebuked de Joinville for eating meat on a Friday. He immediately pushed his bowl away but the Admiral consoled him that God would not reproach him as he had eaten the flesh unwittingly. The Saracen who had saved de Joinville acted as an interpreter between the Admiral and Joinville; it is interesting to note that from this point onwards de Joinville lays claim to him by referring to him as 'mon Sarrazin' (my Saracen).[128] De Joinville takes a similar attitude to the Saracen who helped him to that which ibn Munqidh takes towards his Frankish aquaintainces in his book. Even though de Joinville considers the Saracen his helper, and perhaps even his friend, he assumes a position of superiority over him through the use of the phrase 'my Saracen'. Despite this haughty attitude, a bond had formed between him and this Saracen.

Eventually de Joinville and his men, along with the other prisoners were taken to Mansourah where the King and his barons were held captive. During that period Joinville recounts how men of 'most substance' were taken to a separate pavilion and asked to

[127] *Vie de Saint* Louis, p. 158; p. 160; The *History of St Louis*, pp. 96-97.
[128] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 160; *The History of St Louis*, p. 97.

forswear their religion; if they refused to do so, they were beheaded.[129] The Sultan also sent his council to speak to de Joinville and the barons and the Christians appointed count Peter of Brittany as their spokesman. De Joinville also specifically mentions the presence of men called 'drugemens' (dragoman) who knew 'le sarrazinnois et le françois' (the Saracen tongue and French) to translate the council's speech into French for the count.[130] While it seems only logical that translators were brought forth for any negotiation between the Christians and Muslims, it is unclear how the 'dragomen' spoke both tongues. Levantine Christians may have been familiar with Latin but French would still be unfamiliar in the Levant outside the Christian camp. Where were these dragomens tutored in French? Perhaps these men were once captives themselves. After an inconclusive round of negotiations in which the council asked for castles, which the count could not bestow, the council threatened to behead the Christians. The prisoners were eventually informed that the King had paid their ransom and that they were delivered from captivity.[131] De Joinville goes on to recount that a similar procedure of negotiation led to the deliverance of the King. In addition to negotiating with the King, the Sultan also threatened to torture him with bernicles, a device of the most grievous torture, the reader is informed.[132] The King ultimately paid a 'million besants of gold' for his men and returned the city of Damietta for his own deliverance.[133]

As this rather long description of captivity demonstrates, each experience in captivity was individual. While Walter describes an entirely gruesome episode in which the captors were akin to the devil in their sadistic enjoyment of massacre, de Joinville describes a rather different scenario, which in itself was fraught with contrast. Although several Christians were killed en masse as they were sick and could not help themselves, the Saracen knights also formed a bond with de Joinville and his companions. The knights

[129] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 164; *The History of St Louis*, p. 99.
[130] Ibid.; Ibid.
[131] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 166; *The History of St Louis*, p. 100.
[132] Ibid.; *The History of St Louis*, p. 101.
[133] *Vie de Saint Louis*, p. 168; *The History of St Louis*, p. 102.

helped de Joinville recover and carried Raoul of Wanou to the privy even though they suffered from the same sickness as the other Christians. They took pity on them and treated them with kindness; one of the Saracens even became de Joinville's own personal guard and interpreter. However, both these chronicles shed light on the contrast between the treatment of common prisoners, who were mostly massacred, and nobles who were at times treated with dignity. It also seems that the killing of captives was entirely arbitrary depending on the character and disposition of the captor, but at other times certain bonds were formed, as in the case of de Joinville.

Evidence of the good treatment of prisoners of noble status is demonstrated by the conduct of the Muslims during Baldwin II's captivity. Nūr al-Dīn took Baldwin II captive in 1124; however, after the death of Nūr al-Dīn, Baldwin passed into the possession of Īlghāzī.[134] Īlghāzī brought Baldwin to reside in the castle at Shīzar while ibn Munqidh's uncle, the Amīr Sultan, and his father negotiated the ransom. Both men welcomed and treated Baldwin with extreme benevolence during his stay at the castle. The Emirs also sent one of their own children to Aleppo for the captive. Baldwin II was eventually released a year later when his daughter Iveta and Joscelin II were sent as hostages to secure Baldwin's release during the mediation.[135]

Although Baldwin II was held captive in the castle at Shīzar for an entire year, it is almost certain that he must have been treated honourably as he exempted Shīzar from the indemnity it owed to Antioch.[136] A yearlong stay with the Munqidh family in their castle would have allowed Baldwin daily contact with the Muslims and a rare glimpse into their culture and lifestyle. Although it is not recorded by Christian chroniclers, Baldwin may also have acquired some understanding of Arabic, as necessitated by daily communication. After all, it is credible that this detail, much like other descriptions of

[134] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-Iʿtibīr*, p. 120; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, p. 150.
[135] Michael Köhler, *Alliances and Treaties between Frankish and Muslim Rulers in the Middle East*, trans. by Peter M. Holt, ed. by Konrad Hirschler (The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NY, 2013), p. 126.
[136] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitab al-Iʿtibīr*, p. 121; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman*, p. 150.

cultural contact with the Muslims, is discreetly excluded from the narrative of Christian chronicles.

Apart from higher nobility, lesser-known nobles were also detained as captives for several years on end. Raymond III of Tripoli was held in captivity for a lengthy period of eight years. During his captivity, Raymond became close to his captors; this same intimacy was reflected later in his peaceful dealings with Muslims which laid him open to treasonous suspicions among his contemporaries.[137] One of the reasons his fellow Christian rulers mistrusted him was his peace treaty with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. This treaty led to such a sense of camaraderie between them that when King Guy threatened him with a large host for refusing to pay homage to him in 1187, Raymond sought the protection of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and permitted entry to Muslim troops into Tiberias to strengthen his own defence.[138] There was such general distrust of Raymond, especially after the defeat of Roger des Moulin and Gerard of Ridefort at Muslim hands at Cresson, that his Christian contemporaries threatened to annul his marriage, while his vassals in Tripoli and Galilee warned him that they would sever their allegiance to him unless he dissolved relations with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn.[139] The nature of this intimacy with the Muslims during captivity and during the period of the peace treaty with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn would have resulted in Raymond learning more than just their language; indeed he would have been exposed to their culture, traditions, and perhaps even history. In short, he was positively influenced by his time in captivity, which stands in stark contrast to the gruesome first-hand accounts of captives discussed earlier.

Much like their Christian counterparts, Muslim captives, especially the ones who converted to Christianity, also developed close relations with their captors. One convert

[137] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 6.
[138] Guillaume de Tyr, *La continuation de Guillaume de Tyr*, Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades, 22 vols, ed. by Margaret Ruth Morgan (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthne, 1982), XIV, pp. 36-37.
[139] Ibn al-Athīr, 'Kitāb Kāmil al-Tawārīkh', in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Orientaux*, 5 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1872), I, pp. 188-744 (p. 680). Although the transliteration for both the author's name and the title is incorrect, it has been published in a compilation of texts in that manner; therefore, the transliteration will be retained.

christened Baldwin was privileged enough to gain Baldwin I's trust and was privy to all his private affairs in the position of Baldwin I's chamberlain.[140] According to Guibert de Nogent, Baldwin I had a habit of appointing converted Muslims to high positions in his court. Another converted Muslim by the name of Machomus, once a former captive, was left in charge of the affairs of Jerusalem in 1112, while Baldwin led a military campaign. Baldwin's decision favoured him as Machomus's knowledge of Arabic proved essential in thwarting a Muslim plot to invade the city.[141] It is, however, prudent to acknowledge that both the former captives promoted to high positions belonged to Muslim nobility and thus political etiquette demanded that they be placed in equal rank within their new society.[142] Even so, despite their conversion, Muslim nobles infiltrating Baldwin's court would have led a degree of cultural and linguistic integration. No doubt their linguistic abilities were exploited during negotiations with the enemy.

Similar to the Muslim convert whose knowledge of Arabic was indispensible in deflecting an attack, most of the interpreters or diplomatic delegates used by both the Muslim and Christian side were current or former captives who had learnt the captor's language during captivity.[143] One such example was the case of Hugh Garnier, lord of Caesarea between 1154-1164, who was captured by Muslims in 1167. It can be assumed that Hugh had some knowledge of Arabic, since Nūr al-Dīn's general, asked him to act an envoy on behalf of the Muslims.[144] As Hugh was formerly employed as diplomat by King Amalric and understood both French and Arabic, he was suitable for the role of envoy. However, he did not wish to carry out the dishonourable duty of delivering peace treaties for the enemy; to escape disgrace, he bestowed the duty of acting as envoy on another

[140] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 140.
[141] Ibid., p. 141.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., p. 117.
[144] Ibid., p. 118.

prisoner by the name of Amalric and only added the final touches to the treaty after it had been accepted.[145]

A similar mediator is mentioned by Jean of Joinville in his *History of St. Louis*. On negotiating the prisoners' release, including the King himself, in exchange for Damietta, de Joinville mentions that a series of oaths were drawn up to ensure that the Emirs kept to their covenants, which were verified by a man called Nicholas of Acre. De Joinville relates that he knew the 'sarrazinnois' (Saracen tongue) but does not mention how he acquired it; despite this omission, the nature of the oaths reveals that he knew a great deal about the culture and religion of the Muslims.[146] The first oath stated that if they did not uphold their agreement they would be as dishonoured as a man who went on pilgrimage to Mecca with his head uncovered. Secondly, they would be as disgraced as a man who left his wife and took her again, and lastly, they would be as disgraced as a man who ate the flesh of a pig. After the Emirs took these oaths, Nicholas of Acre assured the King that the severity of the oaths assured that the agreement would be upheld.[147] Judging from the intricacy of the oaths, Nicholas's assurance to the King proves that he must have either spent time with the Muslims or studied their laws closely.

Evidence of Arabic-speaking Franks also exists in the position of 'dragmannus' or dragoman. The dragomen were Arabic-speaking compatriots selected by Frankish lords to keep records and help manage Frankish estates and Muslim tenets.[148]A similar position was created to help Franks deal with Muslim merchants. While Kedar argues that Oriental Christians held the position of clerks, however, Attiya suggests that the clerks described by ibn Jubayr in Acre were decidedly Franks.[149]

As mentioned earlier, prisoners who were held in captivity for lengthy periods of time learned the captors' tongue and sometimes acted as translators in negotiations.

[145] Ibid.
[146] De Joinville, *Vie de saint Louis*, p.176; p. 178; *History of St. Louis*, p. 107.
[147] Ibid.; Ibid.
[148] Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), II, p. 296.
[149] Attiya, '*Knowledge of Arabic in the Crusader States*', p. 207.

Hitherto only noble examples have been discussed; however, there is a strong possibility that common prisoners also eventually developed an understanding of the captors' language. As the chronicles discussed in this chapter and the study of captivity during the Crusades by Friedman suggests, captives were at first killed en masse, ransomed, or sold into captivity. Gradually as the conflicts progressed, both sides realised another use for the captives — they were now additionally used for forced labour.[150] Ample evidence of prisoners being used as labourers exists in several texts written during the early Crusading period. Ibn Jubayr, a Spanish traveller to the Levant writes his observations about Muslim prisoners. He relates that it was a common sight to see Muslim male prisoners in 'القيد ويصرفون فى الخدمة الشاقّة تصريفَ العبيد' (shackles and out to painful labour like slaves).[151] Ibn Jubayr further recounts that Muslim female prisoners were treated in the same manner with 'خلاخيل' (iron rings) binding their legs.[152] The tradition of using prisoners as slaves was not restricted to the Crusading army. The Muslims also delighted in putting prisoners of war to work. Friedman relates an example of a Muslim captor making use of his captive's skill. In the hagiography of the martyrdom of Saint Thiemo, the bishop's captor questioned him as to whether he had mastered a craft. Upon learning that the bishop was trained as goldsmith, the captor was very pleased and availed himself of his captive's skill.[153] In addition to personal skills, captives were also used as labourers to help build much-needed castles and fortresses.[154]

Working in close proximity to enemy settlements for the enemy itself must have once again allowed the captives to gain insight into the captors' lifestyle and language. Perhaps the captor may even have been forced to learn some of the captive's language in order to personally communicate with the captive, such as in the case of Saint Thiemo.

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[150] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 114

[151] Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. by William Wright (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1907), p. 307; *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, trans. by R.J.C. Broadhurst (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), p. 322.

[152] Ibid.; Ibid.

[153] '*Passio Sancti Thiemonis Altera*', in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Occidentaux*, 5 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1895), V, pp. 217-23.

[154] Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies*, p. 114.

While the interchange of language is to some extent chronicled and can be further hypothesised, the influence of Muslim culture on the Crusaders while living in Levant also seems inevitable. Examples of such influence are well demonstrated in the memoirs of Usāmah ibn Munqidh, a chronicler whose work is invaluable as a source of Muslim-Crusader relations.

Ibn Munqidh relates an account of a Frank conforming to Muslim lifestyle in what he perceived to be a caricature of Frankish behaviour. This tale was recounted by a man called Sālim, who had the duty of managing ibn Munqidh's father's bathhouse.[155] Despite being a seemingly fictional, humorous anecdote, it does provide a glimpse into the Muslim presumptiom of superiority as well as their belief that the Franks adopted their customs, regardless of their absurdity. Salīm had once opened a bathhouse in al-Maʿarrat where a Frankish knight once came as a customer. Sālim illuminated that the Franks disapproved of girding a cloth around one's waist while in the bath; therefore, when the Frank saw Sālim's covering, he pulled it off and threw it away. In a nonchalant tone, Sālim mentions that he had recently shaved his pubes. When the Frank noticed this, he was delighted and insisted that Sālim shave his pubes as well. After he finished the task, Sālim claimed that he passed his hand over the place, and finding it smooth, he said,'"سالم، بحق دينك اعمل للداما"' (Sālim, by the truth of my religion, do the same to madame), referring to his wife.[156] The Frank then ordered his servant to bring his wife to the bathhouse. On arrival, the wife was brought forth in front of Sālim, although there were individual sections for men and women, and the knight once again insisted, '"اعمل كما عملت لي"' (Do what thou has done to me), and Sālim obliged while her husband watched.[157] While the incident may have been fabricated to display the eccentric behaviour of the Franks, so foreign to the Arabs, however, it also demonstrates ibn Munqidh's assumption that the Franks would be eager to adopt Arab customs, however strange in nature.

[155] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-iʿtibār*, p. 136; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman,* p. 165.
[156] Ibid.; Ibid., p. 165. Although Ḥittī uses the translation 'by the truth of my religion', it would be more appropriate to translate it as 'for your religion's sake'.
[157] Ibid., pp. 136-37; Ibid., p. 166.

It seems that the Christians arriving to fight in Levant did not only adopt Arab traditions but were also curious about the religious tenets of Muslims. The Saracen romances written around the time of the Crusades demonstrate a very convoluted image of the beliefs of those they titled infidels. While the romances emphasise Saracen tendencies to worship idols such as Apollo, one of the great historians of the Crusades seems to have acquired a fair idea of the basics beliefs of the Muslims. At the beginning of his work, the *Historia rerum gestarum in partibus transmarinis,* William of Tyre alludes to another work in which he explains the history of Muslim belief:

> Quis autem fuerit predictus Mahumet et unde et quomodo ad hanc proruperit insaniam ut se prophetam mentiri et Deo missum dicere presumerat, cuius porro vite conversationis, quam diu regnaverit et ubi et quos demum habuerit successores et quomodo pene orbem universum pestiferis eius repleverint dogmatibus, qui eum in eodem errore sequuti sunt, alibi disseruimus diligenter, sicut ex subsequentibus datur intelligi manifeste.
>
> […] explained with great care who Muhammad was, whence he sprang, and the circumstances which led him to the presumptuous folly of claiming to be a prophet sent from God. His manner of life and conversation, the lands over which he ruled, and the duration of his power have also been described. Who his successors were and how those who follow him in the same error spread these wicked doctrines throughout practically the whole world has likewise been set forth, as will appear clearly in the following pages.[158]

The work he is referring to seems to be the missing text of the *Gesta Orientalium Principum*. It seems that William of Tyre had started work on *Gesta Orientalium* between the period of 1164 and 1174. Although the text is lost, the subject of the text, dealing with the Muslim East, is known through references by Tyre himself, such as the one quoted above, and borrowings from the text by Jacques de Vitry.[159] As most Western texts written around the period were intent on painting Muḥammad as the Muslims' god rather than a prophet, William of Tyre must have heavily relied on and studied Eastern texts to compile

[158] Wilhelmus Tyrenis, *Wilhelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. by R.B.C Huygens, H.E. Mayer, and G. Rösch, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 63, 63A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), pp. 105-06; William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, 2 vols, trans. by Emily Atwater Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), I, p. 61.
[159] William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, I, p. 27.

his history. It only seems logical to assume that Tyre had some knowledge of Arabic to accomplish this task.

The fact that copies of William of Tyre's *Gesta Orientalium* existed more than a century after it was written seems to suggest that it was a popular text and was widely copied, one copy existing at St. Albans in England before its disappearance.[160] The existence of such a text begs the question of whether the *Gesta Orientalium* and its possible Eastern sources had an influence on the writings of Jacques de Vitry and William of Tripoli, who borrowed from the *Gesta*, and Eastern texts also had an influence on vernacular literature of the West.

Translation, Transmission, and Expansion of Greek Scientific Knowledge

Apart from the various forms of positive and negative cultural contact discussed in this chapter, Western Europe also had literary contact with the Muslim Levant. Much of the ancient Greek medical knowledge was mediated through the Muslim East. Many Greek medical manuscripts were first translated into Syriac and then into Arabic; this translation movement continued in the West with the translation of these Arabic manuscripts into Latin. The first translation movement began with the Muslim Umayyad dynasty, which lasted from 661-750 AD. This translation movement started in particular with the Umayyad prince, Khālid ibn Yazīd, grandson of the second Umayyad Caliph.[161] Khālid ibn Yazīd was very passionate about medicine and alchemy; therefore, he commissioned a group of Greek scholars in Egypt to translate Greek-Egyptian medical manuscripts into Arabic. This endeavour was a great feat as it was the first time in Islam that manuscripts were translated from a foreign language into Arabic.[162]As Khan explains, it was under the same Umayyad dynasty that Hispanic Muslim areas of Cordoba and

[160] Ibid., p. 26.
[161] Muhammad Salim Khan, *Islamic Medicine* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 11.
[162] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

Granada became centres of learning. Under the Umayyad dynasty, physicians flourished in Muslim Spain, especially in relation to the development of botanical medicine.[163]

In AD 750, the Umayyads were overthrown by ʿAbd al-ʿAbbās al-Abbās, who was a descendant of al-ʿAbbās, the son of ʿAbd al-Muṭallib, and thus began the Abbasid dynasty.[164] Further translation of medical manuscripts continued with this next great Islamic dynasty — the Abbasid dynasty. Goodman comments that the translation of Greek medical manuscripts during the reign of the Umayyads was 'sporadic and of no great quality or intellectual penetration'.[165] In addition, Goodman states that translation of manuscripts became more regular during the following Abbasid period, with more manuscripts being acquired. The technique of translation also evolved; the translators no longer translated without comment and 'objective standards and philological methods came to govern the translation procedure'[166] In addition, Gutas comments that the translation of scientific manuscripts under the Umayyad dynasty did not have the same impact as the continuation of the movement under the Abbasids.[167] During the Abbasid period, more manuscripts were translated: one reason for this was that the translators consciously translated certain manuscripts in order to complete the canon of works of a particular author or to expand scientific growth.[168]

The revival of Greek learning and translation of manuscripts came with the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr.[169]The historian al-Masʿūdī provides evidence as to al-Manṣūr's role in the translation movement. Al-Masʿūdī quotes a conversation between the caliph al-Qahīr, a descendent of al-Manṣūr, and the historian Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbdī al-Khurāsānī al-Ahbārī. The conversation was directed by al-Qahīr's request for an account

[163] Ibid., p. 12.
[164] Ibid., p. 14.
[165] L.E. Goodman, 'The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic', in *Religion, Learning and Science in the ʿAbbasid Period*, ed. by M.J.L. Young, J.D. Latham and R.B. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 477-97 (p. 478).
[166] Ibid., pp. 478-79.
[167] Dimtri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and the Early ʿAbbasid Society* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 28.
[168] Goodman, 'The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic', p. 479.
[169] Cyril Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia and the Eastern Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 72.

of his predecessors; al-Ahbārī agreed to provide the account on the condition that the caliph would not be offended, or exact punishment if he related details about his ancestors which might not be pleasing to al-Qahīr.[170] Al-Ahbārī narrates the following about al-Manṣūr:

> He was the first caliph to favour astrologers and act on the basis of astrological prognostications. He had in his retinue the astrologer Nawbaht the Zorastrian, who converted to Islam upon his instigation and who is the progenitor of this family of Nawbahts. Also in his retinue was the astrologer Ibrāhīm al-Fazārī, the author of an ode to the stars and other astronomical works, and the astrologer ʿAli ibn-ʿĪsā the Astrolabist. He was the first caliph to have books translated from foreign languages in Arabic, among them kalīla wa-Dimma and Sindhind (translated, repectively by Ibn-al-Muqaffa and al-Fazārī). There were also translated for him books by Aristotle on logic and other subjects, the Almagest by Ptolemy, the Arithmatic [by Nicomachus of Gerasa], the book of Euclid [on geometry], and other ancient books from classical Greek, Byzantine Greek, Pahlavi [Middle Persian], Neopersian, and Syriac. These [translated books] were published among the people, who examined them and devoted themselves to knowing them.[171]

Al-Manṣūr's fascination with astrology was a result of Persian and Zoroastrian influence. Furthermore, the Abbasid dynasty had won the civil war against the Umayyads through the support of certain interest groups, including the Persians, who included Arab tribes who had moved to Khurāsān after the early conquests, Persianized Arabs and Arameans, converted Persians and Zoroastrian Persians.[172] The Nestorians played a crucial part in the translation movement. Before the capture of Persia and Gondēshāpūr by the Caliph ʿUmar, the Nestorian school and hospital in Gondēshāpūr was renowned for the field of medicine and science. Students of several nationalities gathered in the school for instruction and it was from among these students that physicians were recruited in Persia, Iraq and Syria.[173]

Al-Manṣūr and his successors employed many physicians and translators from the famed medical school in Gondēshāpūr through the course of the dynasty. This began with

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[170] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 30.
[171] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[172] Ibid., p. 29.
[173] Allen O. Whipple, *The Role of Nestorians and Muslims in the History of Medicine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 17. The transliteration of Gondēshāpūr will follow the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

al-Manṣūr's condition of dyspepsia, which he had suffered for most of his life. However, his personal physician was unable to cure him of this illness. Other doctors around him tried to cure him in vain and eventually he was forced to consult a Persian physician, Jurjīs ibn Bukhtīshūʿof Gondēshāpūr. News of this skilled physician reached the caliph through the court circle and he decided to consult him. At the time, Jurjīs was physician-in-chief of the medical school in Gondēshāpūr. When the caliph summoned Jurjīs, he left the medical school under the direction of his son and left for Baghdad, the newly created seat of the caliphate, with his two pupils Ibrāhīm and ʿĪsā ibn Sahlāsā.[174] Upon arrival, the caliph welcomed Jurjīs and his students with honour and narrated his symptoms to the physician. Consequently, Jurjīs consented to treat him and was successful in curing the illness. Impressed by his skills, the caliph persuaded him to remain in Baghdad as physician-in-chief to the caliph, leaving his son in charge of the school in Gondēshāpūr.

Elgood notes that from then on foreign physicians were largely employed by the caliph.[175] However, this was not entirely 'another blow to Arab prestige', as Elgood suggests in regard to the revival of Greek learning through the aid of foreign physicians.[176] Although foreign physicians did embark on translation, the caliphs mostly commissioned this initiative. This was the case with the Jurjīs, whom al-Manṣūr had hired as chief physician. Apart from being a physician, Jurjīs is considered one of the first to have translated books on medicine into Arabic and was famed for his translations.[177]

The translation of Greek scientific and medical knowledge continued under Hārūn al-Rashīd with the encouragement of his counsellor Jaʿfar al-Barmakī. Although Whipple suggests that the translation of scientific texts from Syriac into Arabic began under Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphate it is evident from the discussion of earlier caliphs that the translation process was well under way before he became caliph.[178] A rich manuscript collection had

[174] Elgood, *A Medical History of Persia*, p. 75.
[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid., p. 72.
[177] Ibid., p. 76.
[178] Whipple, *The Role of Nestorians*, p. 24.

begun to be gathered into the beginnings of a library in Baghdad comprising Euclid's works and Greek manuscripts borrowed by al-Manṣūr from the Byzantine emperor. Hārūn al-Rashīd expanded this library, adding manuscripts that he had won at Amorium and Ankara. This library served as a tool for physicians and astronomers during Hārūn al-Rashīd's caliphate and grew large enough to require a physical library.[179] The translation activity at the beginning was concerned primarily with mathematical and astronomical manuscripts rather than medical ones. These manuscripts were mostly translated by scholars from the vizier's own hometown in Persia. It was only later during the caliphate that medical manuscripts began to be translated. This new interest in medical knowledge was associated with the Nestorian court physician Jibrāʾīl II.[180] There was a practical aspect to translation; as Goodman explains, 'what was sought was what was useful, but the concept of useful was being enlarged'.[181] Each scientific area of knowledge seemed to have its benefits and one text led to another, leading to the translation of complete collections of works on mathematics, logic, medicine, physics, astronomy and metaphysics. [182] Translation activity increased as scholars such Yaḥyā ibn Batrīq championed the work of his father under al-Manṣūr, translating works such Hipppocrates *On the Signs of Death* and Galen's *De Theriaca ad Pisonem* in a team under al-Ḥasan ibn Sahl al-Sarakhsī.[183]

Before the fall of the Umayyad dynasty, during the Abbasid revolution in Iran and Khurāsān, the Abbasid cause spread a message among the population that the Umayyad dynasty was reaching its end and that it was going to be replaced by a leader from the family of the Prophet Muḥammad who would be acceptable to both the Shias and the Sunnis.[184] During the time of al- Manṣūr, Abū-Sahl, in his book titled *Book of Nahmuṭān*, encouraged the translation movement, describing it as both the destiny of the Abbasids as

[179] Goodman, 'The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic', p. 482.
[180] Whipple, *The Role of Nestorians*, p. 24.
[181] Goodman, 'The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic', p. 483.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid., p. 482.
[184] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 46-47.

well as the will of God.[185] Continuing the prophetic tradition of endorsing translation, al-Nadīm narrates al-Ma'mūn's dream of Aristotle as justification for al-Ma'mūn's continuation and enlargement of the translation movement. Ibn al-Nadīm narrates this dream in his *Fihrist*, within a section titled 'mention of the reason why books on philosophy and other ancient sciences became plentiful in this country'.[186] In this dream, al-Maʾmūn saw the likeness of a bald man who was fair with a ruddy complexion; he also had a broad forehead with joined eyebrows, sitting on the bed.[187] Al-Maʾmūn proceeded to ask the man who he was and the man replied that he was Aristotle. Upon hearing this, al-Maʾmūn was delighted and enquired whether he could ask him a question. Aristotle replied in the positive and al-Maʾmūn asked him:

قلت ما الحسن

(Al- Maʾmūn asked) "What is good?"

قال ما حسن فى العقل

(Aristotle replied): "What is good in the mind."

قلت ثم ما ذا

(Al-Maʾmūn then asked him) "Then what is next?"

قال ما حسن فى الشرع

(Aristole replied with): "What is good in the law"

قلت ثم ماذا

(Al-Maʾmūn further inquired), "Then what next?"

قال ما حسن عند الجمهور

(To this, Aristotle answered), "What is good with the public"

قلت ثم ما ذا

(Once more, al-Maʾmūn questioned) "Then what more?"

[185] Ibid., pp. 45-46.
[186] Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. by Gustav Flügel (Leipzig: F.C.W. Vogel, 1871-1872), p. 243; *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, ed. and trans. by Bayard Dodge, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), II, p. 583.
[187] Ibid.; Ibid.

قال ثم لا ثم

(Finally, Aristotle replied), "More? There is no more."[188]

Ibn al-Nadīm pens the dream in first person, as if al-Maʾmūn was recounting it. He then goes on to inform his readers that this dream inspired the growth in translation of manuscripts. He further recounts how al-Maʾmūn asked the Byzantine emperor, with whom he had correspondence, to borrow old scientific manuscripts stored in the Byzantine country for the purpose of translation. At first the emperor refused to comply but he later agreed to grant the request. Accordingly, al-Maʾmūn sent a group of translators to select books and bring them back for translation.[189] Although the dream was clearly fictional propaganda on part of Ibn al-Nadīm and Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, the original authority for the dream, to promote the ordained nature of the translation movement under al-Ma'mūn, the account of borrowing the Byzantine manuscript seems more realistic. It seems even more probable in light of the amount of translation undertaken in Hārūn al-Rashīd and his son al-Maʾmūn's respective caliphates.

It was under their caliphates that the Bayt al-Ḥikmah, or the House of Wisdom was established. There is much controversy surrounding the establishment of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah. Gutas explains that the name Bayt al-Ḥikmah is a translation of the Sasanian term for a library.[190] He further writes that 'the fact is that we have exceedingly little historical information about the Bayt al-Ḥikmah. This in itself would indicate that it was not something grandiose or significant, and hence a minimalist interpretation would fit the historical record better'.[191] Gutas ascribes the eminence of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah to secondary sources dealing with the translation movement and alludes to only two references to the Bayt al-Ḥikmah in primary literature, which appear in Ibn al-Nadīm's

[188] Ibid.; Ibid.
[189] Ibid., p. 244; Ibid., p. 584.
[190] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 54.
[191] Ibid.

Fihrist.[192] The first reference to the Bayt al-Ḥikmah occurs when Ibn al-Nadīm recounts Abū Sahl al-Nawbakhtī's statement that he was employed at the Bayt al-Ḥikmah for Hārūn al-Rashīd and that he translated books from Persian into Arabic. In the second reference, Ibn-al-Qifṭī repeats the information above and adds that he was appointed as curator of the books within the Bayt al-Ḥikmah.[193]

By contrast, Whipple ascribes the establishment of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah to al-Maʾmūn. According to Whipple, the idea of the academy and library of Bayt al-Ḥikmah was suggested to al-Maʾmūn by Jibrāʾīl Bukhtīshūʿ, a descendent of the same renowned physician Bukhtīshūʿ who cured al-Manṣūr and was later appointed as court physician by him.[194] It was also Jibrāʾīl who suggested that Hārūn al-Rashīd send emissaries to Asia Minor to obtain Greek manuscripts to translate into Arabic. Further evidence for the Bayt al-Ḥikmah exists in the career of the translator Yūḥannā ibn Māsawayh, also a graduate of the school at Gondēshāpūr. Early in his career, ibn Māsawayh was chosen by al-Maʾmūn to be his personal physician before becoming the caliph. However, he was suddenly called from that position by Hārūn al-Rashīd to take charge of the academy and the translation of Greek manuscripts, gained through conquest, into Arabic.[195] In addition to ibn-Māsawayh's position at the academy, evidence as well as prominence of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah can be represented by the career of Ḥunayn discussed below. Regardless of whether Bayt al-Ḥikmah existed and played a large part in the translation of manuscripts or as Gutas suggests its contributions were highly exaggerated, its popularised reputation added to the prominence of the translation movement in the public imagination.

The political situation around al-Maʾmūn's caliphate is crucial to an understanding of the ideology that fuelled the translation of Greek manuscripts during his time as caliph. Al-Maʾmūn came into power as a result of a civil war. When his father Hārūn al-Rashīd died in 809, al-Maʾmūn's brother al-Amīn became caliph. This started a civil war between

[192] Ibid., p. 55.
[193] Ibid., pp. 55-56.
[194] Whipple, *The Role of Nestorians*, p. 24.
[195] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

the brothers that ended with the death of al-Amīn under the orders of his brother.[196] As a result of the civil war, al-Maʾmūn had to re-establish the authority of the caliph. He accomplished this by instating himself as the 'champion of Islam' and the 'foundation of the state'.[197] In order to live up to these titles, he initiated a war against the infidel Byzantines, on a greater scale than his predecessors had dared, with the purpose of gaining territory from the Byzantine Empire and increasing the realm of Islam.[198] Naturally these conquests would have led to the acquisition of further Greek manuscripts for translation and compilation of a library.

The ideology behind the conquest of Byzantine property was not as simple as a war against the infidel; the initiative was more intellectually inspired. Al-Maʾmūn proclaimed that the Byzantines were inferior not only to the Muslims but also to their ancestors. The reason behind this inferiority was their lack of appreciation for the Greek scientific knowledge of their ancestors; in contrast, the Muslims not only appreciated the knowledge of the ancient Greeks, they also translated it into Arabic for further study and practical use.[199] This ideology further appropriated the translation movement and gave it another dimension as a tool against the Byzantines.

The same ideology can later be detected in Ibn Jumay''s treatise to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn on the revival of the art of medicine. In this treatise, Ibn Jumayʿ describes how after the death of Galen, the Christians prevailed over the Greeks. Ibn Jumay' explains that:

> (النصارى) فخطؤوا النظر فى الأمور العقليّة، فاطرح ملوكهم العناية بها وأهملوا رعاية طاليهم، وانصرف الطالبون لها عن ارتكاب المشقة فى طلبها فاستطالوا قراءة كتب بقراط وجالينوس، فاضطربت، واختلّ أم أمرها
>
> The Christians considered it a fault to study intellectual matters and their kings cast away the care for medicine and failed to take care of its students. So its students ceased to commit themselves to the toilsome

[196] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 75.
[197] Ibid., p. 82.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., pp. 84-85.

> study of medicine and found reading Hippocrates' and Galen's works too tedious; thus, it fell into disorder and its condition worsened.[200]

Ibn Jumayʿ goes on to describe the role of Christian kings in reducing Greek works into summaries and abridgments, defiling the art of medicine by limiting the material and time required to study medicine. According to Ibn Jumayʿ, this continued until a prominent Alexandrian physician, afraid that the art would be lost, beseeched the Christian kings to allow the study of twenty books of medicine. This request was granted and the study of these twenty books continued in Alexandria until ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Azīz, the supervisor of medical instruction, converted to Islam. Ibn Jumayʿ then narrates the history of how ʿUmar became a caliph but medical instruction still stood on 'shaky grounds' until al-Maʾmūn became caliph and spread the Greek medical knowledge and favoured and cultivated physicians. He emphasises that without the caliphs, and in particular al-Ma'mūn, Greek medical knowledge would have been lost forever.[201]

Much like al-Maʾmūn before him, Ibn Jumay seems to highlight that the Byzantines were unworthy of the knowledge of their ancestors and that it was Muslims who cultivated and sustained it. Al-Maʾmūn was born at a time when the translation movement was well under way under the commission of his father and grandfather. Al-Ahbārī relates that although he commissioned translations of scientific manuscripts in his later years, he studied the ancients himself as a young man. By the time he became caliph, 'it is certain that not only he as an individual had internalised values that considered the translation movement good, but also that these values were dominant ones in his Khurāsān capital of Marw where he proclaimed himself as caliph in 196/812'.[202]

One of the greatest translators during the time of al-Maʾmūn was a man by the name of Abū Zayd Ḥunayn al-ʿIbādī, later known in the West as Johannitius. He was born

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[200] Ibn Jumayʿ, *al-Maqālah al-Ṣalāḥīyah fī iḥyāʾ al-Ṣināʿah al-Ṭibbīyah* (*Treatise Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn on the Revival of the Art of Medicine*), trans. by Hartmut Fähndrich (Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag F. Steiner, 1983), p. 25; p. 18.
[201] Ibid., pp. 19-20; p. 25.
[202] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 83.

in 809 in a town near Babylon.[203] His father was a Nestorian druggist and he attended the lectures of ibn-Māsawayh in his youth in the school of Gondēshāpūr. He was appointed as dispenser of drugs at the school because of his knowledge of drugs but soon ibn-Māsawayh became weary of his questions and Ḥunayn left the school.[204] Upon leaving the school, he travelled to the Greek cities of Asia Minor to learn the Greek language and textual criticism prevalent in Alexandria. He then returned to Mesopotamia and studied Arabic grammar. He finally travelled to Baghdad where Jibraʾīl Bukhtīshūʿ introduced Ḥunayn to the wealthy patrons of learning, and eventually he was presented to the caliph al-Maʾmūn. He was then appointed head of the academy and supervisor of translation of Greek and Syriac languages because of his understanding of Greek.[205]

The appointment of Ḥunayn as a supervisor of the translation of Greek manuscripts brought a breakthrough in the technique of translation within the academy and led to a more verbatim translation of texts. The former translators were in the habit of literal translation that led to inaccuracies in meaning due to the absence of exact equivalents of Greek words in Arabic.[206] However, because of Ḥunayn's training in Greek in Asia Minor, he was able to recognise 'the sentence as a unit of meaning and translated ad sensum' and worked with his colleagues to take into account variant meanings of words before translation.[207] Ḥunayn's method of translation led to more linguistically accurate translations of Greek texts and he himself translated the works of Galen and Hippocrates, and assisted with the translation of the *Materia Medica*, among other texts on medicine, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine.[208]

The fervour of the translation movement mostly concluded with the end of al-Maʾmūn's caliphate; however, by that time, the East, and in particular Baghdad, had gained a reputation for knowledge and circulation of Greek knowledge, including

[203] Whipple, *The Role of Nestorians*, p. 25.
[204] Ibid., p. 26.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Goodman, 'The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic', p. 488.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Ibid., p. 499; p. 487.

extensive medical knowledge. By the time of al-Maʾmūn, the translation movement had begun to produce commentaries as well as translations of the ancient Greek texts. This translation movement did not stop at translation; as Abottouy, Renn, and Weineig state in their article, this movement 'decisively contributed to establishing an autonomous scientific culture in the Arab world, which contributed to and developed the Greek tradition'.[209] The translation of Greek ancient knowledge into Arabic later led to the translation of the same Arabic texts into Latin in the West in the twelfth century.

An interest in the translation of Greek and Arabic scientific knowledge mostly began from the late eleventh century onwards. Both Toledo and Palermo played a central part in this movement. Although the majority of manuscripts translated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were in Arabic due to the prolific reputation of Toledo as a scientific center during that period, some Greek manuscripts were also translated into Latin. [210] Translators working on Latin translations of original Greek manucripts during the twelfth century were mostly Sicilian and working in Palermo or Northern Italy. Once such translator was the Sicilian archdeacon Henry Aristippus who translated Aristotle's *Meteora*, Plato's *Phaedo* and *Meno*, and Diogenes Laertius's lives and doctrines of ancient philosophers. Another scholar, Admiral Eugenius of Palermo, is credited with translating the prophecy of the Erythrean Siby from Greek to Latin; however, he also translated Ptolemy's *Optics* from Arabic to Latin. Moreover, the capture of some Byzantine territories by Crusaders in 1203 gave scholars more opportunities to translate from Greek manuscripts rather than their Arabic translations. Scholars took advantage of this new means of accessing Greek manuscripts; William of Moerbeke, who became the

[209] Mohammed Abattouy, Jürgen Renn, and Paul Weinig, 'Transmission as Transformation: The Translation Movements in the Medieval East and West in a Comparative Perspective', *Science in Context*, 14: 1/2 (2001), 1-12 (p. 2).
[210] Maria Mavroudi, 'Translations from Greek into Latin and Arabic during the Middle Ages: Searching for the Classical Tradition', *Speculum*, 90:1 (2015), 28-59 (pp. 52-55); Charles Burnett, 'Translation and Transmission of Greek and Islamic Science to Latin Christendom', in *The Cambridge History of Science*, 7 vols, ed. by David C. Lindberg and Michael H. Shank (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), II, pp. 341-64 (pp. 344-45).

Latin bishop of Corinth, immediately learned Greek and began a series of translation projects which made him famous in Europe.[211]

Despite this opportunity to translate Greek manuscripts, both the translation of Greek and Arabic scientific knowledge in Latin did not begin till the late eleventh century. This movement to translate was prominent in Salerno due to a famous medical school that was established there. In Salerno, the archbishop Alfano translated Nemesius's *On the Nature of Man* and five short essays on medicine, compiled from several Greek and Arabic sources. These essays were later titled *Articella*. Other scholars acquired Arabic manuscripts from their travels and translated them in Salerno, thus adding to the reputation of the medical school established in the city. Constantine the African brought several Arabic medical manuscripts from Tunisia and translated them both in Salerno and later in the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino.[212]

This translation movement gained further momentum from the early twelfth century onwards. According to Burnett, this increased interest in advancing scientific knowledge, in particular mathematics and astronomy, through the translation of scientific manuscripts may be ascribed to Petrus Alfonsi, who brought astronomical tables and other scientific texts to France and England; these texts were then translated by Walcher, Abbot of Great Malvern. Subsequently, a group of scholars including Hermann of Carinthia, Robert of Ketton, Rudolph of Bruges, Raymond of Versailles, and Hugo of Santalla devoted themselves to the translation of Atronomical manuscripts in Arabic as well as writing original works based on those manuscripts. Their colleague Abraham ibn Ezra, a Jewish polymath, also contributed through adapting ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUmar al-Ṣūfī's astronomical tables.[213] By the middle of the twelfth century century, Toledo had become a

[211] Mavroudi, 'Translations from Greek into Latin and Arabic during the Middle Ages', pp. 52-53.
[212] Charles Burnett, 'Translation and Transmission of Greek and Islamic Science to Latin Christendom', p. 342.
[213] Ibid., pp. 342-43.

great center for the translation of manuscripts, combining the 'separate streams of mathematical, medical, and philosophical translations'.[214]

The thirteenth century saw a marked increased in the exchange of intellectual ideas between scholars writing in Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Two powerful secular patrons fuelled the continuing translation movement. The first was the Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen whose centres in Sicily and Southern Italy attracted esteemed scholars such as Michael Scot, Theodore of Antioch, John of Palermo, and Jacob Anatoli and these scholars translated the works of Averroes. The second major patron was Alfonso X, king of Castile and León. Under his patronage several Jewish scholars translated several Arabic works on astronomy, astrology, and magic. Despite the emphasis on translation of Arabic manuscripts in Latin from the twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century, the focus turned back to translation directly from Greek in the later thirteeth century. [215]

Considering the transmission and expansion of the knowledge of the ancient Greeks from the Umayyad to the Abbasid dynasties, and the subsequent translation of Arabic translations into Latin, it is not surprising that the East came to be regarded as the centre of learning and subsequently associated with the dissemination of medical knowledge.

It seems that though the West associated both the East and Muslims with medical knowledge and practice, Muslims themselves were not trusted as physicians in comparison with practitioners of other faiths in the East. This information is not entirely surprising since most of the renowned translators of the Abbasid translation movement and the supervisors of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah were Nestorians and graduates of the school at Gondēshāpūr. Evidence of this distrust can be found in the tale of Asad b. Jānī in the *Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ* or *The Book of Misers* by al-Jāḥiẓ who died in 869 A.D. While narrating the tale of Asad ibn Jānī, *The Book of Misers* provides an anecdote about his reputation as a physician. On one occasion Asad ibn Jānī had very few patients and a man

[214] Ibid., p. 343.
[215] Ibid., pp. 344-45.

questioned his lack of popularity as a physician at a time when there was plague. The man also wondered why people would not consult him as a physician, considering the circumstances of the plague, despite the fact that Asad ibn Jānī was knowledgeable about medicine and had experience to support his knowledge. Asad ibn Jānī replied that one reason for the patients' distrust was that they knew that he was a Muslim and that Muslims had not been regarded as effective practitioners of medicine since before he was born. Another reason for his lack of patients was that he was named Asad, a Muslim name, as opposed to Ṣalībā, Jibrāʾīl, Yuḥannā, or Bīrā and that his surname should have been Abū ʿĪsā, Abū Zakarīyā, or Abū Ibrāhīm; all these names constituted either Christian or Jewish names. Lastly, he suggested that another reason might be his Arab accent when his accent should have been of the town of Gondēshāpūr, therefore betraying him as a graduate of the renowned Nestorian school in that city.[216] Although this anecdote does not prove that all Muslims were distrusted as physicians, it does support that patients in the East at that time considered Jews, Christians, or Nestorians more capable physicians.

Much like Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras* and Josian in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, discussed in the next two chapters, women in the East also practised medicine, though this art was herbal rather than the humoral medicine practised by mostly male physicians of the time. Although there are no extant medieval medical handbooks written by Muslim women, there is evidence to suggest that they not only attended to the medical needs of their families, but also practised medicine professionally; in fact they constituted competition for the male practitioners. Such evidence can be found in the writings of medieval practitioners such as Ṣāʿid ibn al-Ḥasan al-Rāzī, who complains about the popularity of female practitioners:

> بل كيف يكون ذلك عجيبًا وهم يسلمون انفسهم وارواحهم الى العجايز الخرفات فليس من احد يمرض الاواكثر اهل بيته اطباء. اما امراته او والدته او خالته. او بعض اهله او

[216] Abī ʿUthmān ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ*, ed. by Ṭāhā al-Ḥājirī (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Kātib al-Miṣrī, 1948), p. 90; *The Book of Misers*, trans. by Professor R.B. Serjeant (Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1997), pp. 86-87.

جيران، و يقبل من غاليه ما تامر به. ويتناول من شعنا ما صنعته له. و يسمع قولها و يطيع امرها اكثر مما يطيع الطبيب. ويعتقدان تلك المراة مع قلة عقلها! عقل منه واسد رأيا.

> How amazing it is [that patients are cured at all], considering that they hand over their lives to senile old women. For most people, at the onset of illness, use as their physicians either their wives, mothers or aunts, or some other member of their family or one of their neighbours. He [the patient] acquiesces to whatever extravagant measure she might order, consumes whatever she prepares for him, and listens to what she says and obeys her commands more than he obeys the physician. He believes that this woman, despite her lack of intelligence, is more knowledgeable and of sounder opinion than the physician.[217]

He further relates one particular occasion on which a patient suffering from bladder stones consulted him. After an extended period of treatment he still retained his condition. The patient next consulted a healing woman and was shortly cured.[218] This example suggests that healing women provided an alternative to professional medicine.

The discussion of the expansive translation movement in this chapter demonstrates that the various Muslim caliphs, through their commission of the translation of Greek manuscripts, preserved ancient scientific knowledge. Furthermore, various Muslim scholars drew on and expanded that knowledge, and their works gained an illustrious reputation in Western Europe. This translation movement, along with the renown of certain Muslim scholars within the fields of medicine, philosophy, and astronomy, led to the Levant gaining a reputation within the Western imagination as a fostering ground for science and medicine. As will be discussed in the next few chapters, this reputation for knowledge of medicine was reflected in the representation of Saracen women in Middle English romance.

As can be seen from the extensive discussion above, the relationship between the Christians of the West and the Muslims of the East was not as unequivocal as the terms Crusade or Holy War seem to suggest. From the advent of Charlemagne, Muslims and

[217] Ṣāʿid ibn al- Ḥasan al-Ṭabīb, *Kitāb al-Tashwīq al-Ṭibbī*, ed. by Otto Spies (Bonn: Seibstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität, 1968), 27b-28a; *Peter* E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 103.
[218] Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, p. 103.

Christians tried to negotiate their relationship and the common factor in their relationship was contact. From the delegations sent to the early caliphs to the Holy War which took them to the shores of the Levant, Christians have had some form of contact with the Muslims in the Near East. The Crusades in their entirety allowed Western Christians to interact with Muslims on an unprecedented level. The Muslims were no longer elusive figures in pilgrimage tales for the throngs of Christian men who went on Crusade; they were part of their daily lives. Although the Crusading armies and the Muslims were at war, the complex web of loyalties on the Muslim side and the individual ambitions of Crusading leaders on the Christian side led to negotiations and friendships being forged. The peculiar friendships between the nobility on both sides allowed them to ask diplomatic favours of each other and spend enough time with each other to refer to one another as brothers or friends.

As the Crusaders settled in the Levant, they received a glimpse of Muslim culture in the area and with time they adopted Muslim traditions. As the Crusades continued, prisoners of war facilitated the exchange of languages, and perhaps even culture. Prisoners such as Baldwin II even resided in noble Muslim castles, getting an everyday glimpse into the life of Muslim nobility. The Crusades also opened up avenues of trade allowing ordinary Christians, mostly from Italy, to interact with the Muslim merchants. It can safely be assumed that this newfound knowledge of the Levant and Muslim traditions and culture was carried back to the West by returning Crusaders.

Judging from the range of interactions between the Crusaders and Muslims, it seems strange that the Crusading nobility did not come into contact with the Muslims' literary tradition. As discussed earlier, William of Tyre may have consulted Arabic texts while compiling his history of the East. Perhaps other members of the Crusading nobility had contact with other texts. It is also worth considering whether returning Crusaders carried with them knowledge of an oral tradition which influenced Western secular texts.

The possibility of Muslim cultural and literary influence on Middle English romances dealing with Saracens will be discussed in the next few chapters.

Chapter Two: *Sir Ferumbras*, *Firumbras*, and *The Sowdone of Babylone*

Crusading Aims and Representations of Saracens

Moving on from details of interaction in the Crusades, and alliances forged within that period, this chapter will deal with a corpus of romances featuring Saracen women, which were mainly written during the later Crusades. Most of them dating from the fourteenth century, they are broadly speaking adaptations of their earlier Anglo-Norman versions, some of which were translated more than once. Some of these English versions rework their sources while others follow them closely. Although they reflect a different ideology and political climate from those examined in the first chapter, glimpses of the knowledge Crusaders may have gathered through interaction with the Muslims can be observed in the representation of Saracen women in these romances.

Contrary to the complex web of friendships, political alliances, and cultural encounters examined in the first chapter, these romances advocate the dual Crusading aims: to kill the Muslims and reclaim the Holy Land, and later, to convert the infidels to the Christian faith. Evidence of these aims can be found in the chronicles of the early Crusades. Conversion to Christianity was certainly not one of the aims of the Crusades in the early years of the fight against the Muslims. Evidence can repeatedly be found verifying the Crusaders' dedication to the repossession of the Holy Land. Pope Urban II's encouraging words in his speech at Clermont seem at first to suggest conversion:

> Moveant vos et incident animos vestros ad virilitatem gesta prædecessorum vestrorum, probitas et magnitudo Karoli Magni regis, et Ludovici filii ejus aliorumque regum vestrorum, qui regna paganorum destruxerunt et in eis fines sanctæ Ecclesiæ dilataverunt.
>
> Let the deeds of your ancestors move you and incite your minds to manly achievements; the glory and greatness of king Charles the Great, and his son Louis, and of your other kings, who have destroyed kingdoms of the pagans, and have extended in these lands the territory of the holy church.[219]

[219] Roberti Monachi, 'Historia Iherosolimitana', in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades; Historiens Occidentaux*, 16 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1886), III, pp. 717-882 (p. 728);

However, his speech as narrated in the *Historia Ierosolimitana* of Baldric of Bourgueil leaves no doubt as to the task he intends for the Crusaders. He preaches, 'pro vestra Jerusalem decertetis; et Turcos qui in ea sunt, nefandiores quam Jebuseos, impugnetis et expugnetis' (struggle that you may assail and drive out the Turks, more execrable than the Jebusites, who are in this land).[220] A later example from 1096 of the brothers Gaufredus and Guiogo selling a manse to the abbey of St Victor of Marseilles in order that they may go on pilgrimage and 'tum ad extinguendam, Deo protectore, paganorum sceleratam effusamque rabiem, per innumeras chistianorum gentes, quas jam furore barbarico oppressit, captivavit, occisit' (with God's protection, to quench the accursed madness of the pagans, which rushed out at innumerous Christian peoples, oppressing, capturing, and killing them with a barbarous furor) leaves no doubt of the early intent of the Crusaders.[221]

From the mid-twelfth century onwards, however, conversion became a definite goal of the Crusades, and consequently became a popular enough idea to be included in one of the chronicles of the Crusades, Ordericus Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. As Kedar relates, leaders of the French army participating in the Second Crusade declared in October 1147 in Constantinople that their aim was "Visitare sepulcrum Domini cognovimus nos et ipse et nostra criminal, praecepto summi pontificus, paganorum sanguine vel conversion delere" (to visit the Holy Sepulcher and, by the command of the supreme Pontiff, wipe out our sins with the blood or conversion of the pagans).[222] Although some chronicles of the Crusades mention the forcible conversion of Muslim warriors, conversion in the Middle English romances seems reserved for the main Saracen

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Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 3.

[220] Baldric of Bourgueil, 'Historia Jerosolimitana', in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades; Historiens Occidentaux*, 16 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1886), IV, pp. 1-89 (p. 15); Peters, *The First Crusade*, p. 9.

[221] *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille*, ed. by Benjamin Guérard, Collection des Cartulaires de France, 8 vols (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1857), I, p. 167; Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Towards the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 59.

[222] Odo de Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientum*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Gingerick Berry (New York: W.W. Norton, 1948), pp. 70-71; Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, p. 66.

characters, that is the Sultan and his daughter, or any Saracen giants that are mentioned in the narrative. Although Saracen armies are mentioned in the romances, none of the common members of the armies mentioned are offered conversion; the Saracen warriors within the army are usually treated as an entity and are collectively forgotten after their defeat at the hands of Christian knights. Judging by the characters who are offered conversion as a means of survival it becomes clear that they are chosen on account of their value as allies to support the Christian cause against the Saracens.

The Muslims in the Middle English romances were not occasional friends, handy when the need arose; instead, they were transformed into one-dimensional figures of the enemy or the Saracen. However, not all Muslims were illustrated through this superficial characterisation: Saracen women played a very different role. Saracen women in these romances embody what Geraldine Heng describes as the 'enamored Muslim princess' topos, which, barring a few exceptions, follows the same pattern: the beautiful Saracen princess falls in love with a valiant Christian knight and betrays her father and kin by helping the knight deceive or defeat her father's army.[223] Furthermore, for the sake of their Christian 'lemmans', they convert to Christianity at some point in the romance.

It almost seems natural for these romances, mostly centred on issues of Muslim and Christian conflict, to incorporate these 'fantasized' women to propagate their agendas.[224] However, surprisingly, the first extant account of the 'enamored Muslim princess' in a Western text can be traced to a chronicle of the First Crusade, namely Ordericus Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* or *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*. According to Vitalis, around 1100, the Danishmend emir captures the famous duke Mark Bohemond, Richard of the Principality, and several other men of rank and imprisons them in chains in his dungeon for a long period. In recounting the escape of Bohemond and his knights, Vitalis introduces the character of the Emir's daughter Melaz. Melaz, who had heard of the knight's great feats, loved them passionately, and after

[223] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 186.
[224] Ibid.

bribing the guards she would visit them in the dungeon. There she learned about the Christian faith from the knights, often sighing at their words. The knights' kindness was touched her greatly, more than her parent's love and she provides them with food and clothing. After two years, a battle breaks out between Daliman and his brother Qilij ʾArslān and Melaz asks the Christian knights to take part in the battle to witness first-hand the chivalric legacy of the Franks. Finally, after the battle is won, Melaz, on account of her knowledge of the tower, helps Bohemond and his companions take control of the tower and eventually defeat her father and escape captivity. In true enamoured Muslim fashion, Melaz converts to Christianity at the end of the episode.[225]

As Forester notes with regard to this episode that 'No one can for a moment attach the character of authenticity to the details of his [Ordericus Vitalis's] narrative'.[226] He further reminds readers of his edition that Vitalis included various fictional traditions as well as factual history in his text. In doing so, Vitalis has provided modern readers with a flavour of the romance genre of the Middle Ages.[227] Even though the episode is fictional it shows how deeply embedded this idea of the converted Saracen was in the literature concerning the Crusades. This episode also sets the precedent for the later romances; although the Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances chose to portray the Saracen princess as white rather than dark, the role of the princess seems heavily influenced by Melaz in many respects. Although a great deal of research has been conducted on the figure of Saracen women in Anglo-Norman romances and Middle English romances, this chapter looks at these women who play such a pivotal role in these romances from a different perspective. By looking at these women from a different point of view from that of current scholarship, it can be argued that these women were more than just orientalised

[225] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1975), V, pp. 335-379.
[226] Ordericus Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, trans. by Thomas Forester, 4 vols (London: H.G. Bohn, 1853-56), III, p. 310.
[227] Ibid.

helpers. They possessed identities and agencies of their own, very much connected to the culture into which they were so strategically placed by romance writers.

Jacqueline de Weever, in her study of Saracen women, *Sheba's Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic*, focuses, as the title of her book suggests, on the whitening and Christianising of Saracen women in French epics. In her first chapter 'On Whitening', she suggests that whitening of Saracen princesses minimizes their betrayal of their fathers and acts as an 'erasure of Saracen identity'.[228] Heng, also dealing briefly with the representation of Saracen women in medieval romance, also writes that the whitening of Saracen women in romance is a narrative device aimed at 'reducing the other to the same, the foreign to the familiar, by reproducing the other as really, flatteringly, oneself in another guise'.[229] Saracen women in Middle English romances are indeed whitened; but far from resulting in an 'erasure of identity', this paling of skin acts as a precursor to conversion. Despite their foreign appearances, Saracen women retain certain quintessential markers of their culture, as well as their names after baptism. It is in the context of this representation that Crusading ideology coupled with information gleaned from cultural interaction comes into play.

The Three Redactions of *Fierabras*

This chapter will discuss three different Middle English versions of the story of Sir Ferumbras, translated and reworked from the French *Fierabras*: Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 33, *Sir Ferumbras*; Fillingham MS *Firumbras*; and Princeton University Library, MS Garett 140, *The Sowdone of Babylone*.

Sir Ferumbras dates from the late fourteenth century and is the earliest of these texts. It also has a peculiar change in metre in the text; from l. 3410 the text changes from rhyming couplets with internal rhyme to six-line, tail-rhyme stanzas. Marianne Ailes in her discussion of this manuscript categorises the first portion as Ash I and the second

[228] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, p. 5.
[229] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 187.

portion as Ash II. She also discusses some possible reasons for this change by the author. As the author changes from an easier rhyme to a relatively more difficult one, the author could not have made this decision due to difficulties in maintaining the earlier rhyme scheme. This change could therefore possibly indicate 'a change of author, a change of source, or a deliberate break on the part of the author, either because there is a break in his source or for some other literary reason'.[230] Ash I seems to have no particular relationship with any individual manuscript of the Vulagte but is related to the P(A) French anonymous prose, P(B) Jean Bagnyon Prose, British Library Additional 3028 Egerton MS, and the Provençal B.N. f.fr. 123043; additionally, it most likely shares a common source with Jean Bagnyon Prose.[231] Ash II seems be further from the Vulgate than Ash I but has links to the same manuscripts as Ash I, which eliminates any argument for a change in source as a reason for the difference in rhyme scheme.[232]

In addition to the change in rhyme scheme, Ashmole MS 33 also has some folios missing from the beginning and the end of the text. Therefore, as Hardman comments, there is no evidence of the manner in which the Middle English poet would have accommodated the association with cult of the Passion relics at St Denis evident in the beginning and closing passages of *Fierabras*.[233] Even though this statement is true, the beginning and the ending of the romance, however, can to a great extent be determined by the fact that the text has strong links to the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras*. It seems likely that the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* followed the events laid out in the source text in the missing folios as well. Herrtage also uses an edition of *Fierabras*, published in the Series "Les Anciens Poêtes de

[230] Marianne J. Ailes, 'A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts of the Fierabras Legend' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Reading, 1989), p. 353.
[231] Ibid., p. 397.
[232] Ibid., p. 420.
[233] Phillipa Hardman, 'Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 33: Thoughts on Reading a Work in Progress', in *Middle English Texts in Transition: A Festschrift dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on his 70th Birthday*, ed. by Simon Horobin and Linne Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2014), pp. 88-103 (p. 99).

la France," from the French National Library, MS 180 to fill gaps in the story, left by missing folios.[234]

Much like the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, there is a gap at the beginning of the Fillingham *Firumbras*. As O'Sullivan writes, the story begins 'in medias res' from the point at which the French knights, with the help of Floripas, seize the tower and are afterwards besieged by the Saracen king Laban.[235] O'Sullivan ascribes this gap to 'technical injury — to the loss of a number of signatures at the beginning of the MS.'[236] Furthermore, in relation to the order of events and proper names in the romance, the Fillingham *Firumbras* also has clear connections to the edition of *Fierabras* by Krœber and Servois in 1860.[237] Although no exact date is identified for the composition of the Fillingham *Firumbras*, O'Sullivan suggests the 'terminus ad quem' of the manuscript is the second half of the fifteenth century. The Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* and the Fillingham *Firumbras* are very similar to each other in content, despite the compressed nature of the latter romance.

The third text discussed in this chapter is (MS Garett 140) *The Sowdone of Babylone*. As the *Sowdone* draws on Chaucer's works in three places in the text, this version of the romance can be dated post-Chaucer. The manuscript itself is dated c. 1450.[238]The *Sowdone* varies greatly from both the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* and the Fillingham *Firumbras*, most obviously in its longer introduction. This longer introduction led the American scholar N.M. Smyser to suggest that the *Sowdone* and British Library Egerton are derived from the same source. It is clearly evident that the *Sowdone* and Egerton are closely related with both narratives following a more abbreviated pattern than the Vulgate.[239] Despite being closely related, they are not translations of each other. This is

[234] *Sir Ferumbras*, ed. by Herrtage, p. 1.
[235] *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland*, ed. by Mary Isabelle O'Sullivan, E.E.T.S o.s. 198 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1879), p. xxiii.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Ibid., p. xxii.
[238] Ailes, 'A Comparative Study of the Medieval French and Middle English Verse Texts', p. 120.
[239] Ibid., pp. 270-71.

specifically evident as the *Sowdone* sometimes agrees with Hanover Staatsbibliothek IV 578 *Destruction de Rome* and the Vulgate, whereas Egerton does not agree with either of them.[240]

Although all three romances stem from the same *Fierabras* tradition, they offer different representations of Floripas's Saracen identity and skills, along with certain aspects of her Christianised persona, by exploring varied, sometimes subtly distinct, approaches to her character. These differences are particularly pronounced between the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras* and the *Sowdone*, where the former places greater emphasis on developing Floripas's character.

Fierabras, the source text of these romances, glorifies the deeds of French knights and these three Middle English romances, in adapting the French text, form part of a group of English Charlemagne romances, dealing with the conquests of Charlemagne and his twelve peers in Spain. However, the subject of the romance raises the question of why an English poet would choose to translate a poem that celebrates French victories over the Saracens. Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman tackle this issue in their chapter 'How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?' by comparing the intent of the French poet of the *Otinel* with that of the English poet of *Otuel*. According to Ailes and Hardman, the prologue to the French *Otinel*

> ends with the promise of a hitherto untold adventure of Charlemagne, 'whom God loved so much that he did miracles for him in his lifetime', while the English poem promises 'batailles […] bitwene/ Cristine men and sarazins kene.[241]

They further explain that the texts seem to emphasise the aggressive nature of the Sultan towards the Christians; this devious character of the Sultan transforms Charlemagne into the saviour of Christendom, not just France.[242] Robert Warm unostentatiously explains the use of French heroes in English romances as 'Christian heroes who happen to be French,

[240] Ibid., p. 275.
[241] Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman, 'How English are the English Charlemagne Romances', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 43-56 (p. 44).
[242] Ibid.

rather than French heroes who happen to be Christian'.[243] It is this emphasis on religion in these three romances, essentially in almost all Middle English romances featuring Saracens, which ties them to the Crusading ideology of their French sources.

Even though these English Charlemagne romances, and in particular the three romances discussed in this chapter, deal with the conquest of Saracens in Spain by Charlemagne and his twelve peers, they also quite explicitly discuss the Crusading issues and aims of the Christians in the Levant. Apart from the emphasis on either converting the Saracens or slaying them in the process, *Sir Ferumbras*, in particular, introduces the figure of the iconic Muslim leader of the later Crusades, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. With a few exceptions, most Middle English romances dealing with Saracens usually invent fictional identities for Saracen kings or leaders; therefore the inclusion of a non-fictional, influential Muslim leader is highly significant, especially in a Charlemagne romance. Towards the middle of *Sir Ferumbras*, when king Balan is about to hang Sir Guy, the Christian knights emerge from the tower and attempt to save him. In one of the scuffles between the Saracens and Christians described, the poet narrates Roland's brief encounter with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn:

> Ro[land] hente kyng Saladyn; & duden a dede bolde,
> for his armure was riche & fyn; on is lift arm he him gan volde,
> & plyȝte him of is sadel with mayn; & let go way þat hors:
> & wiþ is riȝt hond a-brak is necke a-twayn; & to Gy tok he þat cors
> (SF, ll. 3027-30)

The introduction of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in the romance, even for the short space of four lines, sets *Sir Ferumbras* within the context of Crusading discourse.[244] It is interesting that Crusading chronicles often represent Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as a honourable adversary; however, here Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is presented as just another Saracen within the army, indistinguishable from the other heathen Saracens. This representation is indicative of the one-dimensial portrayal of Muslims in medieval romance, as opposed to Crusading chronicles and narratives that at

[243] Robert Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation: Defining a Context for the Middle English Charlemagne Romances', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 87-100 (p. 87).
[244] As *Sir Ferumbras*, *Firumbras* and *The Sowdone of Babylone* are all redactions of the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras*, the same can be suggested of the latter two romances.

times acknowledge some redeeming qualities of the enemy. In light of Roland's reputation as a renowned Christian hero, his effortless defeat of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn can certainly symbolise Christian victory over the Muslims.

Polarised Representations of Saracens in the Three Romances

Much like Jacqueline de Weever's discussion of Saracen women in Old French epics, Floripas, in all three versions of the romance, is represented as fair or bright, both words suggestive of a white complexion. On several occasions in *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas is described as '[…] a mayde fair and swet' (SF, l. 1201), '[…] þat maide fair & gent' (SF, l. 1204), '"Comly mayde of kynges kende"' (SF, l. 1298), 'þat faire flour' (SF, l. 1302), '[…] þat burde briȝt' (SF, l. 1384) on several occasions, and finally, she is referred to as '[…] þat maide briȝt & schene (SF, l. 2967). Although the words 'fair' and 'briȝt' only allusively suggest Floripas's white complexion through most of the romance, these two adjectives, coupled with the word 'schene', meaning shining, illuminate the writer's intention in describing Floripas with the phrases listed above. Moreover, in one instance, in line 5075, the scribe has crossed out the word 'briȝt' and replaced it with 'schene', demonstrating the two adjectives' interchangeability within the romance. If there is still any doubt left within the reader's or listener's imagination regarding Floripas's complexion, it is alleviated when she is seductively described as lying on her bed '[…] as whit as wales bon' (SF, l. 2429), right before she is about to be raped by the thief Maubyn of Egremolee. While Floripas is constantly addressed as fair or bright throughout the romance, it is significant that she is only described as having a range of typically western, physical characteristics at the exact moment of baptism, as if she draws her beauty from the purity of that act. At the end of the romance when Floripas is about to be baptised,

> þe Damesele dispoilled hure þanne anon, Hyr skyn was as whyt so
> þe melkis fom, fairer was non on molde:
> Wyþ eȝene graye, and browes bent, And ȝealwe traces, & fayre y-trent,
> Ech her semede of gold.
> Hure vysage was fair & tretys, Hure body iantil and pure fetys,
> & semblych of stature.
> In al þe werld ne miȝt be non fayrer wymman of flesch & bon,

þan was þat creature.
Wan þys lordes had seyȝen hur naked, In alle manere wyse weel
y-maked, On hure þay toke lekynge,
Was non of hem þat ys flechs ne-raas, Noþer kyng, ne baroun, ne non
þat was, Sche was so fair a þynge.

(SF, ll. 5879-90)

While there is a seemingly sexual element to this scene, the purity of the act of baptism neutralizes this quality. As Calkin explains in relation to *The King of Tars*, the stripping of clothes and baptism of the entire body symbolises the creation of a new body.[245] This symbolism is visually represented in *The King of Tars* through the transformation of the Sultan's body from black to white. As Floripas already possesses a fair complexion, no visual transformation takes place during her baptism; however, as this is the final stage of her conversion before she can marry Guy, it is very much a symbolic transformation. Calkin also suggests that another possible reason for Floripas's nude baptism may be to imply bodily vulnerability.[246] However, Calkin's assertion that 'Christian prowess and the physical vulnerability it awakens in her' leads to her conversion does not take into account that her initial offer to convert is superficial; it not until the knights destroy her idols in front of her that she truly accepts the Christian faith. Therefore, it is the physical futility of her gods rather than 'romantic' vulnerability that leads to her conversion.[247] Although she is described with typically western features such as fair skin, grey eyes, and blonde hair, it can be assumed that she retains her Saracen name, and therefore a part of her identity. The section following the description of Floripas's baptism is missing in the Ashmole manuscript but, as mentioned earlier, *Sir Ferumbras* follows the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras* quite closely in terms of events. *Fierabras* in French National Library, MS 180 notes immediately after Floripas's baptism that she chooses not to change her name: 'Ne li ont pas son nom cangié ne remué' (SF, l. 5900). As none of the Saracen women in the romances discussed in this thesis change their name after baptism, it can be

[245] Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Romance Baptisms and Theological Contexts in *The King of Tars* and *Sir Ferumbras*', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 105-20 (p. 111).
[246] Ibid., p. 112.
[247] Ibid., p. 117.

assumed that Floripas does not change or alter her name in the missing section of *Sir Ferumbras*. Although *Fierabras* points out Floripas's decision to retain her name, *The Sowdone of Babylone*, *Firumbras*, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, and *Octavian* do not even mention the tradition of changing the individual's name after the Saracens princesses' baptism in each indivual romance. This is in contrast to the baptism of giants and Saracen men in Middle English romance. As will be discussed later, the giant children are christened Roland and Oliver; even in the *King of Tars*, the Soudan is christened with a new name after baptism: 'Þe Cristen prest hiȝt Cleophas;| He cleped þe soudan of Damas| After his owhen name:' (ll. 925-27).[248]

The description of Floripas's baptism also closely follows Floripas's description in the Anglo-Norman *Fierabras:*

> Atant es vos Floripes, la fille a l'amiré,
> La plus gente paienne dont fust omques parlé.
> De la soee faiturre vos dirai verité:
> Mout par out gent le cors, eschevi et mollé,
> La car out tender et blanche conme flor enn esté,
> La fache vermeillette conme flor de pré,
> La bouche petite[te] et li dens sont seré,
> Et estoient plus blanches d'yvoire reparré;
> Les levres out greilletes, de roge i out plenté,
> Le nez out bien sëant, le front droit et plané,
> Les eulz vers en la teste plus d'um faucon mué;
> Basse avoit la hancheitte et deugié le costé.
> Vestue fu d'um paille gallicïen safré;
> La fee qui lle fist l'out menu estellé
> D'estoilles de fin or qui getent grant clarté.
>
> (ll. 2105-19)

> At this point, here comes Floripas, the daughter of the emir,
> The fairest Saracen thereupon to ever speak.
> Of her appearance, I will tell the truth:
> Greatly by reason of her beautiful body, slim and well-proportioned,
> Her flesh is tender and white in the manner of a flower in summer,
> Her cheeks pale red in the manner of a rose in the meadow,
> She had a small mouth and perfect teeth,
> And they were whiter than carved ivory;
> The delicate lips, they were exceptionally red,
> Her nose was comely, straight and smooth,
> The eyes in her head were greener than a moulted falcon's;

[248] *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. by David Burnley and Alison Wiggins (15 March 2004) <https://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/floris.html>

She had low and slender sides.
She was dressed in Galicien silks, embroidered with gold;
The fairy that made her dress,
Put stars on it spun of gold that shimmered.[249]

Although *Sir Ferumbras* follows *Fierabras's* description of Floripas, *Fierabras* embellishes the description of Floripas with even finer physical qualities, as well as using a flamboyant tone.

Floripas is not the only Saracen woman described as fair of complexion in this romance. Female members of Floripas's household and her attendants, who play a similar yet smaller role in *Sir Ferumbras*, are also described as bright of complexion. Towards the middle of the romance, Balan besieges the Christian knights and Saracen women in the tower for three days. During this time, Sir Guy, in pointing out the wearied condition of the women, due to lack of food, refers to them as '"[…] þys burdes briȝt"' (SF, l. 2510). Further on in the romance, when the Christian knights have stolen food from the enemy camp and thrown gold onto the besieging army to injure them, the romance once again describes the Saracen women as '[…] burdes briȝte & bolde' (SF, l. 3355) for suggesting the retaliatory idea.

The word 'briȝt' seems to have great significance in *Sir Ferumbras*, as not only are the Saracen women associated with the term, but Mary also is interlinked with the portrait of ennobled 'briȝt' women in this romance. Floripas, having been given the noble rank herself, invokes Mary with the words '"Ac y by-seche þat god of miȝt; þat diede on þe rode,| Hwich of marie þat mayde briȝt"' (SF, ll. 2579-80), identifying the association with the highest order. Floripas's declaration not only elevates herself and the other Saracen women to positions of utmost distinction in character but also presents them in terms of Christian aspects of nobility.

In addition to its Christian associations, the use of the word 'briȝt' also creates parallels between both the Christian knights' and Saracen army's weapons and Saracen

[249] *Fierabras: Chanson de Geste du XIIe siècle*, ed. by Marc le Person (Paris: H. Champion, 2003); The English translation is my own based on Marc le Person's edition of *Fierabras*.

women. Swords are repeatedly referred to as bright in the romance, subtly alluding to their strength, as well as their magnificence. After the Christian knights drive King Balan from his own castle, Balan's army assembles to lay siege to the castle. The romance describes the gathering army with a flourish, emphasising their bright shields and swords: 'Amorwe be non þyder wern y-come; so many Sarsyn3 w3te,| þat þe feldes wer keuerid alle & some; with scheldes & helmes bri3te' (SF, ll. 2369-70). Later on in the romance, the same word is applied to the Christian knights' weapons. After the Christian knights ride out of the castle to steal provisions from the enemy, just a few lines after Floripas herself is described as one of the 'burdes bri3t', the knights' swords are referred to as bright twice within the space of thirty-two lines, first as they carry 'swerdis bri3t' (SF, l. 3097) and later when they fight the Saracens '[…2] with swerdes igronde bri3t' (SF, l. 3129). Finally, whilst fighting the Saracens outside the castle again, the Christian knights' swords are described as 'y-bornsched bri3te' (SF, ll. 3587-88). As both the women and weapons are repeatedly coupled with the word 'bri3t', it is difficult not to consider this repetition as intentional. In the context of the Saracen women's, and in particular Floripas's, explicit roles as the Christian knights' helpers, without whose assistance the knights would have undoubtedly failed, the relation between the women and the weapons becomes more comprehensible. It would seem that the 'bri3t' women and the 'bri3t' swords act in the same way to assist Christendom's victory against the heathen Saracens.

In the *Sowdone of Babylone*, Floripas is also considered fair; however, her beauty and whiteness are not consistently referred to in this version of the romance. The reader must wait until the middle of the romance for any aesthetic reference to her features: she is eventually described as '[…] þat maide fair Dame Floripas' (SoB, l. 1807).[250] A little later in the romance, when Roland saves Sir Guy from being hanged by Laban, Floripas rewards him by offering him a choice to take one of her own maidens as a lover, instructing him

[250] *The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone and of Ferumbras His Sone who Conquerede Rome*, ed. by Emil Hausknecht, E.E.T.S. e.s. 38: English Charlemagne Romances, Part V (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1881). This edition will be used for all subsequent quotations from *The Sowdone of Babylone*, abbreviated as SoB.

that '"Ye moste chese you a love,| Of alle my maydyns, white as swan"' (SoB, ll. 2748-49). Although Floripas refers to her Saracen maidens as white as swans, it can be concluded that Floripas, the Saracen princess, already described as 'fair', is also white of complexion.

Like the other two versions of the romance, *Firumbras* also portrays Floripas and her maidens as white. As Floripas lies asleep in her bed, Manby, a nigromancer in this version, '[...] turned ful sone to that mayde bryȝt' (F, l. 136).[251] Although this seems to be the first instance in which Floripas is described as either white or bright, it is prudent to remember that a large portion of the beginning of the romance is lost; considering that *Firumbras* follows *Sir Ferumbras* rather closely, it is plausible that she is described as such much earlier in the romance. Further on in the narrative, as Floripas anxiously watches the other peers try to rescue Sir Guy from being hanged by her father, the reader is told, 'So red as any rose was here colour' (F, l. 692). Even though there is no direct reference to her white skin, her whiteness can be inferred as it was commonplace for romance heroines to be described in terms of a balance of red and white, as will be seen in the discussion of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* in the next chapter.

Following the connection between Floripas and weapons so repeatedly emphasised within *Sir Ferumbras*, *Firumbras* also depicts the Christian knights' swords as 'Swerdys cler' (F, l. 228); however, this is the only instance in which this parallel is drawn. Another unique analogy, however, is drawn between the 'bryȝt' gold, which is thrown to distract Saracen soldiers, and Floripas. The gold, originally belonging to Balan, has been greatly valued by him, just like his daughter before her betrayal, as Floripas explains that as soon as her father sees his gold distributed that way, he will abandon all efforts against the knights and try to collect his gold. As the narrative is played out, it would seem that both Floripas and the gold are used against him. There is a possibility that the word 'bryȝt' is simply used to fulfill the rhyme with the word 'fyȝt' in the next sentence, as it is used in

[251] *Firumbras*, ed. by O'Sullivan. This edition will be used for all subsequent quotations from *Firumbras*, abbreviated as F.

conjunction with 'bryȝt' twice. However, the fact that the word 'bryȝt' is used three times within the range of thirteen lines in relation to Balan's gold provides suggests its signifcance.

It seems that whiteness or brightness, representative of beauty, is a necessary quality for certain Saracens to help the Christian knights and eventually convert to Christianity. This quality seems to be emblematic of an inner virtue which separates them from the rest of their kin. In Western medieval literary tradition the brightness of the subject seems to be a clear determiner of beauty: such a convention also exists in writings of clerics such as St Bernard of Clairvaux. When detailing the worldly things monks most virtuously renounce, he describes the allure of beautiful things in terms of their 'pulchra lucentia' (wondrous light and colour).[252] He makes a similar reference to 'beauty and brightness' in *On the Song of Songs*.[253] Even when Saracens are not described as either fair of complexion or bright, they are portrayed as beautiful or courageous. Although there was a reluctance to associate beauty with any specific concept in the Middle Ages, Grosseteste, writing in about 1242, associates beauty with virtue. He writes that humans in the image of God are both good and beautiful:

> Bonum enim dicitur Deus secundum quod omnia adducit in esse et bene esse et promovet et consummat et conservat. Pulchrum autem dicitur in quantum omnia sibi ipsis et ad invicem in sui identitate facit concordia.
>
> God is called good because He confers being on everything, and being is good, and He increases and perfects and preserves. But He is called beautiful, in that all things, both in themselves and together, produce a concordance in their identity with Him.[254]

[252] Bernard of Clairvaux, 'Apologia ad Guillelmum*'*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Serie Latina*, 182 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1854-1862), cols. 914-16 (col. 914); Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 7. Although 'pulchra lucentia' is literally translated as 'wondrous light', which could be associated with a heavenly body, Umberto Eco, as well as other scholars, interpret it more widely as 'wondrous light and colour'.

[253] Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. by Irene Edmonds, 4 vols (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1980), IV, p. 207.

[254] Henri Pouillon, 'La Beauté, Propriété Transcendentale. Chez les Scholastiques (1220-1270)', *Archives D'histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, 15 (1946), 263-329 (p. 321); Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, p. 23.

Furthermore, St Bernard of Clairvaux attests to a correlation between outer appearance and inner constitution. He writes:

> Cum autem decoris huius claritas abundantius intima cordis repleverit, prodeat foras necesse est, tamquam *lucerna latens sub modio*, immo *lux in tenebris lucens*, latere nescia. Porro effulgentem et veluti quibusdam suis radiis erumpentem mentis simulacrum corpus excipit, et diffundit per membra et sensus, quatenus omnis inde reluceat actio, sermo, aspectus, incessus, risus, si tamen risus, mixtus gravitate et plenus honesti.
>
> But when this beauty and brightness has filled the inmost part of the heart, it must become outwardly visible, and not be like a lamp hidden under a bushel, but be a light shining in darkness, which cannot be hidden. It shines out, and by the brightness of its rays it makes the body a mirror of the mind, spreading through the limbs and senses so that every action, every word, look, movement and even laugh radiates gravity and honor.[255]

Beyond fairness and brightness, a character's general beauty seems to be suggestive. As Alice M. Colby writes regarding polarity in appearance within twelfth-century French literature: on hearing the description of a handsome person, a twelfth century audience would immediately assume that the character was young, of noble heritage, and would play the part of the protoganist, and therefore deserved the audience's favour. However, if a character was portrayed as ugly or monstrous, the audience would assume that he had a wicked character, undeserving of sympathy.[256] Athough Colby discusses male protagonists and antagonists in twelfth-century French literature, the same analysis can be applied to the characters in these three romances. Evidence of this treatment can be found in the portrayals of other Saracen characters by contrast of the descriptions of beautiful Saracen women.

Although Ferumbras, in *Sir Ferumbras,* is not exactly described as handsome, he is described in a positive manner with the narrator emphasising that his only failing is that that he is a heathen. His first introduction in the romance is striking:

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[255] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons sur les Cantique*, ed. by Paul Verdeyen and Raffaele Fassetta, 14 vols (Paris: Éditiones du Cerf, 1996-2007), V, pp. 392-94; Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, IV, p. 207.

[256] Alice M. Colby, *The Portrait in Twelfth-Century French Literature: An Example of Stylistic Originality of Chrétien de Troyes* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1965), p. 99.

[…] huge was he of lengþe,
Fifteuene fet hol & sound; & wonderliche muche of strengþe.
Had he ben in cryst be-leued; & y-vollid on þe haly fant,
A bettre kny3t þan he was preued; þo was þer non lyuand:
Fyrumbras of Alysaundre; was a man of gret stature,
& ful brod in þe scholdres was; & long man in forchure.
Oppon is armure was he clad; wyþ a cote-armure clene,
Of cloþ of gold it was mad; & enbrouded with perlis schene.
(SF, ll. 546-53)

Like Floripas, Ferumbras is also associated with the word 'schene', which seems to be interchangeable with the word 'bry3t' in this romance. While Floripas's face is considered 'bry3t', only the cloth covering Ferumbras is 'perlis schene'; despite this difference a connection can once again be drawn between Ferumbras and his role in the romance. Greater evidence of Ferumbras's pure inner quality is offered when his appearance is compared to that of Oliver. On discovering the peers imprisoned by her father, Floripas requests Brytamon the gaoler to inform her of the identity of the prisoners. Acquiescing to her request, he tells her the identity of their names, singling out Oliver as '[…] a bacheler fair of sy3te,| In þis werld ne saw ich er; so fair y-schape a kni3te' (SF, ll. 1222-23). As Ferumbras is the only Saracen man who converts to Christianity and helps the Christian knights in this romance, it is fitting that he should be described in fair terms. In contrast, Balan and his army, who do not possess the virtue to convert, are described as 'þe Sarsyn3 blake' (SF, l. 2785). Once again, in *The Sowdone of Babylone*, Ferumbras is depicted in heroic terms, even while fighting the Christians. In the beginning of the romance, 'Ferumbras was of hem ware| And sprange out as a sparkil of glede;| Of Armes bright a sheelde he bare,| A Doughty man he was of dede' (SoB, ll. 204-07). A little later in the initial fight between the Saracens and Christians, 'Sire Ferumbras of Alisaundre oon,| That bolde man was in dede,| Vppon a steede Cassaundre gaye,| He roode in riche Weede' (SoB, ll. 510-13). It would appear that his prowess and generally pleasing appearance, particularly in *Sir Ferumbras*, make him worthy to convert to Christianity. The detailed description with the emphasis on his bright shield and rich clothes highlight his nobility.

However, the other male characters in the romance are not as fortunate. In all three versions of the romance, 'Blake' Balan, or Laban in *Sowdone*, is offered mercy if he consents to convert to Christianity. Being a virtuous and dutiful son, Ferumbras begs Charlemagne to allow his father to convert and then in turn pleads with his father to consent, as he himself converted at the beginning of the romance. In both *Firumbras* and *The Sowdone of Babylone*, Balan is forcefully baptised, with Charlemagne offering himself in the role of 'godfader' (SoB, l. 3156) in the *Sowdone*, but in both instances Balan 'smote' (F, l. 1693) the bishop and refuses to be baptised; in the *Sowdone* he even 'spitted in the water cler' (SoB, l. 3167). This inability to recognise the superiority of Christianity, even after being defeated in battle, resigns him to death at the hands of the Christians.

In contrast to the other two romances, in *Sir Ferumbras*, Charlemagne repeatedly tries to convince Balan to convert; at first he tries to persuade him to convert by assuring Balan that all his possessions will be returned to him and then goes on to relate the articles of the Christian faith. Balan violently dismisses the suggestion and

> […] Contenance made he fers &
> felle, & fram hym tornde away:
> And bytok hym-selue þe deuel of helle, If he wolde euere wyþ
> follo3t melle, Terme of ys lyues day;
> Ne Mahoun wolde he neuere for-sake, For drede of deþ ne for þe
> wrake, to be ded þer for þe ri3te
>
> (SF, ll. 5747-52)

After the first refusal, Ferumbras offers to convince his father; Charlemagne then gives Balan a second chance to forsake his false gods. This time Ferumbras kneels in front of his father and implores him to consent. Although Balan yields to his son's pleas, the moment he is about to be baptised, he strikes the bishop with his fist and confronts him asking whether he should forsake his gods and be submerged in the font; then suddenly '[…] In dispyt of cryst; þan spat| he þer-on, by-fore hure Aldre sy3te' (SF, ll. 5801-02). Despite his arrogant display, Ferumbras tries to give him another chance to consent but Balan resolutely holds onto his heathen faith.

Contrary to his statement that he will not abandon his faith, it is not his devotion to his belief that keeps Balan from converting, since he forsakes his gods several times within the romance. This issue of true faith will be discussed in further detail below. Given that Laban is given three chances to convert to Christianity and yet refuses Charlemagne's generous offer suggests that he is missing a certain quality that would allow him to convert. Calkin argues that the reason for Balan's inability to be baptised and convert to the Christian faith is his flawed understanding of Christianity as dependent on Christ's death '[…] on a croys y-don,| for ys owe mysdede' (SF, ll. 5845-46); she elaborates that unless his understanding of Christianity changes, no amount of reasoning or bribing can convince him to convert.[257] Although there may be some truth to this explanation, it seems that Balan's fate is decided once he is described as black in the romance. Despite his dark colouring, it is significant that Balan, as well as the other Saracen fathers discussed in this thesis, are not portrayed as monstrous or possessing any other features distinguishing them as Saracens; this lack of physical description is surprising since even Ferumbras is singled out as unusually tall.

[257] Calkin, 'Romance Baptisms and Theological Contexts', p. 117.

Fig. 1: *Fierabras*, Egerton 3028, f. 93 [258]

Although this thesis will maninly deal with Middle English romances, Laban posseses another distinguishing physical feature as a Saracen and an opponent of Christinianity in the mid-fourteenth century Egerton 3028 *Fierabras*. As can be seen from the image above (Fig. 1), there is a clear distinction drawn between Laban's nose as to the nose of Roland and Oliver. Laban is repeatedly represented as possessing a hooked nose with a distinctive dent on the bridge of the nose in the Egerton *Fierabras*; since the Saracen guard behind Roland and Oliver posesses a hooked nose, it seems that the hooked nose is a marker for the Saracen other in *Fierabras*. Although Balan and the other Saracen men in the Egerton 3028 *Fierabras* are portrayed with hooked noses in the illumination, they are not represented as black in colour. It is unclear why the illuminator chose to represent the Saracens as white of complexion; however, as can be seen in the image above, the only distinguishing features of the Saracens are their clothing and hooked noses. The choice of a hooked nose as a marker of difference is not suprising, as according to Strickland, 'enlarged or misshapen noses' had a negative implication from antiquity onwards.[259] The *Little Book of Physiognomy*, copies of which date from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, further illuminate that hooked noses were associated with 'drunkedness, voraciousness, arrogance, and wantoness'; all these qualities were assigned to Satan in the period.[260]

In addition, Satan himself was often portrayed with either a snout-like or beak-like nose, as evident in the stained glass panel from Champagne dating from 1170 (Fig. 2). As suggested by Lipton, Satan's 'gross features' are symbolic of his imprudence in tempting

[258] *Fierabras*, Roland and Oliver brought as prisoners before Laban, Egerton 3028, England; 2nd quarter of the fourteenth century, The British Library, London.
[259] Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 77.
[260] Ibid.

Christ.[261] Furthermore, the same 'long or large, downward-curved, snout-like or beak-like noses' were used in the representation of Jews from around the twelfth century onwards as indicative of Jewish blame for the crucifixion of Christ.[262] Much as in the depiction of Jews, the use of a hooked nose in the representation of Saracens in this manuscript emphasises the demonisation of Saracens, although for very different reasons. The inclusion of a Saracen character named Lucifer, who also possesses a particularly grotesque hooked nose in this manuscript (Fig. 3), further highlighs the demonic association of Saracens as well as accentuating the importance of their defeat.

Fig. 2: *Temptation in the Wilderness* [263]

[261] Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), p. 107.
[262] Ibid.
[263] *Temptation in the Wilderness*, ca. 1170-1180, stained glass, Champagne, C.107-1919, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig 3.: *Fierabras*, Egerton 3028, f. 100 [264]

Therefore, it is evident that a clear distinction is drawn between Saracens who convert in this romance, as well as in *Firumbras* and *Sowdone of Babylone*, and those who do not. On the one hand there are characters such as Balan and the giants who are either black or monstrous; on the other hand there is fair Floripas and her brother Ferumbras, whose height makes him giant-like, however, beyond this one characteristic which makes him a formidable opponent, he does not possess any monstrous qualities.

These romance authors' representation of blackness or ugliness as symbolic of an inability to convert can overtly be seen in the extreme descriptions of Saracen giants. These figures form a stark contrast with the beautiful, white figures of Floripas in the three romances. In *Sir Ferumbras*, the giant Aglolafre, who defends the bridge on the road to Balan's castle, is described in explicit detail, the author seemingly revelling at the extent of his hideousness:

> Three fet of brede was þe blad, Of style y-tempred ful wel y-mad,
> þe hylue wyþ yre y-bounde.
> þe Sarsyn was an hudous man, By-twyne ys to browen was a span
> largeliche of brede;
> Ys browes were boþe rowe and grete, & ys nose cammus, ys eȝene

[264] *Fierabras*, Lucifer breaking the door of the castle, Egerton 3028, England; 2nd quarter of the fourteenth century, The British Library, London.

depe, & glystryd as þe glede.
Suþþe þe werlde furst by-gan, Nas neuer ȝut so lodly man,
y-mad of flehs & felle.
Was he noȝt a godes helf þe deuel he semede al hym-self,
y come þo riȝt of helle.

(SF, ll. 4433-42)

In light of this the monstrous description, it is no surprise that Aglolafre is killed by Charlemagne's army, without being given the opportunity to convert. The same fate befalls the giant Enfachoun whose '[…] heued þer-offen was wonder gret, & þe hilues lengþe was viij fet| of þat sturne staue' (SF, ll. 4655-56). Enfachoun's wife is also killed, but their children are baptised under the names of Roland and Oliver.

Firumbras follows *Sir Ferumbras* in the description and slaughter of giants but unlike *Sir Ferumbras*, the giants's children are not baptised. The *Sowdone*, however, makes a bolder statement about the nature of the Saracen giants and their children, who are described as 'vij. monþes oolde' (SoB, l. 3020) but yet 'xiiij fote longe' (SoB, l. 3021). In contrast to *Sir Ferumbras* in which the giant children are baptised and then subsequently forgotten, the children die after their baptism in the *Sowdone*. Although the romance explains the cause of their deaths due to the loss of their mother's milk, the modern reader cannot help but wonder whether they could not survive as Christians because of their monstrous lineage. Despite this, the romance explains Charlemagne's decision to baptise the children positively as they would eventually grow strong and help the Christian cause.

As these examples demonstrate, these romances, though perhaps not always consistently, place a distinct emphasis on the relationship between outward beauty and inner virtue. Cassidy-Welch and Lester suggest that there is some benefit to be gained from exploring how memory is connected to past conflicts. It is worth investigating how people shared war experiences, whether through 'text, ritual, object'. They further suggest that it would be useful to discern how 'remembrance was used to motivate, include and exclude, establish identity and envisage the future' in relation to the Crusades.[265] The first chapter

[265] Megan Cassidy-Welch and Anne E. Lester, 'Memory and Interpretation: New Approaches to the Study of the Crusades', *Journal of Medieval History*, 40:3 (2014), 225-36 (p. 230).

discussed how the Crusaders and Western chroniclers of the Crusades may have chosen to omit memories of friendly interaction with the Muslims in order to maintain their identity as the enemy. Although Cassidy-Welch and Lester discuss the Crusades, their view also holds true of the history of romances featuring Saracens, which were so closely associated with the Crusades themselves. The authors of the romances, through their representation of Saracens, determined how they were seen and remembered by posterity. Those who were willing to convert were remembered in a positive light as beautiful or heroic, and closer to the Western aesthetic ideal, while those who chose not to convert were black and monstrous. While the converted figures conform to Western ideals of beauty, it seems to have been important that they retained markers of East, perhaps to emphasise their conversion. Even though Saracen women conformed to certain ideals of beauty, the extent to which they did so varied within different traditions of romances.

Jacqueline de Weever, in *Sheba's Daughters*, describes the Westernised images of Saracen women in Old French epics. De Weever notes in her examination of whitened Saracen women that 'the representation of Saracen women in the conventional portrait of the French heroine becomes the eraser, rubbing out the difference'.[266] However, Saracen women in De Weever's French epics seem to be closer to the French upper class, female ideal than their counterparts in Middle English romances. De Weever draws attention to the twelfth-century portraits of women in Latin manuals —'blond hair plaited and bound with gold threads and ornaments, sparkling eyes, white skin'— that are mirrored in vernacular portraits of the period and conveniently transferred onto Saracen women in French epics.[267] She provides the example of the description of Enide in Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide* which 'lay[s] out what the portrait of the lady demands of poetic composition', with its emphasis on blond hair, fair face, and shining eyes.[268]

[266] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, p. 3.
[267] Ibid., p. 5.
[268] Ibid., p. 6.

While Saracen women in Middle English romances are described as fair of skin, with the exception of Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras*, none of the Saracen women are described as blond. Even though Floripas is described as fair: 'Wyþ eȝene graye, and browes bent, and ȝealwe traces, & fayre y-trent,| Ech her semede of gold' (SF, ll. 5881-82), in *Sir Ferumbras*, it is imperative to note that she is only described as such towards the final lines of the romance, just before she is baptised. Athough she is consistently referred to as white or bright throughout the romance, it seems that the author made a calculated decision in portraying her in terms of a Western stereotypical, female portrait at the exact instance at which she officially converts to Christianity. De Weever also remarks the clothing that adorns Saracen women in French epics are ornamented or of luxurious quality. She emphasises that while most of the clothing described in French epics is 'haute coutre of the eleventh and twelfth century' France and England, Saracen women's clothing is even more opulent. As de Weever describes, the bodice was a tight tunic incorporating a surcoat; the surcoat was also sometimes trimmed with fur. In addition, a 'jewelled belt' was worn over the bodice, and finally, a mantle of either silk or ciglaton was worn over the entire outfit, giving the impression of extreme wealth.[269]

As with the details of their appearances, this elaborate description of Saracen women's clothes is not included in Middle English romances. De Weever partly discusses the cloth in respect to the 'wealth of the East' aspect suggested within the epics.[270] Although De Weever briefly mentions another element in the epics that associates Saracen women with the East, that is the women's tutelage in Eastern knowledge, she does not further elaborate on this aspect.

The writers of Middle English romances were meticulous in what they decided to retain from the French source and what they decided to exclude, shaping different versions of the original, which were edited with care. This process can be observed in Hardman's

[269] Ibid., p. 31.
[270] Ibid. The cloth mentioned in the epics included Ciglaton, which was considered a specialty of Antioch.

discussion of the author's multiple corrections within MS Ashmole 33, which is the basis of Herrtage's edition of *Sir Ferumbras.*[271] In reference to S.H.A. Shepherd's article on the same manuscript, Hardman notes that there are frequent scribal corrections in some passages, at times dealing with the same line, which help the reader understand the translator's methodology as he composed the English poem from the French *Fierabras*.[272] Hardman notes that 'the manuscript is accompanied by its original parchment wrappers, on which are preserved a draft version of over 400 lines of the text'.[273] As Hardman demonstrates, lines 334-37 in the manuscript have corrections and substitutions in both the draft versions, as well as a version which is crossed out in the lower margin. The three different versions are as follows:

Draft version:

Oliuer torneþ him þanne wiþ an hardi chere
Toward þat heþene manne he rideþ a softe amblere
Til he cam þere {þat he was} him þoȝte ech stap was þre,
At þe laste he fyndeþ Fyrumbras liggyng vnder a tre.

Fair Copy:

Dvc Oliuer him rydeþ out of þat plas . in a softe ambler
& wan he cam [þo] þer F. was, til him he caste his chere
ne made he non oþer pas. til þey ~~come~~ \wern met/ yfere
+/ and wanne he \cam þere/ as he was. þyderward he caste ys~~..ere~~ chere/
& fyndeþ þer Sir Fyrumbras. liggyng on þe erþe þere.

Marginal version:

Duke O. priked into þe feld þer þe Saresyn lay,
Wel y armed wt sper and sheld his harnys was ful gay [274]

As can be seen from this example, the composition of the English romance from the French was not an arbitrary process; the author made several changes, rejecting some

[271] Phillipa Hardman 'Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 33: Thoughts on Reading a Work in Progress', in *Middle English Texts in Transition: Fetschrift dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on his 70th Birthday*, ed. by Simon Horobin and Linne R. Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2014).
[272] Ibid., p. 88.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid., p. 91. The lines that are underlined are crossed out in the manuscript.

entirely, as demonstrated by the starkly different marginal version. The same creative process must have been exercised on the representation of Saracen women, with the author making conscious decisions about physical and characteristic details. Evidence for this practice can be seen in the fact that only one of the three Ferumbras romances discussed portrays Floripas as blonde. Although the example discussed in Hardman's article is taken from the Ashmole *Sir Ferumbras*, it gives an insight into the compositional methodology of medieval romance authors and scribes.

Despite the authors' decision to maintain the representation of Saracen women as fair-skinned, associating them with the Christians, even their fair skin did not dissociate them from images of the East. Lady al-Sayyidah of Yemen was also historically described in terms of the Western combination of red and white, so common in descriptions of both Christian and Saracen women in Middle English romances. Lady al-Sayyidah, later to be Queen al-Sayyidah, was born in 1048 in Ḥarāz, Yemen. She was the daughter of Aḥmad and her mother was al-Radāh.[275] In his history of Yemen, Al-Ḥakamī relates that

> **اما صفتها فكانت بيضاء حمراء مديدة القامة البدن الى السمن اقرب كاملة المحاسن جوهرية الصوت قارية كاتبة تحفظ الاخبار والاشعار والتواريخ**
>
> al-Sayiddah was of fair complexion tinged with red, tall, well proportioned, but inclined to stoutness, perfect in beauty, of a clear sounding voice, well-read and a skilful writer, her memory stored with history, with poetry and with the chronology of past times.[276]

[275] ʿUmārah ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥakamī, *Yaman: Its Early Mediæval History*, trans. by Henry Cassels Kay (London: E. Arnold, 1892), p. 38.

[276] Ibid., p. 28; p. 39. Although Kay translates the phrase 'بيضاء حمراء' as 'fair complexion tinged with red' there is some ambiguity regarding the semantics of that phrase as it could also be translated as fair-skinned with red hair based on the preceding sentence. In the preceding sentence, al-Sayyidah's tutor refers to her as 'حميرا' which Kay translates as 'fair-complexioned'; however, it could either be translated as red-haired or red-cheeked. Morover, there is a Ḥadīth which refers to the Prophet Muḥammad's wife ʿĀʾishah as 'حميرا': 'Learn half your religion from that *humaira*' [Mai Yamani, 'Muslim Women and Human Right in Saudi Arabia: Aspirations of a New Generation', Women *and Islam: Images and Realities*, ed. by Haideh Moghissi (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 405]. Yamani glosses the word '*humaira'* as 'red-headed one' while quoting that Ḥadīth. Despite this ambiguity, there is strong possibility that al-Ḥakamī means red-cheeked, as women were commonly described as having a white and red complexion in poetry.

Not only was she beautiful, with a complexion of red and white, and accomplished, but also she held a position of authority in the court and kingdom. After marriage, her first husband solely gave her charge of the affairs of the kingdom.[277] As will be discussed in detail later, women in early Islamic courts had great influence over their husbands and sons, often influencing political affairs.

"Now fader, as ȝe louyeþ me; doþ ȝe as y telle": Floripas's Agency

Saracen women in these romances are also associated with other more conventional aspects of the East which mark them as quintessentially other. In all three versions of the romance discussed in this chapter, Floripas holds a position of authority within her father's court and later amongst the Christian knights during the siege. Up until the moment Floripas betrays her father, Balan, relies on her advice for political situations, allowing her to manipulate him to the favour of the imprisoned, Christian knights. After the arrival of seven messenger knights in *Sir Ferumbras*, Balan is enraged that they have slaughtered the messengers he sent to Charlemagne and presented him with their heads. He therefore vows: '"And ȝut were þay noȝt apaid þer-by; bote wolde me greue more,| Hure message þay abode dispitously; & schamede me ful sore' (SF, ll. 1984-85). However, when Floripas approaches her father about the situation, he instantly explains the circumstances and asks her, '"Now dure doȝtere, myn Al-one; wat ys þy gode red| Wyþ myn enymys for to done"' (SF, ll. 1986-87). Floripas advises him to bind the messengers, throw them onto the ground, and mutilate them with swords. The king, without consulting any of his advisors, delights in her advice to execute them immediately. Floripas slyly advises him to wait until he eats; meanwhile, she suggests that she handle the prisoners until they can be executed. Floripas ends her advice with a determined command, '"Now fader, as ȝe louyeþ me; doþ ȝe as y telle"' (SF, l. 2003). The king, without suspicion, accedes to Floripas's advice, considering it once again '"god and hende"' (l. 2004). Moreover, Balan trusts his

[277] Ibid., p. 40.

daughter's advice so explicitly that he ignores the Saracen king Sortybran's rather foreboding advice that

> "[…] þy doȝtre wil þe schende.
> By-þenk þe wel of þat brayde; þat touchide duke Myloun;
> How ys doȝtre hym betrayde; þat hyȝte Saramoun,
> Wen sche tok out Godefrayde; þat was in his prysoun.
> Þe Duk þanne þay yuele arayde; to deþe þay duste him doun,
> & she hym wededе after þan; þat was hure fader fo.
> Many ys þe manlich man; þat þorw womman ys by-go."
>
> (SF, ll. 2007-13)

Although Sortybran's words show that women were generally viewed with suspicion, Floripas has enough influence over her father to make him disregard cultural prejudices, in effect gaining unchallenged political power. Despite Floripas's aggressive response to Sortybran's suspicions, Balan disregards his perceptive advice and hands over the prisoners to Floripas's care. Although this unequivocal trust between father and daughter is an essential element of the romance, allowing the plot to move forward, it is significant that is also a recurring element in all the romances discussed, with the exception of *Floris and Blaunchfleur*. The same relationship and authority in court is also an important aspect of some of the texts discussed in the last chapter.

Floripas also has substantial influence over her father in *The Sowdone of Babylone*. Once again the Sultan solicits her advice regarding the fate of the prisoner knights. Although Laban has already decided that he will publicly hang the knights in front of all his men, Floripas convinces her father not to hang the knights. In this version, instead of approving her father's decision, Floripas advises him to spare the prisoners until he can gather his barons to decide the best way to save Ferumbras.[278] Once again, the Sultan accedes to her advice and hands over the prisoners to his daughter without any further consideration. This is not the first time that Floripas exercises influence in her father's court. At the beginning of the romance, Lukafere, king of Baldas, promises Laban that he will capture the king of France and his twelve peers if Laban will give him his daughter's

[278] *The Sowdone of Babylone*, ed. by Hausknecht, p. 53.

hand in marriage. The Sowdone readily agrees until he is abruptly interrupted by Floripas, who sceptically reminds her father that

> "He hath note done as he hath saide.
> I trowe, he speketh these wordes in waste,
> He wole make bute an easy brayed.
> Whan he bryngith home Charles the kinge
> And his xij dosipers alle,
> I graunte to be his derlynge,
> What so evere therof by-falle"
>
> (SoB, ll. 245-51)

Laban immediately agrees to these terms. Not only does Floripas advise her father not to be hasty in his decision, but she also single-handedly manages the terms of her own arranged marriage.

Floripas not only manages to influence her father's decision, but also succeeds in reprimanding Charlemagne's peers and bending their wishes to her will, though perhaps in a more aggressive manner. In *Sir Ferumbras*, after rescuing all the twelve peers, Floripas, on discovering their names, reproaches Richard of Normandy for slaying her uncle. She emphatically declares that may Mahoun '[…] ȝyue þe schame; for þyn oncortesye!| Myn vncle þow slowe a kniȝt of fame; Corsible of Mantrie' (SF, ll. 2058-59). Floripas loses a little of her fiery temperament in *The Sowdone of Babylone* as this accusation does not appear in that version of the romance. As the beginning of *Firumbras* is lost, it is uncertain whether the accusation would have been included in the text; however, in both *Sir Ferumbras* and *The Sowdone of Babylone*, Floripas threatens all the peers with certain death if her wishes are not maintained. She reveals her long-standing love for Guy of Burgundy, Charlemagne's nephew, and expresses a wish to marry him even if it means forsaking her faith and converting to Christianity. In the romances, Guy of Burgundy refuses to marry Floripas or any other woman without the direct consent of Charlemagne. In *Sir Ferumbras*, after hearing his intent, 'For angre sche [Floripas] braid hure wel neȝ wod; & by Ma[houn] swor hur oþ,| þat bote if Gy to wyue hure take; þat sche had loued so longe,| Ecchone þay scholde for is sake; or euene beo an-honge' (SF, ll. 2099-2101). In the

Sowdone, a perhaps less verbally vicious Floripas asserts that '"[…] but he wole graunte me his loue,| Of you askape shalle none here. By him, þat is almyghty aboue,| Ye shalle abye it ellis ful dere"' (SoB, ll. 1899-1902). Roland and Oliver are so affected by this threat that they warn Guy of 'her myschefe' (SoB, l. 1916) and '[…] of the parelles, þat þay in wer' (SoB, l. 1917), imploring him to consent to marry Floripas.

The strong influence of daughters and wives over rulers was fairly common in medieval Muslim courts. The Muslim harem partly facilitated this influence. The harem was not only a residential place for the women of court, it was also a social space were music and performative arts were encouraged. It was in such a space, and at times through the use of such arts, that the women in the harem became favourites and in time influenced rulers, as will seen in the case of the Abbasid queen al-Khayzarān. The women of the harem competed with each other for the ruler's attention and once they attained the status of favourite, they were allowed a certain amount of leniency in action, including influencing political situations. Although there are countless examples of influential Muslim queens both in the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, this thesis has chosen to discuss al-Khayzarān and Zubaydah's relationship with their husbands and sons as both women held renowned positions as both the mother and wife of the infamous Hārūn al-Rashīd. As Hārūn al-Rashīd's reputation led to his eventual inclusion in the *The Thousand and One* Nights, his mother and wife certainly acquired some notoriety.

Al-Khayzarān was certainly one of the Abbasid queens who held an an influential position in her husband's court. As her name implies, she was "slender and graceful as a reed".[279] Once she attained the title of favourite, this attribute was not enough to maintain the favour of al-Mahdī. Al-Mahdī was an admirer and patron of music and al-Khayzarān was faced with competition from many songstresses for al-Mahdī's affection. However, as Abbot notes, 'That al-Khayzarān was able to hold her own and come out of various critical harem situations always the victor, despite the steady competition of the ever present

[279] Nabia Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad: Mother and Wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 22.

songstress and the noble Arab woman, argues for qualities over and above her physical appeal and charm'.[280] Once a favourite, al-Khayzarān was allowed remarkable leniency, as demonstrated by the episode narrated by the historian al-Wāqidī.[281]

Al-Wāqidī narrates that once he visited al-Mahdī and in the middle of his visit, al-Mahdī rose to go to the harem. When he returned, he was full of rage. While in the harem al-Khayzarān had attacked him and torn his clothes, accusing him: '"**ياقشاش، وأى خير رأيت منك؟**"' (O you picker of leftovers! What good have I ever received at your hands?). Enraged, al-Mahdī exclaimed that he bought al-Khayzarān from a slave-trader, gave her great benefit and favour, and bestowed on her sons the status of heirs; therefore, how could she accuse him of being a picker of leftovers. Al-Wāqidī finally calmed him by quoting a hadith encouraging men to accept women with any flaws they may possess.[282] Despite her documented quick temper, al-Khayzarān must have relied on al-Mahdī's leniency towards her before risking her postion in court and confronting him in this manner. Even though it is al-Wāqidī who eventually manages to calm al-Mahdī, it is evident from al-Mahdī's retaliation to al-Khayzarān that the situation would have ended grievously had anyone else accosted al-Mahdī in a similar fashion except for the acknowledged favourite. This example demonstrates the influence of certain women in the harem of rulers. As Hambly comments repeatedly regarding the role of women in Islamic society,

> In reality, well-placed women in traditional Islamic societies always had the opportunity to influence public affairs even if that influence was used inconspicuously. There was always the possibility of a strong female personality determining the actions of a less forceful husband, son, or brother, or of a ruler becoming infatuated with one of the women in his harem.[283]

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[280] Ibid., p. 40.
[281] Abī Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, ed. by Aḥmad ibn al-Siddīq, 14 vols (al-Qāhirah: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādah, 1931), XIV, p. 431; Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 45.
[282] Ibid.; Ibid., pp. 45-46.
[283] Gavin R. G. Hambly, 'Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History', in *Women in Medieval Islamic World*, ed. by Gavin R. G. Hambly (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 3-27 (p. 10).

al-Khayzarān and Hārūn al-Rashīd's wife, Zubaydah, played such a role. Abbott notes that 'the political and domestic roles of al-Khayzarān and Zubaydah reflect and continue the development of woman's position in the early Islamic state'.[284] The evolution of this role will be later discussed in relation to the character and role of Shajar al-Durr during the Seventh Crusade. Another example is offered in the early days of Islam by Khadīja, Prophet Muḥammad's first wife, who fully shared his confidence, while one of his later wives, ʿĀʾishah, went to war against the Caliph ʿAlī, physically riding a camel to the battlefield.[285] Muslims today celebrate both women as important female figures in Islamic history. ʿĀʾishah is also remembered for her contribution to the collection of the Prophet's sayings (Hadith) and for her role as judge in Medina after her husband's death. Furthermore, according to Rahmatallah, ʿIbn Saʿd said of her, "She has knowledge of poetry, literature and medicine"'.[286] In fact, ʿĀʾishah was such an eminent figure that she was proffered as an example of female excellence in *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*: '"So it befits a woman to take example from ʿĀʾishah the Faithful and Fatimah the Radiant, Allāh the Most High bless them both"'.[287] In addition, she also mentioned as a paragon of virtue in countless other Arabic texts.

al-Khayzarān started out as a slave girl. She was eventually noticed by the Caliph al-Manṣūr and paid for by his son and heir al-Mahdī.[288] She remained his concubine for several years before he finally manumitted and married her around 775-76; however, she gained favour with al-Mahdī right from the start, eventually becoming his favourite and

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[284] Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 10.

[285] Ibid. Despite being a celebrated female figure in certain Islamic traditons, ʿĀʾishah is also a controversial figure in the Islamic Shiʾite tradition. As the Shiʾite tradition holds the Caliph ʿAlī in the most honourable position after the Prophet Muḥammad, 'Ā'ishah's opposition to Caliph ʿAlī is a sensitive issue.

[286] Maleeha Rahmatallah, *The Women of Baghdad in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries as Revealed in the History of Baghdad*: As Revealed in the History of Baghdad of al-Hatib, MA Dissertation (Baghdad: Baghdad University, 1963), p. 59.

[287] Mia I. Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-Telling: A Literary Study of The Thousand and One Nights* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), p. 355.

[288] Abī ʿUthmān ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ al-Baṣrī, *Kitāb al-Maḥāsin wa-al-Aḍdād*, ed. by Van Vloten (Leiden, 1898), pp. 232-33; Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols, Aḥmad ibn al-Sadīq (al-Qāhirah: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿādah, 1931), I, p. 83.

giving birth to the next two succeeding caliphs. Al-Mahdī's esteem for al-Khayzarān can be shown through his choice of heir to the caliphate. Although al-Mahdī married a woman called Raita as his first wife, who gave him two sons, he chose al-Khayzarān's sons Mūsa and Hārūn as his heirs, despite the fact that Raita was of royal descent.[289] Before al-Mahdī ascended to the caliphate, his father al-Manṣūr recognised his weakness for women and advised him to not to consult women on his affairs, but shrewdly added that knowing his weakness for women he would do so regardless of his warning: '" **وایّاك ان تُدخل النساءَ فی مشورتك فی امرك** "' (Beware of taking the women in your counsel and your affairs), however, he added, '"**اظنّك ستفعل**"'(I think you will take them in).[290] al- Manṣūr's prediction did come to pass as al-Khayzarān's influence on al-Mahdī steadily increased, almost to the point that she was 'directly involved in all the political intrigue of the court'.[291]

al-Khayzarān's great influence over her husband can be seen in the case of Yaḥyā, son of Khālid the Barmakī. Yaḥyā was imprisoned on charges of misuse of power in his province of Fars. Al-Khayzarān pleaded his release on the basis of foster-brotherhood between her son and that of Yaḥyā; eventually she convinced al-Mahdī to re-instate him to his previous post.[292] The method in which al-Khayzarān influenced her husband to release a prisoner whom she held in favour recalls Floripas's advice to her father regarding the fate of the Christian knights. Al-Khayzarān, Floripas, and Josian all hold sway over the men in their lives but it is significant that they possesss their trust as well, without which they would not be able to manipulate their husbands or fathers when needed.

Al-Khayzarān's influence went beyond her husband: even after her husband's death, she controlled her sons, who went on to become caliphs. As the historian al-Ṭabarī notes, 'Khaizurān, in the first part of al-Hādī's reign, used to settle his affairs and to deal with him as she had dealt with his father before him in assuming absolute power to

[289] Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 25.
[290] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Annales (Tārīkh)*, ed. by Michael Jan de Goeje, 15 vols (Lugdun: Batauorum, 1879-1901), III, p. 444; Abbott, Two Queens of Baghdad, p. 17.
[291] Rahmatallah, *The Women of Baghdad*, p. 47.
[292] Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 55.

command and to forbid'.[293] Even when her relationship with her son Hādī deteriorated to the point that he attempted to poison her, she managed, with the help of Yaḥyā, to secure the caliphate for her other son Hārūn. Once Hārūn was in power, she controlled her son in the same manner that she controlled her husband. As Abbott states, Hārūn allowed al-Khayzarān a 'free hand', often allowing her to go against his own wishes.[294] Furthermore, it was because of his approval that al-Khayzarān shared power with the Wazīr, who 'consulted her on all state and palace affairs'.[295] It is admirable that al-Khayzarān raised herself from the position of a common slave to the mother of two caliphs, using her intelligence and powers of persuasion to increase her status in the Abbasid court. She repeatedly faced competition from other women of the harem, some of noble status; however, al-Khayzarān understood the limits of her influence over al-Mahdī to manipulate him, at times through the use of deception. Even after the death of her husband she continued to use her abilities to control the political affairs of the court.

Hārūn al-Rashīd's wife Zubaydah held a similar position of favour in his court. Zubaydah, who was of royal descent as well being Hārūn's cousin, was well-loved among the people, as opposed to al-Khayzarān who was 'a woman more to be feared and obeyed than to be loved'.[296] Although Zubaydah retained a special position in Hārūn's harem, she had to struggle to maintain her position at court and 'ruled the other women of the harem despotically'.[297] Much like al-Khayzarān, Zubaydah influenced matters of the state, as can be seen by the episode which led to dismissal of the judge Hafs. One of Zubaydah's agents bought goods from a merchant and denied payment for a substantial time. The merchant referred the case to the judge 'Hafs ibn Ghaiyāth' who asked the merchant to bring the case to trial. After Zubaydah's agent admitted to the debt, he refused to pay the money under

[293] Charis Waddy, *Women in Muslim History* (London; New York: Longman Group Ltd., 1980), p. 43.
[294] Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 114.
[295] Ibid.
[296] Ibid., p. 127.
[297] Rahmatallah, *The Women of Baghdad*, p. 25.

the pretext that it was the 'queen's debt'.[298] Believing the agent to be falsely blaming the queen, the judge sent him to debtor's prison. When the queen got wind of this incident, she ordered Hārūn's chief of armed police to release her agent immediately. This move by the queen insulted the judge greatly and consequently he refused to sit on the bench until the agent was returned to prison. Zubaydah, just as indignant, ridiculed the behaviour of the judge and asked Hārūn to command the judge to allow the case to appear before the chief justice instead.[299] The judge, refusing to subvert justice, informed Hārūn's messenger that he would not open the letter sent to him containing Hārūn's orders until he had fully reviewed the case and passed judgement. Amused by his response, Hārūn paid Zubaydah's debt himself. However, Zubaydah was a not a woman to be rebuffed and informed Hārūn that she would cut all associations with him until he removed the judge from office. At first Hārūn ignored her ultimatum but Zubaydah, whose pride had been wounded by the incident, insisted the judge be reallocated to al-Kūfah.[300]

Zubaydah also played a part in the downfall of the Barmakīds, an influential political family at the time of the early Abbasids. Yaḥyā held the position of grand counsellor and his sons Ja'far and Faḍl held the respective positions of minister and keeper of the privy seal. Relations between Yaḥyā and Hārūn were already tense as a result of Yaḥyā overreaching his authority and taking control of the affairs of the empire without reference to Hārūn.[301] However, it was Zubaydah's contribution to the situation that led to the downfall of the family. When Yaḥyā placed restrictions on the harem, prohibiting euniuchs from serving the women of the harem, Zubaydah complained to to her husband about the restriction. When Hārūn al-Rashīd asked Yaḥyā about the Zubaydah's complaint, Yaḥyā asked him whether the caliph had lost faith in his abilities to administer the harem, to which Hārūn replied in the negative. Adversely Yaḥyā increased restrictions on the

[298] Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, p. 165.
[299] Ibid., pp. 165-66.
[300] Ibid., p. 166.
[301] Ibid., p. 194.

harem by also locking it at night.[302] Zubaydah took advantage of the tense relations between her husband and Yaḥyā to gain revenge on him. After a Zubaydah's second attempt at a complaint against Yaḥyā, when Hārūn refused to intervene on her behalf, she carefully chose this moment to tell him that he should not trust Yaḥyā as he could not even control his own son. When the caliph started to inquire after her instigation, she actually 'وقصت عليه (she interrupted him)' and informed him of the on-going secret affair between his sister Abbāsah and Jaʿfar. She further informed him of children conceived as a result of their affair, who had secretly been sent to Mecca. Upon hearing the dishonour Ja'far had brought the Abbasid name, Hārūn vowed to destroy him and delayed his execution only until he had met the children himself.[303] As can be seen, both al-Khayzarān and Zubaydah held positions of significant power within the empire, crucially influencing the rise and downfall of caliphs and political figures alike. Although they held no official power of their own, much like Floripas in the romances, they were capable of manipulating their husbands and sons to fulfil their demands, even if it meant going against the wishes of their husbands or sons as well as those of their privy counsel.

In the Fatimid Empire, another women influenced the counsel of a Fatimid caliph. Sitt al-Mulk, sister to the sixth Fatimid caliph al-Hākim, ruling around 996, seems to have acted as one of the advisors to her brother during his reign. Although al-Ḥākim held her in high regard, she, somewhat as in Floripas's calculated betrayal of her father, was rumoured to have commissioned her brother's murder. Furthermore, after her brother's death, she arduously encouraged the succession of her nephew al-Ẓāhir and held the position of regent until her nephew came of age to rule.[304]

A later queen who exercised political control through her family was Ḍayfah Khātūn, the favourite daughter of al-Malik al-'Ādil. She was married to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's son,

[302] Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī al-Masʿūdī, *Maçoudi. Les Prairies d'Or*, ed. by C. Barbier de Meynard, 9 vols (Paris: Société asiatique, 1962), VI, p. 392; Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad* p. 193.
[303] Ibid., p. 393; Ibid., pp. 195-96.
[304] Hambly, 'Becoming Visible', p. 10.

al-Zāhir Ghāzī; however, her husband died in 1216 and their son, al-ʿAzīz Muḥammad died soon afterwards in 1236, leaving a seven year old son as successor. The young age of Muḥammad's son necessitated the creation of a regency council. This council was composed of two emirs and Ḍayfah Khātūn's slave. The slave was assigned the position of the Khātūn's secretary and deputy on the council and acted on her behalf, conveying her decisions as regent queen to the council.[305] While she exercised control over Aleppo through her secretary and the title of regent, she was effectively the sovereign of an Islamic state from 1236 to 1243. Tabbaa writes that Ḍayfah Khātūn was 'keenly aware of the limits of female power and the boundaries of acceptable behaviour', exercising 'considerable restraint and discretion in keeping her voice, her person, and her regal symbols hidden from view'.[306] It seems that Ḍayfah Khātūn, like Floripas, understood that by maintaining her position on the side-lines, she could influence control over Aleppo as regent queen in the name of her grandson. Unlike the later queen of Egypt, Shajar al-Durr, who would regret her impetuousness, it seems that Ḍayfah Khātūn, astute enough to recognise that the people would never accept a female sovereign, used her slave as a 'mouthpiece' and 'abstained from claiming for herself the classical emblems of Islamic rulership'.[307] However, she did rule the state until the day she died and successfully passed over the Ayyubid dynasty to her grandson.

There were plenty of examples of powerful and influential women and queens in Western Europe as well, however, they exercised a different kind of power compared to the caliph's wives and Muslim queens discussed. Some of these women included Queen Emma, Empress Matilda, Eleanor of Provence, Eleonor of Castille, and Eleanor of Aquitaine. Just like Khayzarān and Zubaydah discussed earlier, these medieval queens gained a reputation for exercising influential power and are therefore form interesting

[305] Yasser Tabbaa, 'Ḍayfa Khātūn, Regent Queen and Architectural Pagan', in *Women, Patronage and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, ed. by D. Fairchild Ruggles (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 17-34 (pp. 20-21).
[306] Ibid., p. 22.
[307] Ibid.

candidates for a comparison with the position of Muslim queens, in particular that Abbasid queens.

Some of these women exercised power through their role as queens or empresses, while others influenced politics through the matters of matrimony within the court. Queen Emma seemed to hold influence at court. Stafford, through the analysis of two images depicting Queen Emma, argues that she shared some influence alongside her second husband Cnut, and later with her sons Harthacnut and Edward the Confessor.[308] The first image is the frontispiece to the *Liber Vitae* of New Minister Abbey, Winchester, and depicts Emma and her second husband Cnut making a gift to the New Minister Abbey; Stafford notes that she is 'as large and prominent as her husband' in the image'. Furthermore, even though she is only gesturing towards the gift of the cross while Cnut is holding it, she is included in the picture as a patron of the Abbey. Stafford argues that the size of Emma's depiction in the image signals partnership in marriage, as representative sizes in images in the eleventh century were symbolically significant.[309] The second image is the frontispiece to the manuscript of a work now known as the *Encomium Emmae*; Emma herself commissioned this manuscript. Emma's image in this frontispiece is prominent, crowned, and enthroned; however, her sons are marginal figures looking into the image at the side. As Stafford explains, thrones in images of this period were reserved for Christ or heavenly figures; even kings were not depicted on thrones. Satfford argues that Emma's enthronement, along with the marginal representation of her sons is evocative of her power as a patroness and mother.[310] Although this image may represent her political standing, however, as Emma commissioned the manuscript herself, it could be viewed as flattery on the part of the author or illuminator for the patron.

[308] Pauline Stafford, 'Emma: The Powers of the Queen in the Eleventh Century', in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), pp. 3-26.
[309] Ibid., pp. 3-4.
[310] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

Emma was married twice during her lifetime; her first marriage was to the English king Æthered the Ready, and her second marriage was to the Danish conquerer Cnut. She seems to have had very little importance as queen during Æthered's reign but she was recognised as a powerful queen as Cnut's wife. She had sons from both marriages and after Cnut's death, her sons contested for the English throne with Cnut's son by his previous wife. Emma played an important part in securing their accession. She seized the treasury and defamed Cnut's former wife, Ælfgifu, and her son to help her own sons gain the English throne. By 1037 her efforts had failed and she was exiled to Flanders. However, her determination did not end there; she called on Harthacnut from Denmark and Edward from Normandy to gather forces to recover the English throne. Harthacnut gained the throne but after his death, Edward attacked his mother and deprived her of her treasury, leaving her to spend her last days essentially deprived of status in Winchester.[311]

Another queen who seemed to hold political influence was Empress Matilda. Empress Matilda was intent on gaining the position of king and securing an estate and office that had previously been held by men.[312] Empress Matilda's father, Henry I, wanted to stabilise the Norman succession patterns, therefore he was determined that his successor should be his legitimate child. As Henry I failed to produce another male heir after the death of Matilda's brother William, he promoted Matilda as heir since her lienage represented the perfect mingling of Norman and Saxon royal blood.[313] As Matilda was 'educated, intelligent, and experienced', her father had no doubts about convincing his barons of her capabilities; although Matilda had her father's confidence in her abilities to rule, her situation, as in the case of her contemporaries Queen Urracea of Castilla-Leon and Melisende of Jerusalem, was maintaining autonomous power after marriage.[314] Although Henry's supporters recognised Matilda as his heir, she was eventually married to Geoffrey

[311] Ibid., p. 6.
[312] Charles Beem, '"Greater by Marriage": The Matrimonial Career of Empress Matilda', in *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), pp. 1-15 (p. 2).
[313] Ibid., pp. 2-3
[314] Ibid., p. 4; p. 2.

of Anjou, a figure who was not popular with the Anglo-Norman baronage. Eventually, when the time came for Henry to pass over the crown on his deathbed, Matilda remained in France, therefore relinquishing her position as heir to Henry's nephew Stephen, Count of Blois.[315] Although women like Matilda exercised a considerable amount of power as successors to the throne, their influence came from their positions as rulers. In contrast, caliphs' wives and Muslim regent queens exercised influence from the side-lines; they knew that as women they could not be tolerated to possess too much influence in the public eye; as mentioned earlier, even Ḍayfa Khātūn was careful about restricting the appearance of power to the point of keeping her regal symbols out of public view. Therefore, instead of asserting outright control, these Muslim women chose to use their roles as wives and mothers to influence both politics and matters at court. While European queens had to contest with their husbands or sons for power, caliph's wives also had to challenge other women at court to assume control over the caliph.

European queens also drew power from matrimonial politics and the politics of accession. The importance of marriage alliances with foreign rulers and the role queens played in arranging those marriages gave them a unique kind of power.[316] Edward I of England's mother, Eleanor of Provence, and wife, Eleanor of Castile, demonstrated such authority in matrimonial matters in 1282. In spring of 1282, Edward I sent envoys to Aragon to settle the matrimonial union of his eldest daughter to the Aragonese heir. After negotiations, the queen of Aragon demanded that Edward I's daughter be sent to Aragon immediately for marriage. However, despite the importance of the marriage alliance, Edward I refused the queen of Aragon's request on the basis of Eleanor of Provence and Eleanor of Castile's objection on the basis of the tenderness of the girl's age. They wished to wait two years before marriage could take place. As Edward I's daughter was already

[315] Ibid., pp. 6-7.
[316] John Carmi Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500, in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 63-78 (65); Pauline Stafford, 'The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries', in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 143-167 (p. 143).

the legal age for marriage, the matrimony took place immediately regardless of Edward's mother and wife's reservation.[317] Although the two queens were unable to delay the marriage, they were intrinsically involved in the negotiation of the marriage and Edward I respected their wishes to the extent of sending an envoy to the queen of Aragon to refuse her wish for an immediate betrothal. In addition to the English queens, the queen of Aragon was also directly involved in the negotiation of marriage between her son and Edward I's daughter. At a time when political strength and stability were largely dependent on marriage unions between nations, this involvement in the negotations of marriage lent some degree of power to medieval European queens.

Apart from matrimonial consultation, queens such as the infamous Eleanor of Aquitaine exercised some degree of power through duties as queen. Despite her marriage to Henry II, she held the duchy of Aquitaine in her own right; even Henry's attempts to transfer the duchy to his sons required her approval.[318] She did have some sense of autonomy as ruler in issuing charters both in her position as queen of France and Duchess of Aquitaine during her marriage to Louis.[319] However, her husband Louis created the title of Duke of Aquitainians for himself and appointed his own officials to administer Aquitaine. Furthermore, only four of the charters created in her name were initiated by Eleanor herself. Therefore, she did have some power in ruling her duchy but she still played a subordinate role to that of Louis.[320] Eleanor exercised more power as a mother, as she played a larger part during the reigns of her sons, as well as advancing one of her sons to the throne.[321] Much like her namesakes discussed above, Eleanor of Aquitaine also played a part in the arranging the marriage of her son Richard by travelling to Navarre to escort Richard's betrothed Berengaria of Navarre. Eleanor also defended Richard's throne against her own son John while Richard was away on Crusade and collected a ransom for

[317] Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power', p. 63.
[318] Michael R. Evans, *Inventing Eleanor: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Image of Eleanor of Aquitaine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 6.
[319] Ibid., p. 7.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid., p. 6.

Richard when he was captured. Eleanor certainly fought for the interests of her sons as she also strove to secure the throne for John after Richard's death.[322]

Medieval European queens certainly held some power as patrons, and through the politics of accession and marriage. As rulers they strove to maintain their autonomy to retain control, as in the case of Queen Matilda and Eleanor of Aquitaine; however, their struggle was maintaining power away from men. This is particularly true in Queen Matilda's case as she had aspirations to gain the position of king. Despite her intelligence and experience as Empress, Henry I would not have appointed her heir if her lineage did not represent the merger of royal Norman and Saxon blood. Even so, she was eventually overlooked as heir in favour of her father's nephew. In contrast to the European queens and queenship discussed, the caliph's wives and Muslim regent queens exacted influence on the sidelines and operated in the realm of the private, much like the Saracen women discussed in this thesis. From the examples discussed above, it seems that they were afforded more leniency with their husbands and they knew how to use that power for political gain and revenge. As part of a patriarchal system they knew not to publicly display their influence but to quietly use it to their advantage. Their role in the harem and their household is more similar to the quiet control Saracen women exercised over their fathers and lovers in the romances discussed.

'Medycyne' and Floripas

Apart from her seemingly influential position in her father's household, Floripas also embodies other quintessentially Eastern markers, such as an association with medicine and the marvellous. In all three Middle English versions of the romance, Floripas possesses a marvellous girdle, '"Who so girde hem ther-with aboute,| Hunger ner thirste shal him neuer dere,| Though he were vij yere with-oute"'(SoB, ll. 2304-06). The introduction of the girdle, however, varies greatly in the other two romances. In both *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras*, the girdle is introduced when the sultan, laying siege to the castle, sends

[322] Ibid., p. 10.

Maubayn to steal the girdle from Floripas before she uses it to satiate the besieged knights' hunger. Even in these two romances, the character of Maubyn differs. In *Sir Ferumbras*, Balan refers to Maubyn as 'A s[uch] þ]ef as he was an; was non in his regnee' (SF, l. 2386); however, in *Firumbras*, Maubyn is 'the queyntyst nygramancer that euer myght be' (F, l. 103), creating a dichotomy between black and white magic. The girdle is first introduced to the reader only when Balan sends Maubayn to steal it.

In contrast, the girdle appears earlier in an additional scene in the *Sowdone*. In the *Sowdone*, after the Christian knights are besieged in the castle and their provisions are almost depleted, Roland condemns Charlemagne for forsaking them, as they remain prisoners, steadily growing weary from hunger. Floripas chooses this moment to reveal that she possesses a girdle, hidden in a chest, which could relieve them of their hunger. At Sir Guy's request, she produces the girdle and 'Thai proved alle the vertue,| And diden it aboute hem euerychon.| It comforted alle both moo and fewe,| As thai hade bene at feste' (SoB, ll. 2312-15). While the knights do not get an opportunity to use the girdle in the other two versions, the knights in the *Sowdone* make full use of it, demonstrating its marvellous ability first-hand.

Although the qualities of the girdle may suggest it is wholly magical, Floripas refers to the girdle as 'a medycyne' (SoB, l. 2301) to comfort them. Therefore, it seems that the girdle is meant to act as a kind of talisman against hunger and thirst, as Hausknecht suggests in his edition of the *Sowdone*. Thus the girdle would constitute what Corinne Saunders defines as white magic or natural magic. The reference to the girdle as medicine to alleviate hunger demonstrates the close relationship between medicine and magic, as the girdle's effect on the knights is marvellous. As Saunders explains, romance writers using the concept of natural magic introduced 'the idea of healing stones, plants, balms and potions that drew their virtue from nature, to marvellous effect'.[323] Such methods of healing naturally produced items such as 'ligatures, charms or magical remedies' with the

[323] Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2010), p. 118.

miraculous power to protect or heal.[324] This type of popular medicine, commonly practised in the East in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, situates Floripas in the East. Although the practice of medicine is not exclusively restricted to Saracen characters in medieval romance, the renowned study and advancement of medicine and the sciences in the Abbasid period made the practice of medicine by Saracens such as Floripas and Josian quintessentially Eastern.

In her study of girdles in romance, Saunders comments on the use of a magical girdle in the Anglo-Norman *Boeuve* and the Chetham Library version of *Beues of Hamtoun*, which is later substituted with a magic ring in the Auchinleck version. A possible reason suggested for this substitution is the 'association of the girdle with much more problematic aspects of natural magic - the ligatures and binding or weaving magic explicitly forbidden by the Church'.[325] Despite this association, the authors of the three Middle English renditions of *Fierabras* decide to affiliate Floripas with the girdle. It would appear that *Firumbras* attempts to tackle this issue. As discussed earlier, Maubyn is described as a necromancer in *Firumbras*. In his attempt to enter the castle and steal the girdle, he performs a range of 'wycchecraft' (F, l. 119) or dark magic. He uses his 'wycchecraft' to jump over a ditch that 'lay wyde & depe' 'with chaynys and barrys' (F, l. 20). He arrives at Floripas's chamber and uses his 'wycchecraft' to open the door and then chants a 'charme' (F, l. 126) to force the 'knyghtys aslepe as they were dede' (F, l. 127). The word 'wycchecraft' is repeated several times, emphasising the dark nature of the act and the task in which Maubyn uses his talents certifies it as evil. In contrast to Maubayn's talents as a necromancer, Floripas's ues of the girdle, the nature of which is to heal and comfort the wearer against hunger and pain, is represented in a positive light. Furthermore, Floripas and the Christian knights do not make use of the girdle in *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras* before it is stolen.

[324] Ibid., p. 116.
[325] Ibid., p. 131.

Instead of Floripas producing the girdle to provide respite to the knights' hunger, it is Balan who mentions the existence of the magic girdle in *Sir Ferumbras*. After Balan lays siege to the tower, he recollects that his daughter possesses what he refers to as 'þe gurdel of honour' (SF, l. 2390), which she is accustomed to wearing. Balan commissions 'Maubayn of egremolee (SF, l. 2385), a renowned thief, to steal the girdle from his daughter as it possesses qualities that '[…] whyle heo haueþ þat gurdel fyn; no hunger ne may hem deere' (SF, l. 2395). If Maubayn can steal the girdle, Balan is confident that he can capture the Christian knights and his treacherous daughter, as they are likely to run out of provisions. The use of the phrase 'þe gurdel of honour' to describe the girdle takes on an ironic quality a few lines later in the poem as Maubayn attempts to steal Floripas's honour by raping her once he enters her chamber. Balan's request to steal the girdle almost invokes the rape as he instructs Maubayn to enter his daughter's chamber '[…] wanne þe nyȝt gynt blake' (SF, l. 2388) and steal the girdle while Floripas is asleep.

The girdle already possesses an inherently sexual quality owing to the fact that it is worn around the waist. It also has associations with the birth girdle, a kind of girdle worn around the abdomen before or at the moment of giving birth, which further sexualises the object. Lea T. Olsan explains that these birth girdles were used at times to ease the pain of childbirth. In addition, these girdles were often hereditary, passed down through generations within families. As Floripas's girdle is described as 'þat gurdel fyn' (SF, l. 2395), indicating its visual splendour, it may also have been a family heirloom. Although Olsan describes the birth girdle as 'long strips of sewn together pieces of parchment inscribed by scriptural texts, charms and prayers', there were also other kinds of birth girdles fashioned from different materials.[326] *The Trotula* mentions another kind of birth girdle that could be used in the event of difficulty in childbirth. *The Trotula* is a compilation of three texts which came to be regarded as an authority on medical issues concerning women and were circulated widely as one text in Western Europe from the late

[326] Lea T. Olsan, 'Magic and Charms', in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Margaret Schaus (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 504-05 (p. 505).

twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.[327] The first book, titled 'Book on Conditions of Women', includes a section on difficulty in birth. Amongst the list of possible difficulties and their remedies, the author instructs either the physician or the midwife handling the birth to 'Item cingatur mulier de spolio serpentis de quo serpens exiuit' (Likewise, let the woman be girded with a snake's skin from which the snake has emerged) if the birth is delayed.[328] The girdle, along with other medical remedies suggested, are meant to help the woman deliver the baby. Furthermore, the birth girdle is mentioned in the cautionary tale of Franco Sacchetti, dating from the 1390s. Sacchetti narrates that a lay brother, a country charlatan, provided a pregnant Sienese woman with a birth girdle for five florins. The woman was seven months pregnant and apprehensive about difficulties and pain during labour as she had had difficulty during her last deliveries. Then the lay brother passed the task of preparing the amulet to a 'disreptuable local monk'. The amulet was written on a piece of kidskin and presented to the woman who wore it beneath her robes and 'presumably over her abdomen'. Sacchetti moralises that if the woman had a painless delivery, it would have been a 'happy coincidence' as it was later discovered that the amulet contained 'a worthless five-line vernacular jingle about a hen'.[329]

Although Sacchetti's tale warns readers against the use of amulets, girdles, as demonstrated by *The Trotula*, were used during childbirth. In addition to being used to help childbirth, they were also worn around the abdomen, further contributing to their sexualised nature. It is also evident from Sacchetti's tale that girdles, which were usually inscribed with words, were considered marvellous objects which were capable of alleviating pain or healing. No further detail beyond its grandeur is provided about Floripas's gidle; however, it is possible that because of the tradition of engraving girdles, it was also inscribed to imbue it with healing abilities. Floripas, however, is not wearing the

[327] *The Trotula: An English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. xi.
[328] *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine*, trans. by Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2001), pp. 102-03.
[329] Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), p. 238.

girdle in either *Sir Ferumbras* or *Firumbras*. The location of the girdle is not even mentioned in *Firumbras*; the romance simply relates that Maubayn, renamed Manby, approached Floripas's bed, and finding her asleep took the girdle in his hand and wrapped it around himself.[330] In *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas is not wearing the girdle either but rather it is 'liggyng at hure hede' (SF, l. 2419) when Maubayn attempts to rape her. However, in both texts the sexual implications of the girdle foreshadow Maubayn's attempt at 'maystries' (SF, l. 2425).

Conversely, the rape scene is removed entirely from the *Sowdone of Babylone*. In the *Sowdone*, Mapyne climbs up the tower at night and enters Floripas's chamber through the chimney. He immediately finds the girdle and puts it on. Before Mapyne has a chance to do anything else, Floripas sees him by the light of the lamp and cries out to the knights to help her.[331] The absence of the rape episode from the *Sowdone of Baylon*e is crucial because it is the only episode in the romance in which Floripas is in a completely vulnerable position. Throughout the romance, she manipulates her father, saves the Christian knights, forces Guy of Burgundy into marrying her, and directs the knights during the entire siege, all actions in keeping with women characterised as enamoured Muslim princesses in medieval literature; this moment of vulnerability is therefore noteworthy. This omission is in keeping with the *Sowdone's* treatment of Floripas. *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras* seem to place a greater emphasis on Floripas's character, keeping her at the forefront of all the action in the romance. The *Sowdone* in contrast seems to neglect the character, placing greater emphasis on Ferumbras and Charlemagne's twelve peers; in addition, Floripas is also properly introduced in the *Sowdone* much later then in the other two romances.

Although the sexual nature of the girdle is important, its magical healing qualities are crucial to the romance as well as to the representation of Floripas. When the knights wear the girdle in the *Sowdone*, their hunger is assuaged. The knights do not get the

[330] *Firumbras*, ed. by O'Sullivan, p. 7.
[331] *The Sowdone of Babylone*, ed. by Hausknecht, pp. 67-68.

opportunity to benefit from the girdle in *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras*; however, the girdle's healing qualities are still emphasised in both romances. Floripas's possession of such a 'gurdel of honour' (SF, l. 2390) does not seem to be a coincidence. As Saunders explains 'the girdle symbolises the treasure and exotic power of the East, worthy to be won by the Christians'.[332] Apart from associating Floripas with the riches of the East, the girdle also affiliates her with the East's long history of accumulation, advancement, and practice of medicine discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

As well as possessing the healing girdle, Floripas is portrayed as having some knowledge of herbal medicine. However, a passing reference to this knowledge is included only in *Sir Ferumbras.* After Floripas rescues Oliver and his companions from jail, she leads them back to her chamber; following an exoticized description of her chamber's walls of 'coral & riche stones' (SF, l. 1325) and a silver-gilded ceiling, Floripas notices that Oliver is bleeding and inquires whether he has received a wound. Oliver replies in the positive and informs her that he has received three wounds from swords and spears. Floripas then provides him with herbal medicine to heal the wound. First she assures Oliver that he shall be wholly recovered with her help; then 'Sche fet him a drench þat noble was; & mad him drynk it warm,| & O[lyuer] wax hol sone þas; and felede no maner harm' (SF, ll. 1386-87). Oliver is as surprised by the marvellous cure as the audience could have deemed to have been as 'Muche him wondred of þat cas; & þan gropede he euery wounde,| And founde hem þanne in euery plas; ouer al hol & sounde' (SF, ll. 1388-89). The rich stones lining the chamber walls in *Sir Ferumbras* may also evoke the healing arts and suggest the learning of the East. Comparing them with precious stones set within drinking cups in the alliterative *Morte Arthur*, Heather suggests that the precious stones set within the walls of the castle in *Sir Ferumbras* may not be entirely for decorative purposes, but also for their healing virtues.[333] Precious stones set within the

[332] Saunders, *Magic and Supernatural in Medieval Romance*, p. 135.
[333] P.J. Heather, 'Precious Stones in the Middle English Verse of the Fourteenth Century, II', *Folklore*, 42: 4 (1931), 345-404 (p. 348; pp. 357-58).

cups in the alliterative *Morte Arthur* are selected for their power 'to resist the ill-effects of poison'; perhaps the precious stones set within the wall in *Sir Ferumbras* had similar protective or healing qualities.[334]

Once again, as the beginning of *Firumbras* is lost, it is impossible to discern with certainty whether it would have included this healing scene; nonetheless, since *Firumbras* follows *Sir Ferumbras* closely, there is a possibility that it would have made some allusion to Floripas's healing abilities. Although the scene is narrated in the *Sowdone*, the romance does not mention Oliver's wounds or Floripas's healing drink or potion. Instead, the *Sowdone* narrates that the prisoners ate their fill and 'A bath for hem was redy there,| Ther-to thay went ful fayre and stille,| And aftyr to bedde with right gode cher' (SoB, ll. 1656-58). Even though no medicinal drink is mentioned, the bath which was prepared for them could work in a healing capacity, in relation to any wound they might have retained. Baths were often used in the Middle Ages and in Middle English romances for healing wounds and curing other ailments. In relation to baths depicted in Middle English romances, Elizabeth Archibald in her article on bathing provides several examples.[335] One such example is that of Tristan returning to Ireland in disguise to be cured of his wound. The romance makes explicit mention of a healing bath, as it is during that scene that Iseut recognises Tristan as her uncle's killer.[336] A specific mention of a healing bath is also included in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Marvellous cures such the healing drink Floripas prepared for Oliver were not unheard of in the Middle Ages, and in particular in the East. The Persian scholar al-Bīrūnī in his book regarding stones discussed the healing qualities of Pissasphalt. Al-Bīrūnī begins the section on Pissasphalt by describing its use as both a simple or compound drug

[334] Ibid.
[335] Elizabeth Archibald, 'Did Knights Have Baths? The Absence of Bathing in Middle English Romance', in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 101-17.
[336] Ibid., p. 101.

that was often administered to people to relieve animal bites.[337] Later in his discussion, al-Bīrūnī relates an anecdote of the miraculous effects of an ointment made from 'Momya'i'. He relates that the 'Shāh of Kwārazam' received a gift of 'Momya'i' from an old prisoner. The prisoner claimed that it was made from ordinary herbs that were used on a daily basis and was 'efficacious and quick-acting'; after hearing the qualities of the ointment, the Shāh gladly accepted the gift. It would appear that this 'Momya'i' described in this anecdote is different from the pitch-like substance described by al-Bīrūnī from various sources; however, he does not note this difference.

Following this event the supervisor of the watchmen who had the duty of looking after the falcons misfortunately broke the wing of the Shāh's favourite falcon. The Shāh was furious with the supervisor and ordered the executioner to maim his leg. The executioner, unsure of the severity of the punishmnent, brushed the supervisor's leg with a stick that had the texture of a date tree. Upon viewing this lenient punishment, one of the adverseries of the supervisor vocally criticised the executioner, stating that the leg was not maimed but simply brushed with a rough stick. The executioner could not evade the criticism and he 'lashed at the ankle of the supervisor so hard that the whole bone broke into fragments and his instep was joined to the ventral part of the knee'. After his ankle was broken, the supervisor was re-admitted into the presence of the Shāh who repented his command and ordered that the Momya'i be applied to his knee. The narrator informs the readers that he was cured and despite the necessity of using a stick, he was viewed easily mounted on a horse a year later.[338] Although the supervisor still required a stick to walk naturally, it seems almost marvellous that a mixture of herbs could repair a broken bone so effectively without the need of any kind of surgery. Although it was not uncommon for stones and other natural materials to used for the practice of herbal medicine in the Middle Ages, the effects of remedies of this nature are often exaggerated in anecdotes and

[337] Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *The Book Most Comprehensive in Knowledge on Precious Stones*, trans. by Ḥakīm Moḥammad Saʿīd (Islamabad: Pakistan Ḥijra Council, 1989), p. 176.
[338] Ibid., pp. 177-78.

literature. The descriptions of these kinds of remedies are usually affiliated with the mysterious, as in the case of the unnamed prisoner who happens to possess the ointment. A similar method of hyperbole is implemented in the description of Josian's use of herbs to replicate the appearance of leprosy in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. As with al-Bīrūnī's anecdote, an element of wonder is created through the description of Josian's training in the celebrated centres of medical learning of the later medieval period. As descriptions of the marvellous nature of these remedies were so common in complilations dealing with natural elements and secular literature, the medieval audience was unlikely to question the authencity of Josian's cure. Although the nature of al-Bīrūnī's ointment exceeds the potency of Floripas's medicinal potion, her knowledge and practice of medicine falls within this category of marvellous medicine.

Beyond Floripas's quintessentially Eastern healing abilities, what sets her apart from traditional women in Middle English romance is her control over the knights, much like her hold over her father, and her involvement in battle strategy during the imposed siege by her father. Much like the overall enamoured Muslim princess topos, this quality can also be found in the character of Melaz in Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. After Melaz befriends Bohemond and his companions, often visiting them in prison, a civil war breaks out between her father and his brother Qilij ʾArslān. Melaz takes this opportunity to instruct the Christian knights on what they must do to escape her father's prison. She requests the knights to assist her father in battle, claiming that she has heard about the knights' reputation for chivalric prowess and wishes to witness it personally. Although Bohemond accedes to her request, she insists that they swear on their honour as knights and on their Christian faith that they will follow her advice and not betray her orders.[339] After Bohemond agrees to her conditions, Melaz proceeds to give Bohemond and his companions precise instructions to capture the strongest tower. She instructs them to help her father on the battlefield then, and when they succeed in defeating the enemy, to

[339] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, V, pp. 360-61.

return immediately but not to disarm. In the meantime she will command all the guards from the upper room of the highest tower to descend to the lower gates to wait for them; however, the minute the guards try to bind them in fetters, they must seize them and imprison them in the dungeon. Once Melaz is sure that the guards are overtaken, she will pretend to flee from them long enough for the knights to occupy the strongest tower, and then descend from the tower using the stone steps and take possession of her father's treasures and apartment.[340] Right from the start, Melaz plans every detail of the strategy to capture the palace and the knights merely follow her orders without question.

The knights manage to capture the guards and fetter them in the tower but when Bohemond sees Melaz being threatened by her father, the knights descend the staircase, following Melaz's instructions, and surround Danishmend and all his officers and companions.[341] Once the Turks in the palace are surrounded by Bohemond and his knights, Ordericus interrupts the narrative to state that the knights could have massacred the Turks had they desired, as they were at their mercy, however, they did not dare act without consulting the princess.[342] This aside on the narrator's part demonstrates the power Melaz holds over the knights that despite having achieved their goal, they are still bound by the oath they gave Melaz. It is also imperative to note that without her orders, the knights would have remained imprisoned in the tower. Furthermore, even though the knights capture the palace and all its residents, it is Melaz who has the honour of ordering her father to surrender, while all the Christian knights assume the position of mere guards watching from the sidelines. Regardless of Bohemond's status as a renowned knight, it seems that Melaz is in command, much like her later counterparts in the Middle English *Fierabras* tradition.

As discussed earlier, Floripas, much like Melaz, seems to possess a unique authority over her father above all his counsellors, governing all his decisions until she

[340] Ibid., pp. 362-63
[341] Ibid., pp. 366-67.
[342] Ibid.

betrays him. Floripas also has influence over the Christian knights, who constantly adhere to her martial advice during the siege. Morever, it becomes clear early on in the romance that Charlemagne's reputedly worthy knights would not survive the siege without her help. Floripas's influence on the knights may have something to do with the terrifying threat she directs at the knights the moment she rescues them from her father's prison. Upon gathering all the Christian knights in her chamber in *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas inquires after their identity. She first questions Naymes and then Richard of Normandy. Hearing Richard's name, she first viciously reproaches him for killing her uncle, protesting, '"ȝyue þe schame; for þyn oncortesye!"' (SF, l. 2058); however, she later reassures him that despite his discourtesy, she will provide him protection from her father and his men. Floripas proceeds to inquire after Roland's identity and confesses her love for Guy of Burgundy ever since she saw him perform great feats of arms at the siege of Rome. Floripas then requests Roland's help in securing Guy's hand in marriage, vowing, '"Wolde he be my worldly make; & wedde me to wyue,| For his loue wold y take; cristendom þanne blyue"'(SF, ll. 2086-87). However, when Guy refuses to marry her without Charlemagne's consent, she impetuously turns against the knights and '[…] wax ful wroþ;| For angre sche braid hur wel neȝ wod; & by Ma[houn] swor hur oþ,| þat bote if Gy to wyue hure take; þat sche had loued so longe,| Ecchone þay scholde for is sake; or euene beo an-honge' (SF, ll. 2098-2101). It seems strange that Guy's unwillingness to marry without Charlemagne's consent stems from his need to consult a man who had raised him rather than any concern for Floripas's Saracen lineage. Indeed, the romance seems oddly unperturbed about her lineage at this stage as she gladly consents to convert to Christianity for Guy's sake.

When Roland hears this threat, he convinces Guy to marry Floripas out of allegiance: '"[…] þow louest me"' (SF, l. 2103). This scene involving one of Charlemagne's most renowned knights cowering under the threats of a Saracen princess is certainly amusing. Similarly, in the *Sowdone of Babylone*, Floripas declares her love for

Guy of Burgundy and threatens the knights that '"Ye shalle abye it ellis ful dere"' (SoB, l. 1902) if Guy does not marry her. However, in the *Sowdone*, Roland and Oliver openly state their fear of Floripas's mischief if her wishes are not upheld. Floripas clearly demands authority from the start but she also plays a crucial role in formulating strategy and helping the knights escape and overthrow her father. In fact, without her help, the knights would not escape prison. Oliver and the other four Christian barons left to starve in Balan's prison seem surprisingly passive compared to Floripas when '[…] þay criede & made hure mone,| And saide, "lord, how schul we fare; in prisoun her al-one"' (SF, ll. 1196-97). *The Sowdone of Babylone* similarly represents the knights making 'grete lamentacion' (l. 1555) while in prison. There is, however, an interesting disparity between the two romances in the representation of Floripas when she hears the knights in prison. In *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas hears the knights moan from her room; in contrast, the *Sowdone* chooses to represent her in that moment as a generic romance heroine roaming in her garden 'To geder Floures in morne colde' (SoB, l. 1553), when she hears the knights. In the *Sowdone*, the reader is introduced to this sensitive side of Floripas, which is followed closely by her violent behaviour.

Despite the different representations of how Floripas discovers the knights, both texts present them as vulnerable and in despair of their situation when Floripas reaches the prison. Although Floripas talks to the knights upon approaching the prison in *Sir Ferumbras*, a dialogue which is not included in the *Sowdone*, she demonstrates her wilful, fierce nature in both texts in her dealings with the gaoler and her governess. Once again there is a slight discrepancy in the event as narrated in the two texts; however, Floripas's vicious method of releasing the prisoners remains invariable. In *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas asks the gaoler Brytamon to allow her to speak to the imprisoned knights but he obstinately refuses on account of Balan's strict orders to keep the knights imprisoned in isolation. Upon hearing this reproof, Floripas became enraged and immediately abandons her gentle speech and curses him as a '"harlot gadelyng"' (SF, l. 1234), suggesting that he

should be '"heȝe an-honge"' (SF, l. 1234) for refusing her request. Her violent outburst does not end there; Floripas then gestures to her maiden to bring a weapon and when the maiden retrieves a staff, they attempt to pry open the prison door. When the gaoler tries to stop them, Floripas '[…] lifte vp þe staf with mayne,| & so on þe heued sche set him þer; þat out sterte al is brayne' (SF, ll. 1250-51). Without an ounce of remorse, Floripas returns to her task, cursing him once more. As in this instance, Floripas resolutely deals with any obstacles in her path, regardless of the consequences. In addition, her loyalty is dependent on her allies succumbing to will. She helps the knights when it suits her purpose but when they refuse to save her lover Sir Guy later in the romance, she vociferously threatens to betray them to her father.

A similar fate awaits Floripas's governess when Floripas leads the knights to her chamber. Although Floripas kills the gaoler swiftly, *Sir Ferumbras* provides a detailed description of her dealings with her governess. It is also of note that Floripas's chamberlain plays a more active role in her encounter with her governess. The governess recognising the knights as Balan's Christian prisoners, reminds Floripas that Oliver is the same knight who overcame her brother Ferumbras and that by helping Oliver and his companions she will lose her father's love. She further threatens to inform Balan of his daughter's deceit personally. Floripas remains undaunted by these appeals to reason and instead runs to the window and calls her mistress to join her. Once her mistress approaches the window, Floripas winks at her chamberlain and leans out of the window; her governess follows suit and the chamberlain takes this opportunity to accost the mistress, lift up her legs, and shove her out of the window into the sea. The chamberlain conducts this treacherous act on Floripas's orders, and Floripas's response suggests that the romance condones this behaviour as 'Flo[rippe] þat was þanne þer ate; turnþ hure in faire aȝe,| & sayde: "Maumecet my mate; y-blessed mot þou be| For aled þow hast muche debate; to-ward þys barne"'(SF, ll. 1371-73). That even in this instance Floripas is associated with the word 'faire' reveals that the narrator considers her actions justified

because they are once again directed towards helping the Christian knights escape imprisonment. The knights passively stand on the side-lines as Floripas takes control of the situation and averts threats against them.

Much as in her assistance of the first group of Christian knights captured by the Saracens, Floripas uses her influence with her father to save Roland and his companions. Floripas advises her father to kill the knights; however, when Balan accedes to her advice, she insists that the knights should be left under her care until he has eaten his meal. Balan, despite the warnings of Sortybran of the dangers of trusting women, '"Many ys þe manlich man; þat þorw womman ys by-go' (SF, l. 2013), trusts Floripas explicitly and allows her to lead the knights to her chamber. As in *Sir Ferumbras*, the event follows a similar pattern in the *Sowdone* when Floripas's governess refuses to help her assist the knights. In the *Sowdone*, however, Floripas uses a much more deceptive method of getting rid of her governess. Perceiving that Maragounde will pose a problem, Floripas calls Maragounde to the window to view the wonderful sight of porpoises playing in the distance. When Maragounde approaches the window to look out, Floripas viciously shoves her out of the window justifying her action as '"Who so wole not helpe a man at nede,| On evel deth mote he dye!"' (SoB, ll. 1581-82). In all three romances, Floripas becomes indispensible to the Christian knights. As the romances progress, she becomes more intrinsically involved in the defence against her father and the siege. Despite her unfaltering support for the Christian knights, Floripas reveals her warrior spirit by threatening the knights themselves if they refuse to adhere to her demands. This chapter has already discussed one such instance; however it seems that this trait lays dormant until Floripas feels passionate about a cause. The Christian knights, surprisingly terrified by her threats, agree to her demands in all instances except for one, which will be discussed later.

Once Floripas rescues the knights and assembles them in her chamber, she takes charge of the situation and warns them that they are in great peril in this palace. She then abandons all loyalty to her father and instructs them to leave the chamber and do whatever

is necessary, stressing to '"Secheþ þis paleys ouer al; boþe in lengþe & brede,| & lokieþ ȝe ne spare gret ne smal; þat he ne go to dede,"' (SF, ll. 2274-75). This advice forms part of a number of events in these romances where Floripas instructs the Christian knights on strategy during the siege. It is significant that *Sir Ferumbras* makes a point of informing the readers that the knights find her advice sound and thank her copiously for her it. Likewise, Floripas tells the knights, '"Loke ye spare for no fere,| Sle down and breke both bake and bones"' (SoB, ll. 1945-46) in the *Sowdone*. In this version of the romance Floripas reveals the desperation of the act: '"Ther is none helpe, but in this wyse"' (SoB, l. 1948). If the knights do not follow her advice of killing anyone who crosses their path, they cannot hope to survive. Unfortunately, all these scenes are lost along with the beginning folios of *Firumbras*.

In all three instances, Floripas consistently helps the Christian knights against her father, but it is evident that she knows how to manipulate the knights into following her wishes. In the two earlier versions she also has no qualms about aggressively threatening them in order to get her will. After the Christian knights venture into the Saracen camp to steal provisions, Guy of Burgundy is captured by Balan's army and the other knights return to the palace. In *Sir Ferumbras*, when Floripas hears this news, she faints at first; however, she refuses to be overwhelmed by the news and instantly takes control of the situation. Only concerned with Guy's safety, Floripas threatens the knights for the second time in the romance, claiming loudly, '"Certis bot y haue Gy aȝen; wiþ-inne þis dawes twye,| þis ilke tour schal iȝelde ben; þe þridde day be Marye"' (SF, ll. 2791-92). Although the event follows a similar sequence in *Firumbras*, Floripas takes a more assertive stance. She not only threatens the knights in general, but also addresses Roland directly, swearing, '"By that ylke lord that tholed woundes fyue"' (F, l. 482), that if he does not rescue Guy from her father, she will surrender the tower and allow him to be hanged '"[…] the foulyst that man may"' (F, l. 487). After this menacing speech, Roland's heart begins to 'quake' (F, l. 488) for Guy and Floripas and he decides to recue him. *Firumbras* follows a similar

pattern with Floripas swooning when she hears the news that Guy has been taken prisoner and threatens to give up the tower if the knights do not rescue him. Moreover, Floripas makes the threat even more personal by swearing to Roland, '"To wrotherhayl the tyme that euer ȝe ware y-bore!'" (F, l. 485). The *Sowdone* takes a different approach to the scene. As mentioned earlier, Floripas's character is less developed in the *Sowdone* compared to the other two versions of the romance. It seems that the character is also softened a little in this instance. Instead of assuming her usual assertive personality, Floripas simply refuses to stop eating until Guy is rescued.[343] This docile approach is hardly in keeping with her threat in the other two romances.

Despite Floripas's occasional threats, she plays an invaluable role during the siege in helping the knights from the sidelines. Although she does not directly participate in the fighting, she manages to rescue and advise the knights whenever they require it most. After Floripas's threat to surrender the tower if the knights refuse to rescue Guy, they prepare themselves to follow her order, but Roland is concerned that they are only ten men. However, frustrated by Roland's lengthy speech to his fellow knights, Floripas curtly exclaims, '"[…] ȝe dwelleþ her wel longe;| Bote ȝe þe rathere ben a-go; my lemman worth an honge"' (SF, ll. 2957-58). Following her outburst, Floripas enters her chamber and brings forth the crown of thorns, which was stolen by Balan, to provide the knights with confidence to defeat her father's men and save Guy. It is at this moment that Floripas assumes a clear Christian role, demonstrating unmitigated belief that kissing the relic would bless the knights with certain victory. It is also at this point that Floripas and her maidens begin to assume a small role in the fighting. When the knights finally leave the palace to fight the Saracens, Floripas hastens to close the draw bridge after the knights passed over it. Although Floripas does not leave the palace with the knights and her role seems comparatively minor, her responsibility of remaining in the palace and keeping the

[343] *The Sowdone of Babylone*, ed. by Hausknecht, p. 75.

gates securely fastened is integral to keeping the Saracens from raiding the stronghold and prevailing in their siege.

In *Firumbras*, Floripas takes a slightly different approach. In this version of the romance, Floripas uses a mixture of intimidation and supplication to force the knights into saving Sir Guy. Floripas first humiliates Roland by exclaiming that: '"Shulde ȝe suffre my lord by-force ȝowre syȝt| To haue suche a deth (why wyl ȝe nouȝt fyȝt?),| hit ne schal neuer be in no maner wyse,| But alle thys world schal speke of ȝowre cowrdyse"' (F, ll. 579-82). Floripas immediately changes her demeanour, falling to her knees and kissing Roland's feet to implore him to save her beloved. After Roland assures her of his intention to save Guy, just as in *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas fetches the relics to bless the knights. However, instead of simply fastening the gate, Floripas is more involved in the preparations before the battle by fetching the horses for the knights. As the romance progresses, Floripas and her Saracen maidens not only help from the sidelines, they actively participate in repulsing the emir's army. The emir's army launches a second attack on the palace in *Sir Ferumbras*, however, the Christian knights defend themselves casting out stones, killing twenty men in one go 'þat fullen doun ded þer on þe fen; to-broke boþe body & bones' (SF, l. 3232). Instead of carrying on in this fashion describing the prowess of the knights, the romance breaks off here and narrates the contribution of the Floripas and her maidens in defending the palace. Not only are the Saracen women present at the forefront of the battlements armed with good clothing, they '[…] cast out stones gret & sade; oppon hem þat wer with-oute,| & gret slauȝt of Sarȝyns made; with þe help of þe lordes stoute' (SF, ll. 3235-36). The repetition of the word 'gret' in reference to the stones and the damage they cause emphasises the strength and contribution of the Saracen women in repelling the attack.

While *Firumbras* follows *Sir Ferumbras* closely for most of the romance, Floripas assumes a more assertive role in *Firumbras*. After the knights save Sir Guy from Balam, Balam and his army renew their attack on the palace and set fire to the tower where the

knights and Saracen women reside. In a moment of blind panic the Christian knights give up hope; however, it is Floripas who exhibits courage and reassures the knights that they should

> "[…] beȝth of gode chere!
> Ne hath eche man but o lyffe, selle ȝe hyt dere!
> y schall turne the fyr and the flames that ben lyȝt
> Aȝen on the sarisins to brenne well bryght,
> thorow crafte that ȝe couthe and queyntyse of gynne"
>
> (F, ll. 797-801)

Floripas goes on to demonstrate the method by turning the fire against the Saracens and setting their tents and pavilions on fire. Although the romance does not elaborate exactly how Floripas accomplished this great feat, narrating the result rather than the technique, it would appear that Floripas achieves this counterattack through marvellous means. She also appears to be more capable of handling the siege than the knights. *Sir Ferumbras* gives futher details regarding Floripas's method of repelling what this version of the romance identifies as 'wilde fyr' (SF, l. 3266). As the fire takes hold of the walls, Floripas reassures the knights that they will be able to extinguish the fire. As with Oliver's wound, she displays her knowledge of the East in extinguishing the fire. One of Floripas's damsels brings her heated 'melk of þe camele' (SF, l. 3289) and 'þer-wiþ sche mellede vynegre anon' (SF, l. 3290); she throws it onto the fire and '[…] þay seȝe it alle' (SF, l. 3292) that the mixture smothers the fire. The narrator's emphasis on everyone viewing the effect of the mixture as proof of its validity suggests that it may be considered marvellous. This episode not only demonstrates Floripas's significance in the siege but also her broad understanding of natural remedies, which strongly aligns her with the East.

After Balan and his army continue to attack the tower, using engines and arrows and eventually breaking down the marble pillars, the knights once again start to panic. The knights view only one option: to leave the tower and fight with the Saracens. Floripas provides them yet again with an ingenious strategy, suggesting that instead of fighting her father's army, they throw the precious gold her father had collected within the palace onto the army. She assures the knights that once her father sees all his gold scattered

generously unto the ground, he will be more concerned with collecting it than attacking the tower. Floripas then instructs her maidens to fetch the gold and throw it outside. When the Saracens see the gold, they abandon their positions to collect the gold. When Balan sees his gold distributed onto the ground and the soldiers greedily collecting it, he instructs the army to stop fighting, lamenting that, '"Thus to spend my gold and my tresorye| That y haue long-gedered, it is gret folye"' (F, ll. 843-44). Although Floripas suggests the same strategy in *Sir Ferumbras*, her intentions seem more destructive. While Floripas clarifies that the purpose was to distract the army in *Firumbras*, she explains the lethal effects of the stones in *Sir Ferumbras*, assuring the knights, '"And suþþe ȝe now þat soþe y-knoweþ; on defaute ȝe han of stones.| Takeþ þer-of y-nowe and þroweþ; & to-brekeþ hem body & bones"' (SF, ll. 3327-28). Even though the final result is the same, that is, the Saracens abandon fighting to collect the treasure, Floripas's original intention is to use her father's treasure as a weapon on account of its weight as the romance emphasises that the knights lift the treasure described as '[…] slabbes grete & þykke' (SF, l. 3333). The *Sowdone* follows *Sir Ferumbras* in the general description of the treasure-throwing episode; however, it is much shorter and lacks the detail of the other two romances. After the knights slaughter several Saracens by throwing stones from the tower, the Saracens begin a second assault. Although Floripas suggests throwing her father's gold outside the tower, she only vaguely advises the knights that the gold and silver '"That shulle ye prove goode woon"' (SoB, l. 2478). However, when the Saracens abandon all thoughts of fighting with the Christians and fight amongst themselves for the gold and silver, Floripas's strategy in throwing the gold and silver becomes clearer. Therefore, it seems that it is only in *Sir Ferumbras* that Floripas has violent intentions in throwing her father's treasure.

Without Floripas's sharp instincts and unique strategy, the romances suggest, the Christian knights would surely have surrendered. However, it is almost impossible to ignore the comical undertones behind the knights' reactions to each of the attacks, creating

a reversal of roles with Floripas. Floripas manages to outwit not only the knights, but also her father and his army as the siege.

Despite Floripas's ability to manipulate her father before the siege and the Christian knights after she betrays her father, there is one instance in which the knights refuse to follow her advice. This occurs at the middle of the siege and lays bare the Crusading ideology behind these Charlemagne romances. This episode also deals with the intrinsic flaw within the conversion topos and explores the idea of true faith. It is interesting that the *Sowdone of Babylone*, dated much later than the other two romances, does not include this significant test of true faith. Perhaps the *Sowdone*'s late composition may be the reason for this omission – it would seem that it is less concerned with ideas of true conversion, as there is less emphasis on Floripas's character, but focuses closely instead on the chivalric deeds of the Christian knights and their recovery of the sacred relics.

Towards the start of the siege, after the knights throw Maubyn, and unwittingly the miraculous girdle, into the sea, they are faced with hunger as all their food and drink supplies diminish. Just as Guy of Burgundy begins to propose stealing food from the Saracens, Floripas interjects to blame the knights, claiming that '"Ful litel ys ȝour god of myȝt; þat vytailes ne sent ȝov none;| Hadde ȝe worschiped our godes free; as ȝe ȝour han done,| Of vytailes had ȝe had plente; maugre al ȝour fone"' (SF, ll. 2526-28). This crisis of faith in the *Fierabras* tradition is significant, as the casual conversion of Saracen women for the sake of their Christian lovers is not questioned in other Middle English romances. Just before the siege, Floripas has promised to Guy of Burgundy that 'For his loue wold y take; cristendom al so blyue' (SF, l. 1423), but at the first instance of trouble she revokes her faith. It becomes clear that her allegiance to the knights and her casual conversion is not enough; she must possess true faith in Christianity. If the multiple comic instances of Balan cursing his gods for their abandonment of him are not sufficient, this episode

provides the perfect opportunity to include a message about the supremacy of Christianity and reveal the falseness of the Saracens' religion.

There certainly seems to be circularity in the accusations of the Saracens and Christian knights. After Floripas comments on the futility of their Christian god, Roland pretends to be convinced by her argument and asks her to lead them to her gods so that they can pay tribute and worship them. Floripas leads the knights to the 'Synagoge' (SF, l. 2535) and draws the curtain to reveal the idols of '[…] Sir Ternagan; & eke hure god Mahount:| Iubiter al-so & iouyn; stode þar hymen by-syde,| & eke hure god appolyn; araid wiþ grete pryde' (SF, ll. 2538-40). Crusading propaganda once again creeps in as the Saracens are aligned with familiar deviations from the Christian faith such as a synagogue and classical deities such Jupiter, Iouyn, and Appolyn, while they are simultaneously resigned to the fate of the 'other' through their association with Mahoun and idol worship. The idols are further associated with the East through the use of gold and precious stones. The idols themselves are made '[…] of gold þat schon ful briȝt' (SF, l. 2542) and as an added measure they were 'y-poudred wiþ stones preciouse; þat wern þer-on i-piȝt' (SF, l. 2543). It seems that the audience of the romance would have been as arrested by the description of the gold and jewels as the knights, as Oliver and Richard comment on how valuable the gold may prove to them; Roland goes as far as to suggest that the gold could be given to Charlemagne to rebuild St Peter's church, which the Saracens have destroyed.

Floripas interrupts the knights, warning them that '"ȝe spekeþ gret folye"' (SF, l. 2559) and that they should ask for mercy and pray to the gods; if they follow her advice then they will receive everything they need. However, instead of abiding by her advice, the knights seal the message of Christian supremacy by smashing the idols. The smashing of idols itself is described with great detail and relish, with Ogeroun smashing the idol of Mahound with his sword, claiming that the idols are sleeping and he wishes to awaken them. Oliver follows his lead and throws the idol of Ternagan against the wall with such force that the idol's arms and legs shatter into pieces. Finally, Richard of Normandy draws

his sword and '& al-hew þe oþre twye; iubiter & appolyn. (SF, l. 2572). After all the idols have been destroyed, Roland tells Floripas that her gods are not strong enough to lift themselves after they have been shattered; how could they possibly help the knights against the Saracens? This is the moment of true conversion for Floripas; after seeing the idols effortlessly destroyed, she agrees with Roland that:

> "If ich hem worschipie after þis; maugre mot y haue.
> for þay mowe noȝt her y-wys ' hem-selue from herme saue;
> Ac y by-seche þat god of miȝt; þat diede on þe rode,
> Hwiche of marie þat mayde briȝt; while tok flechs and blode,
> As wisly as y lyue riȝt; a[nd] dayde for mannys gode:
> Þat Sone sum succour to ous diȝt; & helpe ous of liflode"
>
> (ll. 2577-82)

These words function as a rite of conversion for Floripas; she no longer converts for Guy's love but transforms into a true believer.

Marianne Ailes discusses this idol-smashing scene in *Fierabras*, describing it as a contest between pagan god and the true god; however, the pagan gods are ridiculed through their destrustion by mere men. She further notes that instead of the usual trinity, four gods are named in this episode.[344] Perphaps this is to create a contrast between Christianity and the Saracens' pagan beliefs. Although Ailes rightfuly examines the one-sided contest between the two religions in a similar episode in *Fierabras*, it seems more important to represent a test of Floripas's faith in Christianity. Although Floripas converts for Guy's sake shortly after rescuing the knights, it is only after the knights destroy the idols that she truly converts. As the episode ends with her conversion, it seems that the purity of her faith was the objective of the knights' destruction of the idols. This episode is significant as all other extant Middle English romances dealing with the enamoured princess topos are satisfied with a superficial conversion of faith for the sake of the Christian knight rather than true belief in Christianity.

[344] Marianne Ailes, 'Faith in *Fierabras*', in *Charlemagne in the North: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of the Sociéte Renseval*, ed. by Philip E. Bennet, Anne Elizabeth Cobby, and Graham A. Runnalls (Edinburgh: Sociéte Rencesval British Branch, 1993), pp. 125-33 (p. 126).

Even though Floripas acquires purity of faith through this episode, she is not baptised until the end of the romance. The smashing of idols in *Sir Ferumbras* reveals the fulity of her gods and results in her profession of faith in Christ but according to Thomas Aquinas it is baptism which leads to true conversion: 'baptismus dicitur *sacramentum fidei*, inquantum scilicet in baptism fit quædam fidei profession, et per baptismum aggregatur homo congregationi fidelium' (baptism is called the *sacrament of faith* because it involves a profession of faith and joins those who receive it to the congregation of believers).[345] Despite the absence of a profession of faith in the baptism scene, the ritual completes Floripas's conversion by incorporating her in the congregation: 'aggregatur homo congregationi fidelium'. This integration is visually symbolised in the manner in which she encircled by the notable Christian figures of Charlemagne, his lords, and barons as she undresses to be baptised

Floripas's conversion also seems crucial to the plot of the romance. Towards the end of the romance, when the Saracen army makes a breach in the wall of the palace, while other members of the army climb the walls with ladders, the knights begin to fear for their safety. Although the knights overthrow some of the Saracens scaling the walls, they seem to be overpowered. It is at this crucial point that Floripas advises the knights to pray to the holy relics that were stolen by Balan from Rome. Unlike the earlier instance, here the knights adhere to Floripas's advice. When Floripas fetches the relics, the knights kneel down, kiss the relics, and pray to God for mercy and succour from the Saracens. While the knights are praying, two hundred Saracens scale the walls and reach the windows; however, upon viewing the relics, '[…] þe Sarsyns þanne gunne waxe affriȝt,| þat abide þay ne durste,| Bote fullen a-doun of þe walle, & so heȝe þay fullen alle,| þat hure bodies al to-burste' (SF, ll. 5063-66). If Floripas had not suggested appealing to God

[345] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ: Latin Text and Translation*, *Baptism and Confirmation* (3a 66-72), ed. and trans. by James J. Cunningham, 61 vols (Blackfriars, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1975), LVII, pp. 156-57; Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Romance Baptisms and Theological Contexts in *The King of Tars* and *Sir Ferumbras*', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Chihon (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 105-120 (p. 105).

through the relics, the Saracens would have prevailed; and, if Floripas had not undergone the test of true faith earlier in the romance, she would not have suggested using the relics. The test of true faith comes full circle here showing the strength of the relics compared to the helpless idols.

Despite this one instance in which the Christian knights refuse to take Floripas's advice and worship the idols, Floripas, then, is an invaluable asset to the knights during the siege. Although she does not take up arms on the battlefield, she does whatever is necessary to help the knights, both before and after the siege, even on the sidelines. Examples of historical Muslim women who played similarly crucial roles can be found from the First to the Seventh Crusades.

Three Muslim women participating in the defence of a castle on two separate occasions can be found in the memoirs of ʾUsāmah ibn Munqidh. Although several episodes of ibn Munqidh's memoirs have been discussed in the first chapter, this particular event narrated by ibn Munqidh deals specifically with women and their role prior to as well as during an attack. Both episodes take place in April 1109, at the time of the First Crusade; however, they deal with internal strife between Muslims in Shīzar. Munqidh narrates that on April 1109 the leader of the ʾIsmāʿīlites ʿAlwān ibn Ḥarrār allows ibn Munqidh's cousin, Sinān al-dawlah Shubayb ibn Ḥāmid ibn Ḥumayid, to return to his castle and retrieve anything he is able to carry. However, ʿAlwān warns him that he has already taken possession of the castle and that he must leave after collecting his things otherwise he will be killed. Sinān returns to the castle and asks his aunt and paternal uncle's wives to give him their valuable possessions. Before he can take leave of the castle, a person wearing a coat of chain mail and a helmet enters the castle with a sword and shield; the figure proves to be the mother of his cousin, Layth-al-Dawlah Yaḥyā. Upon being informed of Sinān's intention and cowardly behaviour, she curses him for

attempting to leave his family to the ravishers and demands that he stay behind and fight on their behalf, even if it means laying down his life.[346]

While Floripas does not dress in chain mail or carry a sword, this woman's ability to manipulate her nephew into abandoning what would clearly have been a profitable escape is oddly reminiscent of Floripas's hold over her father and the knights. As in the romances, without this strong-willed woman's efforts the castle would have been lost to the plunderers.

Ibn Munqidh also narrates the determination of his own mother on that day. Much like Floripas and her maidens, ibn Munqidh's mother distributes swords and quilted jerkins. She possesses a similarity to Floripas's unflinching resolve to carry out unsavoury acts if it suits her purpose. On the day of an attack, she askes her daughter, ibn Munqidh's sister, to wear her dress herself and sit near the edge of a balcony. She places herself at the entrance of the balcony in order to throw her daughter into the valley if the attackers reach the balcony. She later confesses to ibn Munqidh that she would murder her own daughter rather than allow her to become captive to peasants and ravishers. This dangerous resolve to kill her own daughter without a moment's hesitation is viewed as a strength by ibn Munqidh as he ends the narrative with admiration for his mother's strength of will. [347] This episode instantly reminds the reader of Floripas's remorseless murder of her governess by throwing her out of the window into the sea. Although ibn Munqidh's mother's intention for killing her daughter in the event of the enemies' victory is heroic from ibn Munqidh's perspective, it also reveals a cold determination without regard to sentiment, not unlike Floipas's brutal deeds at the beginning of the romance. Ibn Munqidh lastly presents one more instance of a woman involved in the defence of the castle: this last example is that of his grandfather's slave. This aged slave, Funūn, sees the necessity of joining the fight and keeping the enemy at bay. Despite her age, she fearlessly seizes a

[346] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-i'tibār*, pp. 123-24; *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior*, p. 153.
[347] Ibid., p. 154-55.

sword, and veiling herself, rushes to battle. She continues to fight until they overpower the enemy.[348]

As can be seen from the discussion of Floripas in these three romances, Saracen women in Middle English romances possess a unique role in these romances. Although they are whitened for strategic reasons, they possess distinct qualities that align them with their Saracen heritage. The quality that undoubtedly marks Floripas as a Sarcacen is her ability to practice herbal medicine. As discussed in the previous chapter, the long tradition of translation of scientific manuscripts during the early Islamic dynasties associated the knowledge of medicine with the East; this reputation for medical knowledge, as well the seemingly marvellous practice of herbal medicine, is reflected in the representation of Floripas, as well as other Saracen women discussed in the next two chapters.

However, the association with the East in these romances does not end there, as demonstrated by the discussion of women in the early Islamic dynasties, as well as women from the First and the Seventh Crusade. It is impossible to determine whether the representation of Saracen women in medieval romance was influenced by accounts of prominent Muslim women in the Levant; however, as this chapter has demonstrated, there are some significant similarities between their positions in their household, and to some extent, their characteristic resourcefulness. The various avenues of contact between Western Christians and Levantine Muslims described in the first chapter certainly allowed some possibility of influence.

[348] Ibid., p.155.

Chapter Three: *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*

Romances such as the three Middle English adaptations of *Fierabras*, which follow the tradition of the *chanson de geste*, best reflect the Crusading ideology of the time. However, other Middle English romances composed in the fourteenth century deal with a similar ideology. One such romance is *Sir Beues of Hamtoun;* moving away from the familiar French figures of Roland and Oliver, this romance deals with the adventures of an English knight.[349] Similar to *Sir Ferumbras*, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* seems to have been adapted from an earlier Anglo-Norman romance titled *Boeve de Haumtone*, placing many of the concerns of the romance at the centre of the later Crusading initiative with an emphasis on conversion. Even though *Beues of Hamtoun* was composed much later, those concerns seem to have transferred to the Middle English narrative. *Beues of Hamtoun* cannot, however, be considered a translation of *Boeve* as it often deviates from its source. As Ivana Djordjević explains, large passages are interposed and others are shortened or removed; there are also changes in the representation of certain charcters and on emphasis paid to certain events in the romances.[350]

Mahoun and Christ: The Fight for Spiritual Supremacy

The romance starts with the matter of England when Beues's father, Sir Gii of Southampton, is tricked and killed by his wife and her lover; Beues is then robbed of his title and sentenced to death by his mother. However, the focus of the romance quickly shifts when Beues is sold to Saracen merchants and ends up at the court of King Ermin of

[349] Although this chapter will be using the Auchinleck MS version of the romance that dates from the first half of the fourteenth century, the redaction of the romance of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* is preserved in four other manuscripts: British Library Egerton MS 2862, CUL MS Ff.2.38, Caius Cambridge MS 175, and Royal Library MS XIII.B.29 (Naples). All these manuscripts date from the fourteenth to the fifteenth centuries. Other versions of the romance survive in Trinity College Cambridge MS 0.2.13/IV (James's no. 1117) and Chetham's Library MS 8009, both dating form the late fifteenth century.

[350] Ivana Djordjević, 'From Boeve to Bevis: The Translator at Work', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in the Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 67-79 (p. 67).

Armenia. The presence of Saracen merchants at the port at Southampton provides evidence of social and cultural interaction between the East and West through trade routes in the Middle Ages. As Heffernan remarks in her discussion of trade routes, 'the Byzantine had in Constantinople a metropolis which in the high Middle Ages was a meeting place for land and sea routes of the Far, Middle, and Near East as well as the crossroads for Northern and Western Europe'.[351] As the Saracen merchants eventually sell Beues in Armenia, they can easily be imagined as one of the many merchant ships headed towards the trade routes of the Mediterranean.

At first, the romance does not seem explicitly to demonstrate Crusading ideology but the consistent battles between Beues and the Saracens create an opposition between Christianity and Islam. This ideology becomes even more explicit towards the end of the romance. The narrator informs the audience that when King Ermin is about die, he summons Beues's children and passes on his kingdom to Sir Guy. The audience is then told in a seemingly judicious manner that 'Þanne sire Beues and sire Gii,| Al þe londe of Ermony| Hii made christen wiþ dent of swerd,' (ll. 4017-19).[352] This action on behalf of Beues and his son aligns the romance with the conversion ideology of the later Crusades.[353] There is a sense of irony that it is through Sir Guy, who himself comes from Josian's Saracen heritage, that the land of Armenia is forcibly converted to Christianity. As Jacqueline de Weever writes in her discussion of Anglo-Norman romances, 'one feature of the poems is the frequency of declarations of the Christian creed, signalling that Christianity's battle with paganism is part of the subtext'.[354]

The final battle with Saracens culminates in a fight between King Yvor and Beues. As King Yvor and Beues face each other, 'Beues bad help to Marie sone' (l. 4145); King Yvor counters by invoking Mahoun's help. The cycle continues with Beues invoking '[…]

[351] Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer*, p. 19.
[352] *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. by Eugen Kölbing, Early English Text Society ES 46 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1885); subsequent quotations from *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* will be taken from this edition.
[353] Burge, *Representing Difference in the Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance*, p. 49.
[354] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, p. 4.

helpe to Marie' (l. 4147), followed by 'To Teruagaunt Yuor gan crie' (l. 4148) before the physical rather than spiritual battle begins. The dual visual ordering of these invocations, one line after another in alternating fashion, effectively pits one religion against the other. This rivalry permeates the entirety of the romance in one form or another, resulting in the final defeat of the Saracens, and in essence Islam, in this momentous fight. After Beues defeats King Yvor, the focus shifts back to national issues and the reclamation of Southampton for Beues and his sons.

In addition to these concerns on which the romance is founded, the author of the Middle English romance makes strategic changes to highlight the continuing importance of the Crusading conflict during the fourteenth century, the proposed date of the romance. Metlizski suggests that the author of the Middle English changes the names of the territories mentioned to reflect 'topical interest'. In the scene when Beues, disguised as palmer, discusses with King Yvor the countries he has visited, according to Metlizski, 'there is a distinct shift to the territory of the Crusades, the Saracen East' when compared with the Anglo-Norman *Boeve*.[355] This change may have a connection with the setting of the romance itself in Armenia, which signals an interest in the anxieties surrounding the later Crusades. By contrast, the Anglo-Norman source sets the romance in Egypt rather than Armenia.[356] The author who adapted the romance to the Middle English version found in the Auchinleck manuscript seems to have made a conscious decision to shift the location of the romance to Armenia for strategic purposes that reflect the anxieties of the period in Europe. As Collete and DiMarco's illuminating article explains, the fall of Armenia in 1375 to the Mamlūks symbolised 'internal strife and contention, loss of hope and land, failure of will, and squandered opportunity'.[357] However, after the fall of Armenia, when Levon VI, ruler of Armenia, travelled to initiate peace between England and France in order to enlist their aid in recovering Armenia, it served 'as both image of

[355] Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, pp. 130-31.
[356] Saunders, *Magic and Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, p. 123.
[357] Carolyn P. Collette and Vincent J. DiMarco, 'The Matter of Armenia in the Age of Chaucer', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 23 (2001), 317-58 (p. 318).

the Christian recovery of the Holy Land and, paradoxically, symbol of the frustration of such hopes and the fragility of such dreams'.[358]

Even before its fall to the Mamlūks, Armenia proved an important asset in the resistance of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his troops in the Third Crusade. Armenia provisioned the Cruaders during the siege of Antioch and King Levon II of Cilician or Lesser Armenia himself fought along with Richard Lionheart in the conquest of Cyprus.[359] Considering Armenia's central role in the opposition of the Muslims at a time of military strife for the Crusaders at the hand of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and its continued resistance of the Mamlūks, represented by Levon VI's appeal to England and France, it is no surprise that Armenia and its symbolic representation of the Holy Land loomed large in the imagination of England in the fourteenth century. Saunders proposes another possible reason the Middle English author chose to change the setting of the romance from Egypt to Armenia; the change may also have been made to facilitate the claim that Josian attained her medical training in the great learning centres of Italy's Bologna and Spain's Toledo. Placing Josian, and in effect the setting of the romance, in Armenia makes her training more plausible as Armenia is closer to Italy and Spain than the Anglo-Norman setting of the romance in Egypt.[360]

Much like the Christian knights in *Sir Ferumbras*, Beues is portrayed both as fair and in heroic terms from the beginning of the romance: from birth, Beues is described as 'Faire child he was & bolde,' (l. 52). In addition, he is portrayed as having such a fair quality that King Ermin is willing to give Beues his kingdom if he would consent to converting to his faith. When Beues is presented in front of King Ermin, he instantly recognises a sense of nobility about him and exclaims:

> "Mahoun!" a seide, "þe miȝt be proute,
> And þis child wolde to þe aloute;
> ȝif a wolde a Sarasin be,
> ȝit ich wolde hope, a scholde þe!

[358] Ibid., p. 319.
[359] Ibid., pp. 319-20.
[360] Saunders, *Magic and Supernatural in Medieval English Romance*, p. 123.

Be Mahoun, þat sit an hiȝ,
A fairer child neuer I ne siȝ,
Neiþer a lingþe ne on brade,
Ne non, so faire limes hade!"

(ll. 531-38)

This description reverses the roles between Christians and Saracens in chanson de geste and most Middle English romances. In the *Song of Roland* the Christian knights exlaim, '"Deus! quels vassals, s'oüst chrestientet!"' (l. 3164).[361] Ferumbras is also described in similar terms, though with a touch of hyperbole:

[...] huge was he of lengþe,
Fifteuene fet hol & sound; & wonderliche muche of strengþe.
Had he ben in cryst be-leued; & y-vollid on þe haly fant,
A bettre knyȝt þan he was preued; þo was þer non lyuand:

(ll. 546-49)

This description usually directed at Saracens invokes the convention of the worthy enemy by stating that the pagan knight would be the best if only he believed in Christianity. *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* reverses this convention and applies it to a Christian, suggesting that his Christian belief is the only thing holding him back from complete nobility. However, the romance immediately counters this Saracen sensibility through Beues's refusal to convert and forsake his religion. King Ermin is so impressed by the strength of his faith that he makes Beues his chamberlain and promises to knight him once he comes of the right age. Despite the reversal of the noble enemy convention, the romance, through the steadfastness of Beues's faith and the King's admiration, establishes Christianity as the superior faith, very much in keeping with Crusading ideology.

King Ermin himself is far from being represented as demonised or black, as are most Saracen figures in Middle English romance. With the exception of Saracen women and Ferumbras, Saracens are conventionally portrayed as black in complexion or as hideous, giant-like creatures. King Ermin, by contrast, is largely portrayed as a kind-hearted king who saves Beues from a cruel fate with the Saracen merchants and knights him, giving him the first opportunities to rise to the role of a heroic knight under Ermin's

[361] *Le Chanson de Roland*, ed. by Theodor Müller, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Dieterich'sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1878), p. 343.

banner. Although clearly introduced as the King of a 'painim' land, he is not further described and is saved from being classed with other Saracen men by virtue of his recognition of Beues's potential and his respectful, even admirable, acceptance of Beues's refusal to convert. However, in the Anglo-Norman, *Boeve de Haumtone*, Beues insults Ermin and explicitly marks him out as an unworthy heathen. When King Ermin asks Beues to convert to inherit his kingdom, Beues rudely responds:

> "Rois", ceo dist l'emfes, "vus parlez de folie;
> ke pur tut la tere ke en paenie
> ne pur ta file ov tut, ke taunt est colorie,
> ne vodrai reneier Jhesu, le fiz Marie.
> Mahun ne put taunt fere con la formie,
> ke la formie mut, e si ne fet il mie.
> Honi seit de son cors ki en Mahun se afie!"
>
> (ll. 399-405)

> 'King', said the child, 'you talk foolishly. Not for all the lands in heathen parts nor for your daughter with it, rosy-cheeked as she is, would I renounce Jesus son of Mary. Mahomet can't even do as much as an ant, for an ant can move and he can't. Shame on him who trusts Mahomet.[362]

Similar reasoning is invoked in *Sir Ferumbras* when the Christian knights smash all the heathen idols in front of Floripas. As the knights explain, this violent demonstration proves the helplessness of the idols who cannot even move to defend themselves.

By contrast, the Middle English Auchinleck version of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* softens the insult, with Beues replying to the King's offer:

> "For gode!" queþ Beues, "þat I nolde
> For al þe seluer ne al þe golde,
> Þat is vnder heuene liȝt,
> Ne for þe douȝter, þat is so briȝt:
> I nolde for-sake in none manere
> Iesu, þat bouȝte me so dere:
> Al mote þai be doum and deue,
> Þat on þe false godes be-leue!"
>
> (ll. 561-68)

[362] *Der Anglonormannische Boeve de Hamtoune*, ed. by Albert Stimming (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1899), p. 17; Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Defining Christian Knighthood in a Saracen World: Changing Depictions of the Protagonist in *Sir Beues of Hampton*', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in the Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 127-144 (pp. 128-29).

As Calkin argues, the offence is softened here as Beues no longer specifically addresses the King by name in his reply and does not consider his belief foolish. Instead, in this version, Beues claims that all those who believe in false gods are doomed. Even the insult to Mahomet is removed and the statement could be applied to any religion opposed to Christianity.[363] Overall, his statement is transformed into a much more polite declaration of his own steadfast faith rather than an offensive accusation against King Ermin. As a result, King Ermin is perceived in a more positive light within this romance, as in other Middle English versions of *Beues of Hamtoun* composed around the same time. Ermin's decision to respect Beues's choice not to convert further distances him from archetypal demonic, Saracen figures. In contrast, it seems that the King admires him for his steadfast faith: after Beues's outburst 'Þe king him louede wel þe more,' (l. 569). It seems that this neutral representation is meant to suit the narrative purpose rather than make any general comment on the nature of Saracens. At this point in the romance, the young Beues is far from Southampton, shunned by his mother, and requires a figure to give him refuge and to nurture him. However, the Saracen King's admiration for him even at such a young age suggests Beues's religious superiority.

It is interesting that even later in the romance when King Ermin has served his narrative purpose, he is not portrayed in a negative light. Even when he sends Beues to his certain death through his deceptive orders, Beues confidently declares that '"He, þat me tok þis letter an honde,| He ne wolde loue me non oþer,| Þan ich were is owene broþer"' (ll. 1330-32). Unlike most Saracen men, who are either forced to convert or failing to convert are killed, King Ermin fades away from the narrative until the end of romance and is forgotten, unpunished for his hand in Beues's imprisonment. It is strange that King Ermin is allowed this happy fate by contrast to other fathers of the enamoured Saracen princesses in these Middle English romances. Beues confides to a knight in Armenia the details of King Ermin's betrayal, vowing that if he was not Josian's father '"Sertes, ich

[363] Calkin, 'Defining Christian Knighthood in a Saracen World', p. 129.

wolde ben is bane!"' (l. 2006). Even when King Ermin is mentioned towards the close of the romance, he is portrayed on his deathbed and passes on the kingdom of Armenia to his grandon Sir Gii. The narrator's description of his demise is very brief and the audience's expectations of justice are subverted. Most surprisingly, the audience is informed 'Sone þar after hit be-com,| Þat a daide at þe ende,| To heuene mote his saule wende!' (ll. 4014-16). Despite his heathen religion and his vicious treatment of Beues, his soul is awarded salvation through admittance into heaven. It seems strange that Josian's father is allowed to escape despite his treatment of Beues simply for Josian's sake, especially considering Floripas's treatment of her father Balan in *Sir Ferumbras*. Towards the end of *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas actually takes a staff and shakes it against Balan, 'þywyng hym þan þar-wyþ' (l. 5093). Later in the romance, Floripas advises Charlemagne not to heed Ferumbras's request to convince his father to stop assailing the Christians, emphasing 'ȝe hadde don wel, by god almyȝt, Had ȝe do slen him ȝesternyȝt,| Wan þat he was take' (SF, ll. 5765-66). Judging from Floripas's sentiments towards her father and Josian's treatment of other Saracens, it seems that she would not have requested Beues to spare her father's life after his betrayal. Perhaps this inconsistency is due to the complexity of the romance; as Beues faces many adversaries and his first enemy, no longer an obstacle, is soon forgotten.

The Natural Order of the Romance: Colour as Signifier of Character

Much like most Saracen women in Middle English romance, Josian is also portrayed as both fair-skinned and in terms of Western aesthetics of beauty. Josian is introduced at the beginning of the romance along with her father when the Saracen merchants bring Beues to King Ermin's court in Armenia. Josian is described in a grand fashion: 'Hire schon wer gold vpon hire fet;| So faire ȝhe was & briȝt of mod,| Ase snow vpon þe red blod;| Whar to scholde þat may discriue?' (ll. 520-23). Josian's shining gold shoes add an element of wonder to her appearance as well as associating her with the wealth of the East. However, the very next line describes her as possessing a complexion

of red and white. This aspect of her description immediately aligns her with the conventional descriptions of Christian women in medieval romance. Among several other examples of similar descriptions, one stands out in Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Conte du Graal* or *The Story of the Grail (Perceval)*. When Blancheflor is first introduced to Perceval, she is described in extensive detail, with close attention to both clothing and physical beauty. In addition to her general appearance, the romance focuses on her facial features: 'Et lo nes droit et estandu,| Et mielz avenoit an son vis| Li vermaus sor le blanc assis' (her nose was straight and long, and the rosiness of the cheeks on her white face was more pleasing than vermillion on silver) (ll. 1780-82).[364] This long description, focusing on every detail is typical of Western descriptions of beauty in romance. However, Blancheflor's white face and rosy cheeks seems to be the one feature that is singled out as the epitome of her beauty later on the romance. When Perceval witnesses a falcon attack a goose in a meadow, he is fixated by three drops of blood spreading on the snow on the ground. As Perceval stares at the blood, the romance explicitly reveals that '[…] li sanz et la nois ensanble| La fresche color li resanble| Qui est en la face s'amie,' (blood mingled with the snow resembled the blush of his lady's face) (ll. 4133-35).[365] That the romance dispenses with the rest of the description and accentuates this feature reveals that it is an important indicator of her beauty. The emphasis on the perfect combination of red and white with regard to the beauty of a woman was so common in later Middle Ages that it was also used to describe Queen Sayiddah of Yemen, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Josian's fairness and beauty are reiterated in the romance. When King Ermin offers Beues both his kingdom and his daughter's hand in marriage if he agrees to convert, Beues acknowledges that Josain is '[…] so briȝt' (l. 564). The word 'briȝt' is repeated in reference to Josian when 'þat maiden briȝt' (l. 933) counsels her father to make Beues a knight in order to defeat Brademond. The audience is repeatedly reminded of Josian's

[364] Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans: suivis des Chansons, avec, en appendice, Philomena* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994), p. 996 (*Le Conte du Graal*, ed. by Charles Méla); Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romance*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 404.
[365] Ibid., pp. 1065; Ibid., p. 432.

beauty as after Beues's fight with Brademond, she is addressed as '"Iosian, þe faire maide"' (l. 1080) by her father. The words 'briȝt' and 'cler' are often used to describe Saracen women; although they do not explicitly refer to her fair complexion, these words indicate Josian's white skin and overall beauty. If there is any doubt left in the audience's mind regarding Josian's white complexion, it is put to rest when the romance overtly refers to her as 'Þat mai, þat was so briȝt of hiwe' (l. 1091) when she attends to Beues's wounds after he defeats Brademond. Although this description is in keeping with the generic representation of Saracen women, Josian is not only described as fair and beautiful, but also as '[…] þat maide fre' (l. 833). Even though Beues refers to Josian as a '"[…] heþene hounde"' (l. 692) early in the romance, a term usually used to refer to black Saracens or giants who either refuse or are physically incapable of converting to Christianity, however, she is represented as both beautiful and white in complexion. As discussed earlier, beauty, or in particular whiteness or clarity in complexion, tends to be symbolic of inner beauty and purity without which it seems impossible to convert to Christianity. St Bernard of Clairvaux discusses the physical manifestation of spiritual beauty in his *On the Song of Songs*. He further explains that this spiritual beauty radiates through 'membra et sensus' (the limbs and senses), diffusing through every aspect of an individual.[366] This beauty is certainly reflected in the description of Saracen women, in particular Josian, in the repeated references of them as 'briȝt'. It is by virtue of this brightness that they convert to Christianity and are pardoned unconditionally for any actions that might otherwise be considered unethical.

Sir Beues of Hamtoun presents a more complex representation of this seemingly simple relationship between beauty and purity of character. The connection between beauty and purity is overtly questioned by Beues in reference to his mother. When the romance introduces Beues's mother, the daughter of the king of Scotland, she is portrayed as 'Faire maide ȝhe was & bold,| And fre y-boren;' (ll. 32-33); however, soon after

[366] Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, ed. by Paul Verdeyen and Raffaele Fassetta, V, p. 392; *On the Song of Songs*, IV, p. 207.

helping her lover, the Emperor of Almayne, to kill to her husband, Beues questions the purity of her complexion, cursing her:

> "Allas, moder, þe faire ble!
> Euel be-comeþ þe, houre to be,
> To holde bordel,
> And alle wif houren for þe sake,
> Þe deuel of helle ich hii be-take,
> Flesch and fel!"
>
> (ll. 307-12)

This seems to be the first time in the romance that the assumption that having a fair complexion automatically identifies a character as virtuous, or worthy of conversion is undercut. Beues's claim that despite her 'faire ble' she is influenced by evil establishes the assumption that a fair complexion usually constitutes inner purity, however, Beues's mother seems to be in unnatural opposition to that unity.

Beues's mother is not the only character who is in opposition to the natural order of things in the romance. Ascopard the giant also defies conventional representations of Saracen giants. Ascopard appears fairly late in the romance, having been sent by Garci to retrieve Josian and kill Beues. Ascopard is described in the customary fashion of giants in Middle English romances:

> He was wonderliche strong,
> Rome þretti fete long;
> His berd was boþe gret & rowe;
> A space of a fot be-twene is browe;
> His clob was, to ȝeue a strok,
> A lite bodi of an ok
>
> (ll. 2507-12)

Later in the romance, when Beues attempts to recapture Southampton with the help of Ascopard, Beues's stepfather informs his comrades that Ascopard seems so strong that 'Erþliche man semeþ he nouȝt,| Ne noman of flesch ne felle,| Boute a fend stolen out of helle;' (ll. 3344-46). Morever, Ascopard's fearsome qualities are enhanced when he reveals that he was driven out of his own town because despite his incredible height and strength, compared to the other giants he was considered small and weak, so much so that '"Eueri man me wolde smite;| Ich was so lite & so meruȝ,| Eueri man me clepede

dweruȝ,"' (ll. 2524-26). Jeffrey Jerome Cohen draws a connection between Beues and Ascopard based on Ascopard's exile, suggesting that 'Ascopart's history exactly parallels that of Bevis'.[367] Although Beues and Ascopard share some sense of camaraderie for a part of the romance, Ascopard's eventual betrayal of Beues destroys any ideas of true fellowship between them. In spite of his hideous appearance, and Beues's confident assertion that he will surely betray them, Josian convinces Beues to spare Ascopard's life after he swears loyalty to Beues. Aspocard accompanies Josian and Beues as Beues's page, helping them and protecting Josian whenever the opportunity presents itself. In his discussion of Ascopard in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, Cohen proposes that perhaps it is due to their shared history of social exile that 'he [Ascopard] agrees at this defeat to become the knight's obedient page, to accept integration into the bodily system of socialized meaning that he had intended to destroy'.[368] Even though Ascopard does become Beues's 'obedient page' for a portion of the romance, his obedience is due to his submission to the chivalric code of honour initiated when Beues shows him mercy. It is specifically this code which Josian utilises to reason with Beues, suggesting that if Ascopard is spared, he will '"[…] ben our knaue"' (l. 2546). This same chivalric code is set in motion when Oliuer spares Ferumbras's life; Ferumbras even goes a step further and converts to Christianity.

Although Ascopard also consents to be baptised, when the bishop of Cologne prepares a font for him he resists by leaping onto a bench and accusing him: '[…] "Prest, wiltow me drenche?| Þe deuel ȝeue þe helle pine,| Icham to meche to be cristine!"' (ll. 2594-96). Even though Ascopart agrees to be christened at first, his reaction and refusal to be immersed in the font suggest a rejection of Christianity. Cohen suggests that a possible reason for his failure to submerge himself, and by extension be baptised, may be found in the etymology of Ascopard's name which he traces through *Mandeville's Travels* and the *Sowdone of Babylon*, to argue that it is as derived from a proper noun which designates '"a

[367] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 173.
[368] Ibid.

desert people of Near East"'.[369] However, this does not fully explain his failure to convert or integrate into the Christian world. Judging by the fate of most giants in Middle English romance, it is more plausible that this failure lies in his nature as a giant.

Ascopard's attempted baptism appears to be more successful in the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*.[370] *Boeve* explicitly mentions that Ascopard was too big to fit in the font and 'Ke dedens le fons ne put entrer.| Un grant couve funt aparailer| tut plein de ewe pur li baptiser;' (they prepared a great tub full of water in order to baptize him) (ll. 1957-59).[371] Unlike in *Beues*, Ascopard climbs into the tub and he is named Gui; this suggests that he is actually baptised. Despite this seemingly successful baptism, in a comical turn of events Ascopard finds the water too cold and confronts the bishop: '"Ke est ceo?" fet il "malveis velen herger,| mey volez vus en cest ewe neyer?| Trop su jeo crestien, lessez moi aler"' ("What is this?" he said, "Base, wicked shepherd, do you want to drown me in this water? Let me go; I've had enough of being a Christian") (ll. 1971-73).[372] This declaration certainly suggests that Ascopard renounces Christianity immediately after converting. This spontaneous rejection of Christianity is in keeping with the ideology that runs through both romances that aesthetic beauty is an indicator of inner purity, while ugliness indicates the absence of that purity which is necessary to convert to Christianity.

Ascopard's inherent nature is further represented when he reverts to his natural treacherous character and betrays Beues in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. As Calkin explains, Saracen knights fall into two categories, those who consent to convert to Christianity and those who do not. It seems Ascopard represents both categories, 'switching from one role to the other in the same romance'.[373] After Beues's horse Arondel accidentally kills King Edgar's son, Beues refuses to kill his horse in recompense and eventually becomes

[369] Ibid.
[370] Ascopart is named Escopart in *Boeve de Hauntome*.
[371] *Der Anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. by Albert Stimming, p. 72; *Boeve de Hamtoune* and *Gui de Warewic*: Two Anglo-Norman Romances, trans. by Judith Weiss (Arizona: ACMRS, 2008), p. 62.
[372] Ibid., p. 73; Ibid.
[373] Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Saracens', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 185-200 (p. 186).

impoverished. It is at this time that Ascopart reverses his loyalty and promises to kidnap Josian for King Yvor. As he has not been baptised, Ascopard easily reverts to swearing by Mahoun and Tervagaunt and promises to overpower Beues and kidnap Josian if King Yvor provides him with forty knights. Melissa Furrow suggests that 'the change in [Ascopart's] behaviour is so unprepared for that it produces the impression not of psychological complexity, but merely of incomprehensibility'.[374] Furrow supports Judith Weiss's suggestion that the portion of the extant Anglo-Norman poem after Beues's reclamation of Hamtoun is an extension by another author as Ascopard's betrayal does not seem sufficiently motivated.[375] Although that suggestion is plausible, Ascopard's betrayal may also be ascribed to his nature as a Saracen giant.

Ascopard is described in the same hideous manner as most Saracen giants in medieval romance, and more particularly, in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. The giant whom Beues encounters after escaping Brademond's prison is described in a similar fashion. Similar to Ascopard, the giant is very strong and thirty feet tall; furthermore, 'Þe staf, þat he to fiȝte ber,| Was twenti fote in lengþe be tale,| Þar to gret & noþing smale;' (ll. 1882-84). Once again, in an interesting reversal of roles, the lady of the giant's castle informs Beues that the giant '"[…] felleþ cristene men to grounde,| For he hateþ hem ase hounde!"' (ll. 1847-48). It is usually Christians in these romances who refer to Saracens as heathen hounds; Beues even refers to Josian as a heathen hound once in the romance. Judging from the frequency of its use, it seems to be the ultimate insult. Therefore, it is interesting that the insult is directed back at the Christians. Unlike Ascopard, this giant is not even given an opportunity to convert to Christianity. Regardless, it seems that even if the giants consent to convert on certain occasions, they are unable by nature to do so. This is most clearly represented in *Sir Ferumbras* when Charlemagne baptises the giant children after killing their mother. The giant children are successfully baptised but they

[374] Melissa Furrow, 'Ascopard's Betrayal: A Narrative Problem', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in the Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 145-160 (p. 145).
[375] Ibid., p. 146.

soon die afterwards, unable to survive as Christians. Although Ascopard's earlier homage to Beues renders the audience hopeful that he is indeed reformed, his later betrayal confirms that his ugly exterior is an indicator that he does not possess the inner quality to convert and change.

Josian conforms to the enamoured Muslim princess pattern common in both Middle English and Anglo-Norman romances. While most Saracen women in Middle English romance instantly fall in love with the Christian knights on viewing their prowess or meeting them, however, Josian gradually falls in love with Beues. After Beues passionately refuses to convert, the narrative informs the audience 'Þe king him louede also is broþer,| And þe maide, þat was so sliȝ:' (ll. 578-79). Athough her love for Beues's steadfastness of religion is mentioned, it is sometime after King Ermin takes Beues as his chamberlain that Josian reveals her love for Beues to the audience. When Beues leaves to fight the boar, Josian watches him ride into the woods and laments that she would give up all worldy pleasure if only Beues would take her as his lover. Following this declaration, Josian's desperation for Beues's love slowly increases as Josian watches Beues's martial prowess against the Saracen knights who accost Beues in a jealous fit for defeating the boar. While watching the fight, Josian declares

> "Oh Mahoun," ȝhe seide, "oure driȝte,
> What Beues is man of meche miȝte!
> Al þis world ȝif ich it hedde,
> Ich him ȝeue me to wedde;
> Boute he me loue, icham ded:"
>
> (ll. 891-95)

It is ironic that Josian invokes help and advice from the same Mahoun she easily forsakes for Beues. That Josian turns to Mahoun in her hour of need demonstrates that she has faith in her god. Despite this seemingly absolute trust in her god, Josian converts to Christianity for the sake of love. However, her faith is somewhat tested before she can sincerely accept her new religion.

After Beues defeats Brademond on behalf of King Ermin, Josian finally confesses her love to Beues and converts to Christianity for his sake. After the fight, when King

Ermin orders Josian to tend to Beues in her chamber; Josian takes this opportunity to finally tell him, '[…] "Beues, lemman, þin ore!| Ichaue loued þe ful ȝore,| Sikerli can I no rede,| Boute þow me loue, icham dede,"' (ll. 1093-96). Despite the extent of her love, demonstrated by the use of the general trope that if Beues does not love her, she will surely die, Beues refuses her affections on the grounds that while he is not wealthy enough to marry to her, Brademond, or any other rich man in this world, would marry her at first glance. Josian retaliates with desperation, stating that she would rather his '"bodi in þe scherte naked,| Þan al þe gold, þat Crist haþ maked"' (ll. 1107-08). Josian's attribution of creation to Christ here is rather peculiar, as she does not suggest converting to Christianity until almost a hundred lines later. This attribution to Christ is even more unusual as Josian reverts back to swearing by Mahoun almost immediately after her last appeal to Beues. True to her nature, when Beues continues to decline her offer of love, Josian resorts to threats by cursing and abusing him. Josian acknowledges that her beauty would indeed attract any king or sultan but goes on to insult him, '"And þow, cherl, me hauest for-sake"' (l. 1117); her speech momentarily ends with the curse '"Mahoun þe ȝeue tene and warke!"' (l. 1118). As if the combination of that insult and curse is not enough, Josian piles on the offence by claiming that he is more worthy to clean a ditch than to be dubbed a knight and allowed to interact with '"[…] maidenes briȝt;"' (l. 1122). It seems that when Josian wishes to appeal to Beues, she invokes Christ; however, she just as easily reverts back to old beliefs when she is unable to please him. Beues simply takes offence at the use of the term churl to describe him and rationalises that since his father was both an earl and a knight, he could not possibly be a churl. In addition, Beues refuses to endure her threats and leaves his chamber to take reside in town.

The episode continues as Josian instantly feels remorse for her words and sends her chamberlain Bonefas to Beues's chamber to apologise on her behalf and assure him that she has wronged him in word and deed; in response to her message, Beues tells Bonefas to inform Josian that her attempt at recompense was successful. As a reward for

bringing the message, Beues, in an obvious display of Western wealth, gives Bonefas '"A mantel whit so melk;| Þe broider is of tuli selk,| Beten abouten wiþ rede golde,| Þe king to were, þeȝ a scholde!"' (ll. 1157-60). This exorbitant gift for the mere delivery of a message symbolically sets the East and West into opposition with each other; the West appears superior as Beues matches the presumed wealth of King Ermin as well as demonstrates benevolent generosity compared to Josian's ungenerous accusation of Beues. This opposition is in keeping with the constant conflict between Christianity and a heathen-like Islam in this romance. Drawing a long episode leading to her conversion to a conclusion, Josian finally decides to personally apologise to Beues. It is only at the conclusion of this episode that Josian offers to convert for Beues's sake. In an act of humbleness, Josian weeps in front of Beues and appeals to him: '"For-ȝem me, þat ichaue misede,| And ich wile riȝt now to mede| Min false godes al for-sake| And cristendom for þe loue take!"' (ll. 1193-96). Her offer to convert seems to be a last resort to win Beues's favour and love.

Even though Josian consensually converts to Christianity, she does not get the opportunity to betray her father for Beues's sake. Josian's situation is significantly different from the other Saracen women discussed in this thesis as her father favours Beues from the moment he is introduced at the Armenian court. In fact, on his first meeting with Beues he loved him like a brother. To reinforce the legitimacy of this sentiment, Beues himself acclaims that '"He, þat me tok þis letter an honde,| He ne wolde loue me non oþer,| Þan ich were is owene broþer"' (ll. 1330-32) even though that statement will prove ironic when he reaches Brademond's court with the King's treacherous letter.

This relationship between a Christian and a Saracen is reminiscent of ʾUsāmah ibn Munqidh and the son of King Fulk in Munqidh's memoirs mentioned in the first chapter. Ibn Munqidh recounts that 'فانس بي وصار ملازمي يدعوني "اخي" وبيننا المودّة والمعاشرة' (he was of my intimate fellowship and kept such constant company with me that he began to call me

"my brother". Between us were mutual bonds of amity and friendship).[376] It seems that King Ermin and Beues also share a mutual bond of 'amity' up until the point that King Ermin decides to betray Beues's trust. King Ermin not only appoints Beues as his chamberlain, but also knights him and allows him to carry his banner. However, King Ermin's affection for Beues quickly disappears and he orders Brademond to imprison him. Much as the cordial relationship between Beues and King Ermin turns sour, ibn Munqidh's 'fellowship' with King Fulk quickly dissolves as well. As discussed earlier, when the Frank was about to return to his country, he offered to take ibn Munqidh's son with him so that he gain a chivalric education from the Franks. Ibn Munqidh was so offended by the offer that he writes that he would prefer his son to be held in captivity rather than having the misfortune of travelling with this Frank to his land.[377] Ibn Munqidh eventually replies with a polite excuse; however, the Frank's offer leads to the dissolution of the superficial brotherhood between the two individuals.

Therefore, this early relationship between King Ermin and Beues prevents any friction between Josian and her father as a result of her love for Beues. As Josian is deceived about Beues's absence when he is held captive by Brademond and is subsequently married off to King Yvor, she does not even learn about her father's betrayal until he is written out of the narrative and forgotten. Josian's lack of conflict with her father does not separate her from the cohort of the enamoured Muslim princess. Not only does Josian reject her father's choice of husband, she also betrays her religion by readily converting to Christianity for her lover's sake, despite the fact that she faithfully turns to Mahoun in times of need. This decision also creates a division between Josian and her Saracen culture; however, as discussed later, she arguably retains vestiges of her Saracen heritage.

[376] Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, ed. Ḥittī, p. 132; *Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh*, ed. by Ḥittī, p. 161.
[377] Ibid.

While Josian renounces her religion early on in the romance, she is not baptised until much later in Cologne. After Beues, Josian, and Ascopard arrive in Cologne, Beues's uncle, the bishop, baptises Josian and attempts to baptise Ascopard. Although Josian is indeed baptised, her baptism is certainly not as grand or ceremonious as Floripas's baptism. During her baptism scene, Floripas disrobes completely and is surrounded by Charlemagne and his lords, who admire her unparalleled beauty. In absolute contrast, only one line is dedicated to Josian's baptism: 'Þe beschop cristnede Iosian' (l. 2590). The romance moves on to a description of Ascopard's baptism. It is peculiar that only one line dedicated to Josian's baptism but several lines are used to describe Ascopard's failed baptism.

It is, however, interesting that right before Josian is baptised, Beues's uncle asks Beues about the identity of the '"[…] leuedi shene"' (l. 2581) and he explains that '"Sire, of heþenesse a quene,| And ȝhe wile, for me sake,| Cristendome at þe take"' (ll. 2582-84). Beues's language dissociates Josian from the woman he loves and reduces her to a heathen queen who has been conquered by him and is converting for his sake. In *Beues of Hamtoun*, as in *Sir Ferumbras* and *Octavian*, the celebrated Christian hero is symbolic of the greatness of the Christian faith; therefore the Saracen princess's decision to transfer love and loyalty to the Christian knight demonstrates the superiority of Christianity. This is further emphasised through the knight's dominance over the princess's father, either by conquering his land or through martial defeat. Erwin suggests that 'Christian men like Bevis need the love and conversion of Saracen women like Josian to validate their own identities'.[378] Although Beues fights the boar for the love of Josian, he otherwise seems unconcerned with Josian's love for him, demonstrated by the episode in which she reveals her love for him. While Josian is eager to win his love and marry him, he repeatedly refuses to marry her, angering her to the extent that she resorts to abusing him. Contrary to Erwin's theory, the emphasis in the romance on defeating Saracen kings and knights and

[378] Bonnie J. Erwin, 'A Good Woman is Hard to Find: Conversion and the Power of Feminine Desire in *Bevis of Hampton*', *Exemplaria*, 23:4 (2011), 368-89 (p. 371).

the supremacy of the Christian knight, Josian seems to become symbolic of the Holy Land and Christian possession of it with Beues's statement to his uncle being indicative of this ideology. Emphasis on Beues's travels through Armenia and Jerusalem for a large part of the romance before the focus shifts back to the repossession of his heritage in Southampton, reiterates the presence of this Crusading ideology.

Even after Josian consents to convert, it is suggestive that she has a crisis of faith. In her time of utmost trial, Josian questions the authenticity of her newfound religion before she is baptised. While Beues is trapped in Brademond's prison, Josian is married to Mombraunt for seven years. After seven years, Beues escapes from the prison, disguises himself as a palmer and finds that Josian is so weary of waiting for him that she questions the supremacy of his god. Disguised as a palmer, Beues comes upon Josian near a turret, making her moan:

> "O allas," ȝhe seide, "Beuoun,
> Hende kniȝt of Souþ-hamtoun,
> Now ichaue bide þat day,
> þat to þe treste i ne may:
> þat ilche god, þat þow of speke,
> He is fals & þow ert eke!"
>
> (ll. 2103-08)

Her complaint suggests that her trust and belief in the Christianity is only connected to Beues. Even though Josian is baptised after this incident, it is as Beues boasts to the bishop that Josian is converting for his sake. Josian does not renew her belief in Christianity after Beues reveals himself, suggesting that her belief, unlike Floripas's, is merely a belief of convenience. Despite this lack of true faith, Josian's conversion is a worthy conquest for Beues. Ermin further suggests that Josian's '[…] conversion represents the potential for feminine desire not only to alter identities but, in doing so, to challenge gendered social structures'.[379] In spite of Josian's consensual conversion to Christianity, it certainly seems that she does not forsake her identity and culture; indeed, the only thing she changes is her religion and even that conversion is superficial. Ermin's

[379] Ibid.

assertion that Josian challenges gendered social structures after she converts to Christianity does not seem to take the entire romance into consideration. Even before conversion Josian, just like Floripas, challenges gendered social structures; however, as discussed in the earlier chapter, those actions which can be considered as challenging gender stereotypes are very much in keeping with the characters of Muslim women in early Islamic empires.

'"[…] for loue o me"': Josian's Authority

One such attribute is Josian's influence over her father. Josian seems to enjoy a great deal of leniency from her father, as there is no one to challenge her opinions. Despite the absence of any opposition from her father's advisors, Josian still has the advantage of her advice remaining unchallenged at court. This unopposed influence may partly be because there is greater emphasis in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* on Josian being 'sliȝ' (l. 579) and 'fre' (l. 833) rather than being beautiful; this of course does not mean that she is not described as beautiful, as demonstrated earlier in the chapter. This influence over her father works to Beues's advantage. Towards the beginning of the romance, Beues is confronted by fifty Saracens from King Ermin's court on Christmas day. Despite being severely outnumbered, Beues manages to kill all the Saracen knights and return home to court. When King Ermin is informed of Beues's behaviour, he '[…] swor and seide is sawe:| For þi a scholde ben to-drawe' (ll. 653-54) for killing his knights. Josian, however, rushes to Beues's defence; swearing by Mahoun and Tervagaunt, she assures her father that Beues would not have slaughtered the Saracen knights without being provoked. In addition, acting as the voice of reason, she implores her father:

> "Ac, fader," ȝhe seide, "be me red,
> Er þow do Beues to ded,
> Ich praie, sire, for loue o me,
> Do bringe þat child be-fore þe!
> Whan þe child, þat is so bold,
> His owene tale haþ itolde,
> And þow wite þe soþ, aliȝt,
> Who haþ þe wrong, who haþ riȝt,
> ȝef him his dom, þat he schel haue,

Whaþer þow wilt him slen or saue!”

(ll. 661-70)

She further adds the invocation ‘for loue o me’ to add weight to her plea. Even in the midst of his anger, King Ermin trusts his daughter so thoroughly that without any resistance or invoking advice from any of his kings or advisors, he immediately accepts her ‘rede’ and replies, ‘“[…] Me douȝter fre,| Ase þow hauest seid, so it schel be!’” (ll. 671-72). In her discussion of this scene, Myra Seaman agrees that Josian is a ‘capable rhetorician’; however, she goes on to argue that Josian assumes, as would not be the case in most romances, that her opinion should and will be granted value’.[380] Although this may be true of other romance heroines, Saracen women in Middle English romances do possess a unique position in their fathers’ households that, as argued earlier, distinctively resembles the position of wives and daughters of caliphs in the Abbasid dynasty. Contact between the Muslims and the Christians in the Middle East may have influenced the representation of Saracen women in Muslim households in romance.

Judging from the fact that Josian fits the stereotypical representation of Saracen princesses in romance it is likely that even the audience would have anticipated the positive reception of Josian’s advice to her father. However, there is an important difference between Josian’s relationship with her father and that of Floripas in the previous chapter. Although both fathers seem to implicitly trust their daughters at the start of the romances, Floripas’s advice to Balan on several occasions is intended to manipulate her father to help the Christian knights; in contrast, Josian’s advice to her father is based on her love for Beues. Regardless of their intentions, their influence over their fathers initially remain absolute.

Bonnie J. Erwin writes that Josian’s ‘conversion represents the potential for feminine desire to not only alter identities but, in doing so, to challenge gendered social

[380] Myra Seaman, ‘Engendering Genre in Middle English Romance: Performing the Feminine in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*’, *Studies in Philology*, 98:1 (2001), 49-75 (pp. 58-59).

structures'.[381] Even though Josian converts to Christianity and swears Christian oaths, she continues to display characteriscs that associate her with her Saracen identity. In addition to her quintessential Saracen identity, Josian challenges gendered social structures from the moment she is introduced. As Judith Weiss argues, Saracen women are distinct from their Christian counterparts by having a talent for magic and medicine, and a greater tendency for violent behaviour.[382] Although Weiss's article deals mainly with *chanson de geste* and Anglo-Norman romance, the same characteristics apply to Saracen women in Middle English romance.

Josian's favour with her father allows her to exercise a great deal of authority over him, as well as his household. The influence Josian exercises over King Ermin at Christmas is not an isolated instance in the romance. A few years after Beues's massacre of the Saracen knights on Christmas day, a king named Brademond who loves Josian comes to Armenia and threatens King Ermin that if he does not give him Josian's hand in marriage he will defeat him in battle, destroy his kingdom, and slay him to gain revenge. King Ermin is about to retaliate by seeking advice from his knights when Josian, having seen Beues's skill in combat, relates to her father how Beues singlehandedly defeated a boar, the steward, the steward's twenty-four knights, and ten forsters being armed with nothing 'Boute a tronsoun of is spere,' (l. 942). In providing this evidence of Beues's prowess and skill, Josian suggests to her father that if Beues were knighted, he could champion Brademond on his behalf. King Ermin is so enthralled by her narrative that he does not further consult the knights he had summoned and immediately decides to knight Beues so that so that he can carry his banner.

It is significant that as a result of the King's initial respect for Beues, he chooses a Christian to represent him in battle, especially one who has not even been knighted. It is by virtue of Josian's exemplary narrative of Beues's fight, highlighting his extraordinary

[381] Erwin, "A Good Woman is Hard to Find", p. 371.
[382] Judith Weiss, 'The Wooing Woman in Anglo-Norman Romance', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 149-161 (p. 151).

skill when overpowered by his opponents, that her father chooses Beues to carry his banner. This is evidenced when immediately after Josian finishes her narrative, her father is so overcome by it that he '[…] swor his oþe' (l. 960). Both Josian's presence at the consultation and her intervention indicate that Josian has enough influence over her father and the household to express her opinion with open ease. As her advice clearly advances Beues's development as a knight, this move by Josian is a clear manipulation of her father who not only acts on her advice but does not chastise Beues for killing his steward, twenty four knights, and ten forsters. While she uses her influence to promote Beues, Josian's advice benefits both Beues and her father as Beues defeats Brademond and orders him to pay homage to King Ermin. Ironically, it is this same order to pay homage to King Ermin that facilitates the King's imprisonment of Beues later in the romance, using Brademond as his instrument. Josian is unable to save Beues from this imprisonment; however is it pertinent that she has no knowledge of her father's plan; otherwise the reader feels she would have been able to curb his rash decision until Beues could defend himself on the charge of defiling Josian. Even when Josian inquires after Beues's whereabouts, King Ermin deceives her by telling her that he has returned to his land to reclaim his birthright and has married the English King's daughter. Therefore, she is unable to rescue Beues from certain death at her father's hand.

Josian's influence extends beyond her father to her lover, and eventual husband, Beues. After Josian recognises the palmer as her lover Beues, they escape from the castle and hide in caves to escape king Garcy. They stay in the cave without food or drink for two entire days until they are both almost starved.[383] Josian seemingly feels the greater effects of starvation and turns to Beues for comfort, informing him that she is '[…] a-fyngered soore' (ll. 2357). This declaration has an adverse effect on Beues as he grows impatient, doubtless because of his own hunger, and aggressively accuses her, '[…] "How darst þou of me meete craue?| Wel þou wotest, þat noon y haue"' (ll. 2358-60). Josian,

[383] *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. by Kölbing, p. 114.

who has proved herself to be resourceful and is used to getting her way, as displayed by her abusive treatment of Beues after he refuses to marry her, recounts to him that she has heard of men hunting wild beasts in the wilderness and using their meat and hide for their needs. Josian instructs Beues to hunt animals in the same fashion; once he has succeeded, she will cook them for them. It is evident that without Josian's innovative suggestion, they would have starved to death. Although Beues's prowess in the romance remains unparalleled, he relies greatly on Josian's advice to guide him to greatness. Josian's resourcefulness also seems characteristic of other Saracen women in medieval romance.

Despite turning angrily on her just a few lines earlier, Beues instructs Bonefas to protect Josian and obligingly accedes to Josian's advice to hunt animals for food in the forest. Despite his initial resistance, the supremacy of the Saracen woman's advice remains constant. Somehow Saracen women in Middle English romance manage to control the men surrounding them, regardless of whether they are Christian or Saracen. When they are unable to control them, their instinctive reactions are violence and abuse, which usually allow them to maintain their agency. In this instance, Beues does not have the clarity of mind to hunt for food; therefore Josian's advice and control of the situation is invaluable. Other Saracen women discussed in this thesis also display unique inventiveness when faced with a crisis. However, Josian's relationship with Beues is hardly simple. Following the previous episode, lions surround Boniface and Josian while Beues is out in the forest hunting for food. Boniface tries to fend them off but is killed in the process, leaving Josian to deal with the lions. The romance specifically mentions that the lion could not harm her because she was both a maiden and a king's daughter.[384]

However, when Beues finds her with lions at her feet, she implores him to save her. As Salter explains that there '[…] is the assumption that lions and lionesses – as kings and queens of the animal world – are not only able to recognise humans of royal descent, but are actually physically incapable of doing them any harm, presumably on the grounds

[384] Ibid., p. 115.

of their shared royal kinship'.[385] Although she is not Christian, the same rule seems to apply to Josian but strangely enough this kinship does not extend to Beues. Even though Josian initially conforms to the traditional role of an agent to prove the hero's prowess, when Beues appears, she holds one lion at bay and 'A-boute þe nekke she hent þat oon' (l. 2411) while Beues kills the other lion. Her agency wounds Beues's pride and he commands her:

> […] "Dame, forsoth, y-wys,
> I myȝt ȝelp of lytel prys,
> There y had a lyon quelde,
> Þe while a woman a nother helde!
> Thou shalt neuer vmbraide me,"
>
> (ll. 2413-17)

Up to this point in the narrative it is usually Josian who advises and orders those around her; therefore, when she moves aside and allows Beues to fight the lions it is surprising and seems thoroughly out of character. Her passive observance, however, does not last long. A heroic narrative of Beue's battle with the lion ensues, complete with the traditional hyperbole, 'Strenger bataile ne strenger fyȝt| Herde ȝe neuer of no knyȝt| Byfore þis in romaunce telle,' (ll. 2423-25). However, the narrator informs the audience that when the lion assails Beues and throws his shield to the floor, Josian springs to action when she thinks Beues will be slain. Without hesitation she gladly helps him by seizing the lion. Once again Beues asks her not to intervene and goes as far as threatening her with death if she does not allow him to deal with the lioness. Despite being capable of keeping the lioness at bay, Josian does move away but not without moving forward and bringing Beues his shield. Throughout the episode Beues orders her to watch passively from the sidelines, but Josian, being brave and resourceful, keeps intervening, creating a strange dynamic between the couple.

There is a rather amusing contrast between Beues's honour and Josian's wondrous power over the lions. This conflict leads to an imbalance in gendered roles in the romance,

[385] David Salter, *Holy and Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 86.

as it is traditionally the knight who rescues the lady from danger. Josian's intervention is typical of her character, and indeed of most Saracen women in Middle English romance. Josian is unable to passively watch Beues fight the battle as she is accustomed to playing a significant role in her father's affairs. Therefore, even under threat of death, she cannot help but play a small role in the fight by bringing Beues his shield. Even so, the hierarchy of roles is soon re-established when Josian and Beues encounter Ascopard and later when Josian is about to give birth. When they encounter Ascopard, who has been sent by King Garcy to kill Josian, Beues fights with Ascopard; however, just as Beues is about to draw his sword and cut off Ascopard's head, Josian stops him from killing the giant. While Beues views Ascopard merely as an obstacle, Josian has more foresight and begs him: '"Sire" ȝhe seide, "so god þe saue,| Let him liuen & ben our knaue!"' (ll. 2545-46). Although Beues protests at first, when Ascopard consents to pay him homage, Josian's advice prevails and Ascopard undertakes the position of page. After this episode, a pattern becomes evident in the manner in which Josian reasons with both her father and her lover. When King Ermin is about impose justice on Beues at the beginning of romance without hearing Beues's account, Josian implores him to give Beues a chance to defend himself. In the same manner, when Beues is about to rashly kill the giant Ascopard, Josian shrewdly recognises the advantages of the company of such a strong creature on their travels and beseeches Beues to show mercy. Although Ascopard betrays them in the future, Josian's advice is still wise as he helps them in several encounters before he reverts to his treacherous nature. A similar pattern of reasoning, and at times outright manipulation, can be seen in the dealings of other Saracen women with their fathers and lovers. This ability is usually used in favour of the Christian knight; however, on several occasions it is used to control the knight himself.

Josian's control over Beues is futher highlighted later in the romance when she is about to give birth to twins in the woods. As Beues, his squire Terri, and Josian are travelling through woods on the way to Armenia, Josian suddenly goes into labour. Beues

and Terri alight from their horses and build a shelter for Josian with the help of their swords. When Beues offers his help, Josian abruptly refuses his help and scolds him,

> "For godes loue," ȝhe seide, "nai,
> Leue sire, þow go þe wai,
> *God* for-bede for is pite,
> Þat no wimman is priuite
> To noman þourȝ me be kouþe"
>
> (ll. 3627-31)

Following this assertive refusal, she commands him to leave with his squire '"And let me worþe & oure leuedy!"' (l. 3634). It is interesting to note that she begs the Virgin Mary's help during childbirth; this gesture, along with several Christian oaths earlier in the romance, indicates that by this point in the romance Josian has faithfully converted to Christianity. Although it is evident that she has forsaken her god, she still retains her Saracen identity. Beues and Terri follow her instructions and leave her in isolation to deal with the pain of childbirth. Josian's reaction may be demonstrative of the tradition that 'birth in the High Middle Ages was idealised as an occasion attended by women only', which is why perhaps Josian shuns her male companions.[386]

Harris-Stoertz provides several examples to demonstrate that birth was the provenance of women, including the example of Cedar entering the birth chamber after Eufemie gives birth in *Roman de Silence*, emphasising the justification in the narrative that '"Li voloirs qu'a del voir savoir| Tolt qu'il ne puet vergoigne avoir| Qu'al lit ne voist de l'acolcie"' (desire to know the truth took away any feeling of shame which would have kept him from approaching a woman in childbed) (ll. 2003-06).[387] Harris-Stoertz draws a comparison between the shame that Eufemie felt at Cedar's entrance and the assumption that Josian 'rejects her husband's help in delivering out of shame'.[388] However, it seems that shame is not the main motivating factor in Josian's case; as Josian informs her

[386] Fiona Harris-Stoertz, 'Midwives in the Middle Ages? Birth Attendants 600-1300', in *Medicine and Law in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Wendy J. Turner and Sara M. Butler (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 58-87 (p. 72).
[387] Ibid.; *Silence, A Thirteenth Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. by Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing: Michgan State University Press, 2007).
[388] Harris-Stoertz, 'Midwives in the Middle Ages?', pp. 72-73.

husband and his squire, it is for the sake of '"priuite"' (l. 3630) that she orders them to leave her alone. In particular, Josian's authoritative command to her husband displays her need for privacy rather than suggesting embarrassment. Although childbirth may have been the province of women, it is worth noting that Josian is forced to give birth alone, without the help of any midwives or attendants, in the middle of the woods. Beues and Terri's submission to Josian's wishes is even more noteworthy in light of Harris-Stoertz's argument against 'the idea of a strict division of labor in women's healthcare'.[389] Contrary to Green's extensive study of women's medical practice in the medieval period, and conclusions concerning the lack of division of labor in medical practice, Carl Rosenthral's evidence displays that 'although male physicians considered themselves competent to treat the full range of gynecological disorders' there is evidence of a man manually examining a woman's vagina for a gynecological disorder'.[390] Even if Green's study is correct in suggesting that male physicians were interested in women's health and possibly even present at childbirth, there is nothing to suggest that a male family member such as Beues would be present during childbirth. In either case, it is significant that Beues and Terri do not resist the instructions that Josian authoritatively gives them.

In addition to helping King Ermin and Beues, Josian also manages to advise her sons during a time of crisis. After she receives news that Beues has been killed in London, she swoons and her sons enquire what has upset her so greatly. Even in her despair, Josian informs her sons of the news and instructs them to '"Now keþe, ȝe ben noble kniȝtes,| And wrekeþ ȝour fader wiþ ȝour miȝtes!"' (ll. 4465-66). Her sons immediately vow to follow her instructions to avenge their father's death. It is surprising that in a romance centred around a knight, it is a woman who gives advice and instructions to characters. However, Josian does not hesitate to control a situation whenever she gets the opportunity;

[389] Ibid., p. 73.
[390] Monica Green,'Women's Medical Practice and Healthcare in Medieval Europe', *Signs*, 14:2 (1989), 434-73 (p. 468).

especially in the case of Beues, Josian manages to save his life on several occasions through her assertiveness.

Josian's authoritativeness and power of persuasion extend to her enemies as well. After the earl Miles, who has fallen in love with Josian in Beues's absence, tricks Ascopard into leaving her side by means of a forged letter, Josian finds herself in the dangerous position of marrying the earl despite trying to reason with him that she loves Beues. As Seaman suggests, although Josian does send Beues a message when she realises that she will be forced to marry the earl, she does not wait for him to save her; instead she takes control of the situation and Miles through her powers of persuasion and rhetoric that have served her so well with her father and lover.[391]Josian is unable to convince Miles not to force her to marry him since he is intent that '"Y schel þe wedde aȝenes þe wille,| To morwe y schel hit ful-fille!"' (ll. 3169-70), however she does formulate a bold plan to escape marriage and rape at the hands of Miles. The deferral of rape is not uncommon in romance; as Saunders explains, 'in chivalric romance, as in saint's lives, rape is repeatedly deferred; abductions occur, rape and enforced marriage are threatened, but the woman's honour is almost invariably upheld'.[392] Although Josian fits within the romance tradition in which rape is never realised, except in the case of a supernatural threat; however, by subverting the threat of rape through her own devices, she robs Beues of the opportunity to distinguish himself by not only saving her from Miles but also enforcing justice.[393]

After the wedding Josian is led to the bedchamber to consummate the marriage; however, they are followed 'Wiþ kniȝtes gret compainie| Wiþ pyment and wiþ spisorie' (ll. 3187-88). Josian uses her wit, appealing to female embarrassment to coax Miles into dismissing the company of knights from their bedchamber. Aided by perfect logic, she implores Miles to grant her a boon; this request is followed by a clever invocation: for '"loue of me"', she implores Miles to command the knights and maidens to leave so '"Þat

[391] Seaman, 'Engendering Genre in Middle English Romance', p. 62.
[392] Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 187.
[393] Ibid., pp. 187-88; pp. 197-98.

noman se our priuite"' (l. 3200). A variation of this invocation is used by Josian in various instances in the romances; she uses the same phrase to influence her father's dealings with Beues and appeals to Beues '"And cristendom for þe loue take!"'(l. 1196). In all three instances, her entreaties to love are meant to manipulate; even her statement to Beues is a final attempt to convince him to marry her. Her reasoning with Miles is once again very simple; she suggests that '"Wimmen beþ schamfast in dede| And namelich maidenes…"'(ll. 3201-02). Modern readers might imagine Josian subtly seducing Miles using a sugary tone but perhaps that may be too anachronistic. However, she does manage to use her powers of rhetoric to convince Miles to dismiss the knights and maidens and lock the door of their bedchamber for privacy. The following events are described in meticulous detail, down to Miles taking off his shoes and dressing for bed, as if the scene does not simply display a helpless woman escaping the clutches of rape but demonstrates Josian's skill and resourcefulness. In the following scene, Josian embodies the stereotypical figure of the Saracen woman who would go to extreme lengths to fulfil her purpose, even to the extent of utmost violence or murder. This purpose is signalled to the audience via the narrator's interjection after Miles locks the door, 'Litel a wende haue be so veie' (l. 3208), leaving the audience in excited anticipation.

The cold calmness with which Josian handles the situation is typical of Saracen women discussed in this thesis. Josian waits for Miles to undress for bed before lulling him into a false sense of security. She then approaches the bed which has 'A couertine on raile tre,| For noman scholde on bed ise' (ll. 3217-18). It is almost as if the audience is viewing the scene from Josian's viewpoint since immediately after the coverlet and rail are mentioned, the audience is informed that Josian has formulated a plan:

> On a towaile ȝhe made knotte riding,
> Aboute his nekke ȝhe hit þrew
> And on þe raile tre ȝhe drew;
> Be þe nekke ȝhe haþ him vp tiȝt
> & let him so ride al þe niȝt
>
> (ll. 3220-24)

In this scene, even Mile's hanging is described in excruciating detail, including the image of Miles body hanging from the railing for the entire night. Perhaps this demonstrates Josian's bold, unwavering resolve in the face of the violence she has to exact in order to escape rape.

This encounter with Miles and the manner in which Josian handles the threat of rape is similar to the steps Judith takes to protect herself and her people from Holofernes in the Book of Judith. In the Book Holofernes is overtaken by his desire for Judith and orders his servant to convince her to accompany him for the evening meal through her own consent. The eunuch convinces Judith to join Holofernes and she promises to do everything in her power to please him. When they meet for the meal, Holofernes is overjoyed and drinks more wine than he had on any occasion.[394] Intoxicated by drink, Holofernes falls fast asleep in his bed and the servants leave Judith alone with him in his chamber. Once alone with Holofernes, Judith stands in front of his bed and prays to god to give her strength to carry out her task. She then takes a sword from the pillar next to the bed, draws the sword, and takes hold of Holofernes's head using his hair. She then strikes Holofernes's neck twice with the sword and decapitates him. Finally she takes the canopy from the bed and rolls away his headless body.[395] There are certain differences between Judith's dealings with Holofernes and those of Josian's with Miles. The most obvious difference is that while Josian was abducted against her will and hung Miles from the canopy to protect herself against the threat of rape, Judith joined Holofernes out of free will to gain access to him to protect her people. However, both Josian and Judith ruthlessly take advantage of a vulnerable moment to kill men who pose a threat to them. Even the methods they employ to kill the men are similar; although Josian chooses to hang Miles while Judith depitates Holofernes, they both make use of the canopy as a tool to deal with the men's bodies.

[394] Book of Judith, 12. 10-20 <http://www.drbo.org/chapter/18012.htm>
[395] Book of Judith, 13. 1-10 <http://www.drbo.org/chapter/18013.htm>

Aspects of the overall episode with Miles are also somewhat reminiscent of the situation Shajar al-Durr found herself in during the time of the Seventh Crusade. Much like Josian, she was an influential figure during her time, both as the wife of the Ayyubid leader al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ and individually in keeping up the morale of the Muslim troops against St Louis's Crusade. Like Josian, Shajar al-Durr was queen but became sole ruler when her husband was killed in the Battle of Manṣūra on 9th February 1250.[396] When al-al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ was killed in battle, his heir, Tūrān Shāh was absent from Egypt. In light of his absence, his mother Shajar al-Durr, with the help of a senior Mamlūk Amīr concealed the fact that the Ayyubid leader had died at battle; during Tūrān Shāh's absence, his mother even forged official documents as resistance against the Crusaders continued.[397] Eventually Tūrān Shāh returned to Egypt and Shajar al-Durr surrendered the position to her son. Despite being successful in retaliating against the Crusaders, he insulted his father's senior Mamlūks 'by threatening them and assigning members of his own Mamluk retinue to the major posts in the state'; therefore, within two months of his reign a group of Mamlūks assassinated him on 2nd May 1250.[398]

Follwing Tūrān Shāh's assassination, the Mamlūks, impressed by Shajar al-Durr's ability and in acknowledgment of her role as the prince's mother, elected her queen.[399] In response to this election, the Caliph of Baghdad sent word to the Egyptian leaders warning them regarding their choice of a female ruler that '"if they had no man among them, he would send them one"'.[400] After receiving this taunting warning, Shajar al-Durr, much like her fictional counterpart Josian, was forced to marry one of the leading Mamlūks, 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak. Although her new husband was given the title of Sultan of Egypt, the majority

[396] Keppel Archibald Cameron Cresswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952-1959), II, p. 135.
[397] Ibid.; Niall Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders: Christianity's Wars in the Middle East 1095-1382* (New York: Routledge: 2014), p. 99.
[398] Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders*, p. 99; Cresswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, p. 135.
[399] Cresswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, p. 135; Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders*, p. 99.
[400] Cresswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, p. 135.

of power remained with the queen. The events that follow after the marriage display the remarkable resemblance of Josian's fate to that of Shajar al-Durr.

The Sultan Aybak, intent on legitimising his title, send word to the Caliph requesting the insignia of investiture and promised to marry the daughter of the Amīr of Mosul. When Shajar al-Durr learned of this plan, she grew 'mad with jealousy', and much in the spirit of Josian, she had him murdered in his bath on 12th April 1257. Josian is portrayed like Shajar al-Durr, possessing the capability of doing whatever is necessary, even ruthlessly committing murder, to further her goals. She is portrayed as murdering her new husband on their marriage night to preserve her chastity for her beloved, however, Shajar al-Durr commissions murder to maintain power. Although it is suggested that Shajar al-Durr killed her husband due to jealousy regarding a second marriage, there is an overt suggestion that her jealousy was sparked due to a potential loss of power if her husband took a second wife, rendering her redundant.

Shajar al-Durr's fate also somewhat parallels that of Josian; however, Josian has the good fortune of being saved while Shajar al-Durr suffers a most violent death. For her commission of murder, Aybak's Mamlūks imprisoned her in the Red Tower of the Citadel and three days later she was handed over to Aybak's former wife, whom Shajar al-Durr had forced him to divorce preceding their nuptials. This former wife, overcome by vengeance, had her beaten to death with the wooden clogs of her slave girls on 14th April 1257.[401] This punishment was not deemed sufficient and in an act of further desecration, her body was thrown in the Citadel ditch to be defiled by dogs. After three days, her bodily remains were buried in a mausoleum.[402]

Her romance counterpart Josian's murder of the Earl Miles also has dire consequences. The day after their wedding when Miles's barons rise to go church and hunt they are surprised that Miles has not risen from sleep, however, they allowed him to continue sleeping. By midday, when he still does not emerge from his bedchamber, the

[401] Ibid., pp. 135-36.
[402] Ibid., p. 136.

barons enter the room and try to revive him as they believe him to be asleep. Josian assures them that he would not awake and confesses to his murder, appealing to their reasoning to 'ȝerstendai he me wedded wiþ wrong| & to niȝt ichaue him honge' (ll. 3253-54). Her defence has no effect beyond causing them sorrow at his death. In the same way that the Mamlūks could not tolerate the murder of their leader, Miles's barons and household condemn Josian to be burnt to death for her crime. Although this sentence does not seem as creative or vicious as Shajar al-Durr's sorry fate, it may seem extreme since Josian has a legitimate reason for killing her husband. They lose no time and 'Wiþ oute þe toun hii piȝte a stake,| Þar þe fur was i-make,| Þe tonne þai hadde þer iset,| Þai fette wode and elet' (ll. 3261-64). Fortunately the priest who is called to receive her confession holds her long enough for Beues and Ascopard to rescue her. Unlike Shajar al-Durr, Josian manages to escape just in time. Despite the difference in conclusion, the stories bear a strong resemblance to each other. The afterlife of the figure of Shajar ad-Durr gives some credence to the possibility of literary influence.

The story of Shajar al-Durr and her second husband Aybak is preserved in the *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baībars*, a sīra that narrates the story of the thirteenth century ruler and hero, al-Ẓāhir Baībar. It is difficult to categorise the contents of this sīra as the term does not have an equivalent in English. According to Reynolds, sīra his 'literally a travelling, a journeying, or a path' and can be used to refer to 'a history, a biography, or even a mode of behaviour or conduct'. The term sīra was first applied to a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad by ibn Isḥāq and the term was vaguely applied to several different types of writing; however, it came to be associated with the idea of biography as the genre evolved.[403] The legend of the death of Shajar al-Durr and Aybak was alive in the popular imagination and many different versions were circulated; however, the one immortalised in the *Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baībars* is particularly enticing and would certainly have entertained the public in its oral recitation. The *Sīra* sets the scene within the realm of the private as

[403] Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 5.

Shajar al-Durr is bathing her husband, 'as was her custom'.[404] In the midst of this intimate act, she scolds her husband for taking a young slave-girl as a concubine. Similar to Josian, who convinces Miles to order members of his household to clear the room for reasons of privacy, Shajar al-Durr coaxes her husband into false sense of security by softly asking him '"Do I no longer please you"'. When he answers sharply that the slave-girl possesses youth which she no longer possesses, Shajar al-Durr, calmly, somewhat like Josian, rubs soap in his eyes 'while whispering conciliatory words to allay any suspicion'.[405] She then suddenly takes a dagger and stabs him in the side. According to the *Sīra*, she tries to dispose of the body with the help of her faithful slaves but one of Aybak's sons notices bloody water emerging from drain and catches Shajar al-Durr with the stained dagger at the door.[406] Her stepson follows her through the palace corridor and alerts the guards to capture her. Just as the guards are about to seize her, she falls onto the floor slamming her head against a slab of stone.

The *Sīra* changes the story to suit its purpose, as sexual intrigue would certainly be more successful in enthralling an audience than the original story of political strife. In doing so, the *Sīra*, supposedly a biography of al-Ẓāhir Baībar, inserts elements that might be found in a romance. As Shatzmiller notes, these cycles 'represent oral accretive tradition, based on manipulation of standard narrative ingredients in which a concern for historical accuracy is not among the narrators' priorities'.[407] The *Sīra* has such disregard for accuracy that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is represented as recapturing Baghdad from the Mongols, the Muslims are shown as capturing Genoa, fighting in Rome, and most prominently, killing the King of England in his own capital.[408] Although inaccurate, these false events represent the hopes of the Muslim public and perhaps the stories floating about in the

[404] Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, trans. by Jon Rothschild (London: Al-Saqi Books, 1984), p. 244.
[405] Ibid.
[406] Ibid., p. 245.
[407] Maya Shatzmiller, *Crusaders and Muslims in Twelfth Century Syria* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), p. 149.
[408] Ibid.

public's imagination. This version of Shajar al-Durr and her husband's death may well reflect one version circulated among the public; the fact that it was included in the *Sīra* demonstrates how widely distributed it must have been in Egypt and the surrounding regions. Sīra like these may have also been publicly recited, much like the popular romances of the late medieval period, and may have possibly been heard by Christians in such diverse gatherings. These events are after all not very far from those included in medieval romance and specifically in the texts being discussed. The assassination of the King of England, clearly a common aspiration among the Muslims, is not so very different from Roland's killing of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, even though Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn is portrayed as cursory figure in *Sir Ferumbras*. Furthermore, the recovery of Baghdad can be compared to the recovery of Armenia, an important Christian territory in the later Crusades, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

'Boþe fysik and Sirgirie ȝhe hadde lerned of meisters grete': Josian's Mastery of Medicine

One of the qualities that intrinsically defines Josian's character in the romance also establishes her Saracen heritage throughout the romance. This is Josian's skill and expertise in medicine and the marvellous, which are closely associated here, and indeed in other medieval romances. Floripas, discussed in the previous chapter, is also associated with knowledge of medicine; when she notices that Oliver is wounded in *Sir Ferumbras* she gives him a drink that will make him '[…] hol anon,| & recuuer y al þy myȝt' (ll. 1384-85). Not only does she determine which drink to administer for his wound, she also knows that the drink needs to be consumed warm to take effect. This medicine forms part of the marvellous medicine associated commonly with the East, as even Oliver is surprised when the drink takes immediate effect and heals his wounds instantly. This marvellous drink is not mentioned in *The Sowdone of Babylone*, which substitutes this demonstration of medical ability with the preparation of a bath for the knights; this however, again demonstrates Floripas's medical knowledge as baths were commonly

considered to possess healing qualities and the knights are soon rejuvenated and in 'right gode cher' (l. 1656). Finally, Floripas produces a girdle with marvellous qualities that she describes as medicine to cure their hunger and thirst. Floripas's knowledge of medicine clearly seems to veer towards the marvellous and she can be associated with the healing women whom the physician in *The Book of Misers* so emphatically criticises for stealing his patients. As will be seen, other Saracen women in Middle English romance are also associated with the marvellous.

From the beginning of the romance, Josian is also portrayed as possessing considerable skill in medicine. When Beues kills King Ermin's knights on Christmas day, Josian appeals to her father to listen to Beues's account of the incident before consigning his to death. When Josian approaches Beues's chamber, she finds him sorely wounded and she gives him an ointment that she claims will '"[…] make þe boþe hol & fere"' (l. 717). Although the effects of the ointment are not described, despite the severe wounds, Beues is able to sufficiently recover to appear before the King. After proving his innocence to the King, Beues reveals forty gruesome wounds on his body from the fight. Despite the severe nature of his wounds, King Ermin requests his daughter to heal Beues '"[…] ase þow can"' (l. 729). While King Ermin openly claims that he could not bear to lose Beues, he trusts in his daughter's ability to heal Beues rather than summoning a physician to treat his wounds. It becomes clear that Josian has extraordinary healing abilities when she takes him to a chamber and through the means of 'riche baþes' (l. 732), in a short while Beues is '[…] boþe hol a sonde' (l. 734), so much so that '[…] he ase fresch to fiȝt' (l. 735). Considering the severity of Beues's wounds, his almost instant recovery is extraordinary. Although the quick effects of Josian's treatment seem incredible, it appears that Josian has a good understanding of common natural remedies associated with herbal medicine, as ointments and baths were commonly used to heal wounds. Elizabeth Archibald discusses several examples of heroes in medieval texts recovering from temporary madness, fatigue, or wounds through the use of baths. Ladies use baths to heal Ywain in *Ywain and Gawain*

and Sir Eglamour is given a bath after hunting a boar, although in Sir Eglamour's case it is unclear whether the bath is provided to heal wounds he may have incurred during hunting or simply to recover from the fatigue of the hunt.[409] Oddly enough, Beues does not require any medical attention after his own strenuous fight with a boar. Classen also provides another example of healing through baths in Wolfram von Eschenback's *Parzival*. When the young Parzival arrives at the court of the knight, and later mentor, Gurnemanz, Parzival is given a bath and massaged by maids to heal his bruised body.[410] These examples reveal that bathing was used to treat both the wounded mind and the body in the Middle Ages. Further evidence for the use of baths for medicinal purposes can be found in the writings of Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Sīnā makes several references to both hot and cold baths and its effects on the pulse.[411] He also suggests using baths to treat Furunculosis. Furunculosis causes boils which break up into ulcers; if the boils turn black, they are fatal, however, if they are white or red in colour they do not pose a serious threat. He suggests that boils should be treated by infusing water with a mild astringent like 'roses, myrtle, mastic leaves, or tamarisk' and washing the body with it. When the same boils break into ulcers he recommends that a white ointment should be applied to it or the boils should be bathed in honey water with a small amount of niter. Ibn Sīnā prescribes the same treatment for ulcerative stomatitis. In addition to these treatments, he further suggests a 'decoction of myrtle, rose, bog rush, and young mastic leaves' to treat vesicular eruptions on the face.[412] Josian, therefore, draws upon a well-known medical tradition of healing baths to treat Beues's forty wounds. At first it seems that Josian inherits the tradition of herbal knowledge practised by women, who tended to the basic medical care of members in their

[409] Archibald, 'Did Knights have Baths', p. 103.
[410] Albrecht Classen, '"The 'Dirty Middle Ages": Bathing and Cleanliness in the Middle Ages. With an Emphasis on Medieval German Courtly Romances, Early Modern Novels, and Art History: Another Myth Buster', in *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: Explorations of Textual Presentations of Filth and Water*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 458-500 (p. 480).
[411] Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Sīnā, *The Canon of Medicine (al-Qānūn fi al-ṭibb)*, ed. by Laleh Bakhtiar, 5 vols (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World: Kazi Publications, 1999-2014), I, pp. 310-11.
[412] Ibid., p. 372.

family and household. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the eleventh century Christian physician, Sāʿid ibn al-Ḥasan emphatically complains about this particular issue claiming that it is surpring that patients allow 'امراة أو والدة او بعض اهله او جيران' (wives, their mother, or aunt, or some other member of his family or his neighbours) to attend to their illness and consume whatever form of medine they provide them.[413]

Like the women in al-Ḥasan's complaint, Josian attends to Beues's wounds on her father's behest through the use of baths and an ointment, techniques that seem fairly basic. It is later towards the end of the romance that it is revealed that Josian has received formal medical training. As Ascopart, who has once again reversed his loyalty, is about to abduct Josian for king Yvor, the narrator breaks off to inform the audience that while Josian was in Armenia,

> Boþe fysik and sirgirie
> ȝhe hadde lerned of meisters grete
> Of Boloyne þe gras and of Tulete,
> Þat ȝhe knew erbes mani & fale,
> To make boþe boute & bale
>
> (ll. 3672-76)

This description of Josian's training defines the nature of her medicine, which often borders on the marvellous; as the narrator elucidates, Josian is trained in both herbal medicine and the Hippocratic medicine of the period, based on the humoural system. Her medical knowledge is capable of both healing and hurting people; this ability distinguishes her from other practitioners of medicine and magic in the romance.[414] Josian's knowledge of 'fysick and sirgirie' is uncommon as most women in medieval romance, as well as women practising household medicine in the East, only have an understanding of herbal medicine; other branches of learned medicine seem to have been the realm of male practitioners. Even though she has the ability to cause harm through medicine, she only

[413] Al-Ḥasan, *Kitāb al-Tashwīq al-tibbī*, ed. by Otto Spies, p. 27b; Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, p. 103.
[414] Corinne Saunders, 'Middle Age in Romance? Magic, Enchantment and Female Power', in *Middle-Aged Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Sue Niebrzydowski (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 37-52 (p. 44).

uses her abilities to heal or protect, thus placing her abilities within the category of white magic.

Josian's skills and training also seem to be exemplary: as Saunders discusses, the places of learning mentioned by the poet are prominent centres of learning. 'Boloyne þe gras' or Bologna 'la grassa' was a great centre of medical learning in Italy from the early thirteenth century onwards and 'Tulete', or Toledo, represents the Arabic learning that thrived under Muslim rule.[415] Josian's learning seems to extend to an impressive combination of the knowledge of both the East and the West. This training distances Josian from the figure of the common household healing or wise woman, who, if al-Ḥasan is to be believed, caused more harm than healing due to her lack of professional training in medicine. Despite her formal medical education, Josian's skills tend towards the marvellous; as Saunders explains that Josian's abilities appear credible due to the realistic detail included in her practice of medicine.[416] These skills extend to the use of marvellous charms and amulets. After Beues is imprisoned by Brademond, Josian is married against her will to king Yvor. Even though her father deceives her through false news of Beues's return to Southampton, Josian senses that her father is not being entirely truthful. Therefore, when she is married to king Yvor, she vows to wear a ring '"Þat of swiche vertu is þe ston:| While I ichaue on þat ilche ring,| To me schel noman haue welling"' (ll. 1470-72). This ring allows her to preserve her chastity and remain true to Beues; the qualities of this stone on this ring appear entirely magical rather than associated with the healing arts. The use of such a stone suggests Josian's knowledge of natural or white magic that was usually associated with herbal medicine in the Middle Ages.

Stones, ligatures, and amulets were often used in the practice of such medicine; however, it is clearly distinguished from black magic, especially in this romance. An important distinction between natural and black magic was made in terms of the intention

[415] Corinne Saunders, 'Gender, Virtue and Wisdom in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', in *Sir Bevis of Hampton in the Literary Tradition*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjević (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 161-175 (p. 172).
[416] Saunders, 'Middle Age in Romance?', p. 44.

of the practitioner; as Saunders explains, 'the difference is not in the kind of magic so much as in extent and use, and the motivation of the practitioner'.[417] Furthermore, it was generally believed that the efficacy of charms was dependent on divine intervention; unless the faith of the practitioner and the cause pleased God, the desired effect would not transpire.[418] Josian's intentions in using the ring are pure as she wishes to preserve her chastity and escape rape. Considering the emphasis on chastity in Christianity, perphaps it is no surprise that the ring fulfils its purpose.

Despite the use of charms with such marvellous protective qualities, the romance is very particular about distancing Josian from the figure of the enchantress. In both the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Hamtoun* and the Chetham Library version of the Middle English romance, Josian preserves her chastity using a girdle rather than the ring that is described in the Auchinleck version. As Saunders suggests, the earliest English version may have followed the Anglo-Norman tradition and included a girdle instead of a ring, however, the later redactor may have replaced the girdle with the ring due to the negative associations with the use of girdles emphasised by the Church.[419] These associations might align Josian with unholy practice of black magic and the figure of the enchantress. Josian is further distanced from such unsavoury figures through favourable comparison with characters who practise the dark art of necromancy.

While the author of the Auchinleck *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* is careful to distance Josian from the dangerous associations of the girdle, Floripas does not escape them in all three versions of the Middle English redactions of *Fierabras* in her use of the healing girdle, which is essential to the narrative. However, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter, the redactors of the Middle English versions of *Fierabras* manage to disassociate Floripas from the figure of the enchantress through the contrasting portrayal of the necromancer Maubyn. The distinction between Floripas's healing magic and Maubyn's

[417] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Romance*, p. 155.
[418] Ibid., p. 153.
[419] Saunders, 'Middle age in Romance?', p. 45.

dark magic becomes clear from the description of Maubyn's talents as he climbs the tower to Floripas's chamber. The author of the Auchinleck *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* takes advantage of the same technique. After king Yvor's marriage to Josian, he is deceived by Beues into rushing to the aid of his brother and leaving Josian under the protection of king Garcy. King Garcy is portrayed as no ordinary king; Sir Boniface reveals to Beues that king Garcy is endowed with the abilities to practice Necromancy and '"He may see in his goldryng,| What any man dooth in alle þing"' (ll. 2299-2300). Initially the qualities of this ring do not seem very different from those of Josian's marvellous ring; however, there is a difference in the nature of magic they practise as king Garcy's skills are explicitly referred to as the practice of Necromancy. Necromancy in medieval romance has different associations from the modern notion of necromancy as the art of dealing with the dead. As Saunders explains, medieval 'nigromancy' owes its linguistic etymology to 'Latin niger, black (rather than Greek, nekros corpse), and is invariably spelled to indicate this'.[420] According to Saunders, the practice of 'nigromancy' is not portrayed as largely different from natural magic; however, it is according to Helen Cooper's definition, 'magic on the edge of acceptability, not magic conducted through the agency of the dead'.[421] By invoking king Garcy's skill at 'Nygremancy', the romance signals the unacceptable nature of his magic. However, Josian's intentions for using her ring protect her against such negative associations. Furthermore, king Garcy's 'nigromancy' is countered by Sir Boniface's natural use of magic, so similar to Josian's own practice; his use of natural magic is authorised by his noble intention to save Josian from the clutches of king Yvor and his company. After revealing the qualities of Garcy's ring, Sir Boniface assures Josian and Beues that he knows how to counter its effects. This method makes use of herbal medicine, very similar to the kind of medicine Josian commonly practises in the romance, by soaking a herb found in the forest in Rhenish wine. Sir Boniface explains that anyone who drinks this mixture will compulsively sleep for an entire day and night. If Garcy

[420] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Romance*, p. 154.
[421] Ibid.

drinks that mixture he would be forced to fall asleep; therefore he will not be able to use his ring to follow them once they flee with Josian.

The mixture works just as Sir Boniface has described and king Garcy awakes the next day surprised that he had slept so long. By the time Garcy arises from the deep slumber, Sir Boniface, Beues, and Josian have been successful in escaping and in putting sufficient distance between themselves and Garcy to foil any attempt at capturing them. It is not just the herbal association that distinguishes Sir Boniface's practice from Garcy's use of darker magic; rather his intention in using the mixture is crucial. Sir Boniface's intention is noble in helping Beues rescue Josian from a forced marriage and is therefore aligned with the motivation underlying the kind of natural medicine and magic Josian frequently displays in the romance. In this romance, as in the others discussed, the context of the use of magic or medicine is very significant; the use of marvellous medicines or objects by Saracen women is purely for the purposes of healing or protection; they are never used to inflict harm.

However, natural magic and medicine does not entirely remain the domain of Saracens, and in particular Saracen women, in medieval romance. Chrétien de Troyes's *Le Chevalier au Lion* (*Yain*) provides an example of a healing ointment similar in nature to the ointment Josian applies to Beues's wound at Christmas; however, the maiden who administers the ointment to Yvain does not possess Josian's knowledge and proficiency in natural magic. After Yvain is overcome by madness and flees to the forest, a maiden discovers him sleeping naked and recognises him as a virtuous knight. When she informs her lady of her discovery, she entrusts to her maiden the task of applying an ointment she has received from Morgan le Fay which will cure Yvain's madness. The lady gives the maiden precise instructions not to be too generous with the ointment and to apply to the temples and forehead only as the madness plagues his mind. The maiden, untutored in natural magic, eagerly applies the ointment all over Yvain's body, emptying the entire box her lady had given her; the romance elucidates 'S'il en i eüst .v. sestiers,| S'eüst ele autel

fait, je cuit' (Had there been five gallons of the ointment she would have done the same) (ll. 3008-09).[422] The romance emphasises her enthusiasm by describing the application of the ointment to several parts of the body in repetitive detail. The romance assures the audience that the maiden did this in good faith as she was eager to expel the madness but as she did not possess any knowledge about natural magic or medicine she foolishly applied it to the entire body when only application to the temples and forehead was necessary.[423] Although the additional ointment has no adverse effects and Yvain is marvellously cured of his madness, the action is presented as an unnecessary waste of precious ointment. This episode suggests that although women other than Saracens made use of natural magic, they were not seen as having the benefit of Josian's training or the special skills of other Saracen women in the romances discussed in this study. Although the ointment originally came from Morgan le Fay, it fell to the maiden to use her own, limited skills to apply it.

As discussed earlier, the East was known for the proliferation of medical texts from the Umayyad dynasty, beginning with the patronage of the Umayyad prince Khālid ibn Yazīd, to the succeeding Abbasid Dynasty. As the translation movement progressed, Greek manuscripts were not merely translated but the knowledge found within the manuscripts was further developed. In addition, the Abbasid dynasty was so famed for the translation, dissemination, and advancement of Greek knowledge that early Abbasid caliphs were noted for the establishment of the renowned, yet elusive, Bayt al-Ḥikmah, which functioned as great library and an academy for the translation of Greek manuscripts, which included various scientific manuscripts. The Bayt al-Ḥikma gained such repute that scholars today still dispute the existence of this academy. As detailed earlier, Gutas presents the case that the fact that there is little historical information about the Bayt al-Ḥikma suggests it was 'not something grandiose or significant'; however,

[422] Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans: suivis des Chansons, avec, en appendice, Philomena* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994); *Arthurian Romances*, ed. by Kibler, p. 333.
[423] Ibid., pp. 806-10.

Whipple presents the testimony of the physician translator Yūḥannā ibn-Māsawayh, who was also the personal physician of the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, stating he was called to head the academy and the translation of Greek manuscripts, acquired through conquest, into Arabic.[424] The prominence or the possible role the Bayt al-Ḥikma played in translation of medical manuscripts is not as significant as its fabled reputation, both during the Abbasid reign and later, promoting Baghdad and the East as a centre of medical learning. Josian's training in the East as well as her status as having Saracen heritage thus singles out her skill in the practice of medicine.

Morgan le Fay's marvellous ointment in *Le Chevalier au Lion* falls into the category of natural magic, much like Josian's skills: as Saunders explains that the reference to Morgan le Fay as 'the wise' singles out her ointment as an example of 'positive natural magic'.[425] Josian's own training in medicine, however, is partly conducted in Toledo, a city that was a centre of medicine in Spain which 'evokes the Arabic learning that flourished in Spain during the period of Muslim rule'.[426] Thus, Josian is directly related to Islamic learning and medicine in the romance, highlighting her unique Saracen heritage, distancing her knowledge from the kind of marvellous medicine practiced by Morgan le Fay.

Perhaps the most marvellous demonstration of Josian's skill in natural magic is illustrated when Ascopard reverts to his natural disposition and kidnaps Josian on the orders of king Yvor. After Josian orders Beues to provide her with privacy to give birth, Ascopard, along with forty of king Yvor's Saracen men, find Josian alone in the woods after giving birth and abduct her. On the way to king Yvor's palace, Josian uses her unique powers of persuasion to manipulate Ascopard, much like Sir Miles earlier in the romance, to allow her to go somewhere in privacy to '"[…] do me nedes"' (l. 3661) as '"[…] wimman te be| schamfaste and ful of corteisie' (ll. 3662-63). Once she manages to

[424] Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, p. 54; Whipple, *The Role of the Nestorians*, pp. 24-25.
[425] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval Romance*, p. 120.
[426] Ibid., p. 172.

get out of Ascopard's direct gaze, she puts her skills to use and '[…] tok vp of þe grounde,| Þat was an erbe of meche mounde,| To make a man in semblaunt þere,| A foule mesel alse ȝif a were' (ll. 3677-80). Josian's ability to imitate the symptoms of leprosy using a few herbs seems rather incredible; however, as mentioned earlier, the realistic details of Josian's medical abilities make such a transformation more believable.[427] In addition to the detailed description of Josian's medical training as a precursor to her most marvellous display of medical herbal knowledge, the placement of this event in the romance following the numerous instances of extraordinary medical skill and knowledge, prepares the audience for this dubious transformation, using that very same knowledge.

Josian is not only described as beautiful in the romance – she is also referred to as 'sliȝ' (l. 579) more than once in the romance and her choice to appear as a leper highlights her intelligence. Evidence from the romance assures the audience that Josian could have used her knowledge to imitate any disease, and yet she chooses a disease with such serious implications in the Middle Ages that it was not only considered a physical ailment but 'especially came to be understood as divine punishment for sinfulness and to be viewed as no other sickness known to man'.[428] As a result, when she is presented to king Yvor, he is so overwhelmed by the sight of the disease that he curses Ascopard with the wrath of Mahoun for bringing such a foul-looking lady and orders him to remove her from his presence immediately. As Goodman emphasises, 'the horror with which the appearance is greeted demonstrates the dread with which leprosy was regarded'; therefore, Josian is portrayed as being aware that the most infallible method of escaping the clutches of king Yvor is to imitate a disease that was feared above others due to its sinful associations.[429] This decision displays an uncommon level of intelligence, which Josian continues to demonstrate throughout the romance.

[427] Ibid., p. 123.
[428] Barbara A. Goodman, 'Physical Disfiguring and Body Forms in Middle English Metrical Romance', *Enarratio*, 5 (1998), 15-33 (p. 19).
[429] Ibid.

Josian's diverse skills and knowledge related to the practice of medicine align her to her Saracen heritage. In addition to her training and practice of medicine, Josian holds a position of authority over her father and his political decisions and household until she is married, betrays her father for the sake of love, and is extraordinarily resourceful, to the point resorting to violence to achieve her goals. These characteristics tend to draw on the general stock of qualities typical of Saracen women in Middle English, and to some extent, Anglo-Norman romance; however, just because these characteristics are typical of the romance representations of Saracen women, it does not follow that they are entirely fictional. As demonstrated, Josian's and Floripas's authoritative positions in their household, their knowledge and skill in medicine, and their resourcefulness associate them with the East, rather than forming some orientalist fantasy, as has been suggested by critics such a Dorethee Metlitzski and Amy Burge. Even though the translation movement of medical and scientific knowledge, including the further advancement of that knowledge, was to a great extent carried out by non-Muslim scholars, quite a few hailing from the prominent school of Gondēshāpūr, this movement was carried out under the patronage of Muslim caliphs and the East gained a reputation for the dissemination and advancement of medicine.

However, the East was not only reputed for the distribution of Hippocratic and humoral medicine; it also gained a reputation for marvellous and herbal medicine – the kind of medicine Saracen women like Josian and Floripas practise. Indeed, the practice of herbal medicine within the family and on a professional level in the East was so common that al-Ḥasan chose to include an aggravated complaint in his book. The marvellous in the East extended beyond medicine from the marvellous objects like the mechanical clock mentioned in chapter one to the horse in *Sir Octavian* in the following chapter. Thus, Josian's embodiment of the qualities discussed and her status within her household can seem far from fanciful. Despite critical views that Saracen women in romance 'act in reprehensible ways' and yet are given license because they are acting in the interests of

Christian knights, readers need only to look back to women such as al-Khayzarān, Zubaydah, and Shajar al-Durr. The actions of these women, discussed within this and the previous chapter, demonstrate that Muslim women within courts not only held authority, but also committed manipulative and questionable deeds, to the point of murder in Shajar al-Durr's case.[430] *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* provides a strong example of possible exchange between the East and the West; although this is entirely fictional, regular trade and trade routes between the East and the West existed and the inclusion of one such example in this popular romance demonstrates how common trade was between these two regions. Trade coupled with the multiple forms of interaction, as discussed in the first chapter, suggests that the embodiment of these characteristics within Saracen women may not be entirely coincidental.

[430] De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, pp. 9-10.

Chapter Four: *Octavian* and *Floris and Blauncheflur*

Octavian, although composed much later than *Sir Ferumbras* and *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, also reflects the sustained Crusading ideology present in a number of Middle English romances of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In addition to a narrative that creates an opposition between the Christians and Saracens to display Christian superiority, both physically and ideologically, it also introduces the stereotypical figure of the enamoured Muslim princess. Although scholars have extensively discussed issues of class and familial bonds in *Octavian*, as well as the familiar topos of the exiled queen and stolen children found in romances such as *Sir Isumbras*, there is very little discussion of the figure and role of the Saracen princess Marsabelle and the pervading Crusading ideology in the Lincoln Thornton *Octavian*. Like Floripas and Josian, Marsabelle flawlessly fits into the enamoured princess mould; much like other Saracen women in Middle English romance, Marsabelle, despite her whitened complexion and eventual conversion to Christianity, retains features of her Saracen origin and remains poised between her acquired Christian identity and her original Saracen identity.

Introduction to *Octavian* and its Textual Origins

There are two Middle English versions of *Octavian*: one is the northern version which is preserved in the Lincoln Thornton MS 91, Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff. 2.38, and the early printed Huntington Library 14615; the southern version is preserved in the London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.II. Both versions seem to have been composed around the second half of the fourteenth century; however, they treat the material very differently.[431] As the southern version of *Octavian* reduces the role of

[431] *Octavian*, ed. by Frances McSparran, E.E.T.S. No. 289 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 40-42.

Marsabelle in the romance and does not include her monologues this chapter will deal with the northern version of the romance.[432]

Within the northern versions, this chapter will focus on the romance found in the Lincoln Thornton as it is the earliest manuscript that contains the northern version of the Middle English *Octavian*; evidence for its dating can be found in the script, which is Anglicana, dating from the mid-fifteenth century, and the watermarks on the manuscript which have been found in documents dating from the years 1413-61. The Lincoln Thornton has at least 20 damaged folios resulting in a big gap in the text of *Octavian*; folio 103 is lost completely and a large portion of the text on the damaged folio 108 is also missing. As both the Lincoln Thornton and Cambridge *Octavian* are similar enough to suggest a shared Anglo-Norman source for the romance, for the purpose of this thesis any missing text in the Lincoln Thornton *Octavian* will be substituted with lines from the Cambridge manuscript, dating from the fifteenth to early sixteenth century.[433]

The Middle English *Octavian* is most likely adapted from the earliest surviving French version of *Octavian*, which is preserved in the Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Hatton 100, dating from the beginning of the fourteenth century.[434] Although there have been some suggestions that the Middle English versions may have been adapted from another fourteenth century French version titled *Florent et Octavian*, after extensive comparison McSparran concludes that the Middle English versions consistently agree with *Octavian* rather than *Florent et Octavian*. In addition to consistencies in the text, the English romances also choose to adopt the shortened title of *Octavian*.[435] K.V. Sinclair has drawn attention to another Anglo-Norman version of *Octavian* that is no longer extant. According to Sinclair, John Whytefeld listed the *Gesta Octouiani imperatoris in gallicis* as the seventh item in a volume in the library of Benedictine Priory of the Blessed Virgin

[432] Ibid., p. 45.
[433] Ibid. p. 2; p. 6. McSparran's edition of the romance will be used to refer to lines from both manuscripts.
[434] Ibid., p. 38.
[435] Ibid., p. 39; p. 42.

and St Martin in Dover. Although the volume is now lost, it is particularly interesting that according to Whytefeld, this manuscript which contained fourteen items, both of religious and secular nature, bound the *La Romonse de Ferumbras* immediately before the *Gesta Octouiani*, suggesting that the two romances were considered closely related. This chapter further emphasises this connection, because of similar tropes and themes.

Although the title of the romance suggests that the focus of the narrative will be on Emperor Octavian's son Octavian, once Octavian's other son, Florent, is rescued by Clement from outlaws and raised in Paris, the romance concentrates on the heroic awakening of Florent. It is only towards the end of the romance that Octavian rescues his father, brother, king of France, and other Christians taken prisoner by the Saracens. Despite this monumental feat, Octavian does not play much of an active role in the romance, even though he is intrinsic to the structure of the story that requires emperor Octavian's family to be reunited at the conclusion. It is Florent, however, who fills the part of the fair unknown, performing great feats of arms against Saracens, leading to the Marsabelle, the Sultan's daughter, falling in love with him, betraying her father, and converting to Christianity.[436]

The Saracen Threat and Christian Superiority in *Octavian*

The romance does not begin with an emphasis on defeating or conquering Saracens but rather with the seperation of Emperor Octavian's family as a result of the deception of his mother; the focus of the romance changes when Florent is rescued and Saracens are introduced to the narrative. Although the introduction of Saracens could be construed as a narrative device in order to display Florent's and Octavian's prowess, the inclusion of enamoured princess Marsabelle, along with other tropes, that will be discussed later in the chapter, it is evident that a larger scheme is at work. Furthermore, that *Sir Octavian* is bound with *Sir Isumbras* in the Lincoln Thornton manuscript suggests

[436] For a full discussion of the 'fair unknown' in medieval romance, see Jill Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008).

that *Octavian* does possess the anti-Muslim ideology prevalent during the Crusades, which was also later reflected in *chanson de geste* and romance. Although the Lincoln Thornton may have bound *Octavian* and *Isumbras* together on account of the common theme of familial separation and unification at the end of the two romances, they also share a concern of the Saracen threat.

Although this threat is prevalent throughout *Octavian,* the romance also emphasises Christian superiority in comparison to the heathen Saracens. Not only does the martially inexperienced Florent defeat the monstrous giant, but he also repeatedly defeats other Saracens singlehandedly. After Florent abducts the Sultan's daughter, Marsabelle, he is accosted by Saracen knights. Florent, who at this point is not even knighted, 'Full many a Sarezene made he to blede […] Many a hethyn man in a stownde| He made to lygge appon the grownde:| Was þer no childes playe' (ll. 946-50).[437]

This superiority of the Christians is reiterated when Florent, disguised as a messenger, takes an olive branch to the Sultan. While the other romances discussed in this thesis only allude to the spiritually true nature of the Christians, Florent faithfully warns the Sultan to retreat 'For þou werreys agayne þe righte;' (l. 1190). As further evidence of the false nature of the Sultan, and in essence the Muslim cause, Florent defeats ten score Saracen knights with such efficiency that he kills the proudest in the hall and delivers such a blow to the other Saracens that their heads are brutally decapitated from their bodies. These encounters between Florent and the Saracens could merely represent Florent's martial prowess; however, the constant Christian superiority displayed in the romance and the stereotypical representation of Saracens as the heathen enemy transform Florent into a vessel for the Christian cause. The dogmatic statement by the narrator at the final defeat of the Saracens, 'Thorow God þat ys of myȝtys gode,| The Crysten men þe bettur stode;| The

[437] Unless specified, quotations referenced from *Octavian* will be used from the Lincoln Thornton manuscript.

hethyn were broȝt to grownde' (ll. 1618-20), attests to the unflinching Crusading ideology prevalent in the romance.[438]

There are more subtle allusions to the Crusades in the romance, which highlight conflict through religious alterity. Burge explains that kidnapping was a customary strategy during the Crusades: therefore, the Sultan's imprisonment of Florent, his father, the king of France, and several other Christians is reminiscent of the tactics practised during the Crusades, especially since they are specifically referred to as Christian prisoners, highlighting their identity.[439] However, the brief abduction of Marsabelle by Florent has the opposite effect. As Burges suggests, 'abduction itself becomes a tool for achieving this sameness, rather than a way of highlighting difference'.[440] Even though her abduction allows Marsabelle to fall in love with Florent and eventually convert for his sake, indeed reducing difference, however, her decision to convert is not instigated through her recognition of Christian superiority, as Burges suggests, but rather as a consequence of her love for Florent.[441]

As with most Middle English romances that feature Saracens, there is also a contrast between the physical representation of Christian heroes and their Saracen opponents. Both the younger Octavian and Florent are described as beautiful and accomplished; when Emperor Octavian's wife and the younger Octavian arrive in Jerusalem, the king of Jerusalem considers the child '[…] so faire and fre' (l. 514), and when he matures the king knights him as he can ride and bear arms well. Florent, Octavian's other son, is stolen from his mother by an ape and eventually rescued by a knight; when he is once again stolen by outlaws, the leader of the outlaws instantly recognises Florent's noble heritage and among the outlaws, 'It was no man þat it seghe,| Þat þay ne wepid with þaire eghe:| So faire it was of syghte' (ll. 571-73). A few lines later,

[438] Quotation taken from the Cambridge, University Library manuscript.
[439] Burge, *Representing Difference in Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance*, p. 143.
[440] Ibid., p. 137.
[441] Ibid., p. 143.

after Clement purchases Florent from the outlaws and takes him back to his home in Paris, the romance emphasises again that although the child was only seven years old:

> He was bothe wysse, faire and bolde,
> The man þat redis righte.
> Alle þe rewme wyde and longe
> Worde of þe childe spronge,
> So was he faire to syghte
>
> (ll. 635-39)

Descriptions of this nature are common in representations of Christian heroes in medieval romance; therefore the author of the romance systemically uses this tradition to signal Florent's noble heritage. Florent's concealed greatness is further demonstrated by the series of comic events related in lines that are lost in the Lincoln Thornton manuscript; these events indicate that Florent, though misunderstood by Clement, is naturally drawn to items associated with knighthood. In the corresponding lines in the Cambridge manuscript, when Clement asks Florent to take two oxen to the butcher, he gets distracted and exchanges the oxen for a falcon. Subsequently, in a comic sequence of events, when Clement sends Florent to take pounds to his brother, Florent once again gets distracted mid-errand and ends up using the money to buy a beautiful horse he spots on the way to delivering the money. The emphasis on strength, beauty, and whiteness in the romance extends to the horse Florent purchases, which ends up being his chosen mount as a knight. As Florent passes through Paris, he is struck by a steed that 'Was stronge yn eche werre;| The stede was whyte as any mylke,| The brydyll reynys were of sylke,| The molettys gylte they were' (ll. 717-20).[442] This association between beauty, in particular fairness, and pureness of character is further emphasised in the representation of Marsabelle, who will convert later in the romance. Although Florent's inability to follow through on Clement's orders is undoubtedly comical, the episodes unequivocally suggest to the audience that Florent is inherently destined to be a great knight.

In contrast to Florent and his brother Octavian, as well as all the Christians described in the romance, the Saracen giant Arageous is represented as ugly and

[442] Quotation taken from Cambridge MS.

monstrous, instantly reprehensible to anyone who sees him. Interestingly, Arageous comes to represent all Saracens in the romance as he is the only one who is described in detail, apart from Marsabelle, whereas the Sultan, the leader of the Saracens is conveniently overlooked, as are the other troops. Morever, the Sultan remains unnamed and disappears from the narrative at the end of the romance with no mention of his fate or demise. Thus, by default, Arageous's description as a fearsome giant is the only portrait of Saracens left in the imagination of the audience. Discussing *chansons de geste*, Jubb observes that Christian belief and baptism are not necessary to be a knight and part of the brotherhood; however, this is not true of Middle English romances.[443] As the previous chapters demonstrate, conversion is necessary to be truly accepted. Arageous is more than a worthy adversary for Florent but he is not even given the opportunity to convert before he is beheaded.

When the war breaks out in France, the emperor Octavian arrives in Paris with a host to face the Sultan; although the Sultan is introduced as '[…] moche of might' (l. 777), he is quickly glossed over for the giant he has brought with him whom 'The realme of Fraunce durste noȝt| Agenste hym to fyght' (ll. 779-80).[444] As well as a detailed description of Arageous's monstrous features, the lines above give a sense of the fear he instills in the knights. In addition to the knights' reaction to Arageous, the romance repeteadly alludes to his hideous appearance. After introducing Arageous as a giant, the romance moves on to a description of Marsabelle but eventually returns to Arageous. Arageous, who is in love with Marsabelle, heads to her chamber to profess his love for her, but in a harsh turn of events the romance states that she '[…] hade leuir dede to hafe bene| Than hym in hir chambir to hafe sene:| So fulle he was of syghte' (ll. 675-77). When Arageous attempts to enter Paris to claim the king of France's head to gain favour with

[443] Margaret A. Jubb, 'Enemies in the Holy War, but Brothers in Chivalry: The Crusaders' View of their Saracen Opponents', in *Aspects de L'éopée Romane: Mentalités, Idéologies, Intertextualités*, ed. by Hans van Dijk and Willem Noomen (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995), pp. 251-59 (p. 255).
[444] Quotations taken from Cambridge MS.

Marsabelle, his fearsome appearance is once again highlighted when Clement warns Florent that '"He es so fowle a wyghte"' (l. 767) that if Florent saw the giant he would retreat in horror at first sight. Even though no formal description is provided, the emphasis is mainly on Arageous's overall foul appearance, leaving the details to the audience's imagination.

Despite Arageous's frightful nature, Florent is able to defeat him in his 'vnbryghte' (l. 828) attire without any formal training. Clement gives Florent armour to wear while fighting Arageous, but the chainmail, 'bacenete' (l. 819), and outer helmet are all dirty; indeed, his whole attire is so 'vndbryghte' (l. 828) that the king and knights are surprised to see him dressed in that manner. His attire is also scorned and ridiculed by people around the gates to the city. In contrast, Florent's attire is described as 'bryght' (l. 913) in the Cambridge manuscript; however, this inconsistency may be ascribed to scribal error as the following couple of lines agree with the Lincoln Thornton *Octavian* and the context of the episode suggests that, similar to the Lincoln Thornton text, there is something to ridicule about Florent's attire. Although there is a discrepancy in the two manuscripts regarding the physical condition of his general attitre, both romances agree that his 'brene bryghte' (l. 849) assures the crowd that he is a noble knight. Here, as in the other romances discussed, the word bright is associated with nobility. As expected because of his shining corselet, Florent is able to defeat Arageous and present his head to Marsabelle despite his 'vnfair wede' (l. 873). Perhaps Florent's clothes signal the fair unknown trope until the crowd at the gate notice his equestrian skills and shining corselet.

Emperor Octavian's wife, much like her sons, is described according to Western stereotypical standards of beauty as possessing a 'faire lyre' (l. 40) and 'Was whyte so blossome on þe brere,| That semly was of syghte' (ll. 41-42). The emphasis, especially in the first part of the romance, is on her white skin, an essential feature of Western standards of beauty, and a feature without which most characters in Middle English romance seem to lack virtue. Octavian's wife is not only explicitly described as 'whyte', but she is

constantly referred to as 'lady bryghte (l. 39; l. 73) and as possessing 'bryghte blyee' (l. 50); as seen in other romances, this fair outer beauty is indicative of inner beauty, recalling St Bernard of Clairvaux's biblical commentary on inner beauty shining and being outwardly visible, like a lamp in a bush.[445]Octavian's wife's future banishment and suffering only add to her virtue, demonstrated initially by her beauty, as she bears her unfair punishment with grace and her reputation is later redeemed.

Marsabelle is described in a similar fashion with emphasis on her fair skin. Although the lines introducing Marsabelle are lost in the Lincoln Thornton manuscript, the Cambridge manuscript, which closely follows the Lincoln, gives a close indication of Marsabelle's description. It is strategically significant that Marsabelle is introduced immediately after the romance mentions the giant Arageous, who inspires fear in all whom he encounters. In the very next line, the romance introduces Marsabelle for the first time as the Sultan's 'doghtur bryght' (l. 781), immediately creating a dichotomy between the two Saracens – one monstrous and the other bright of complexion.[446] Simply the word 'bryght' instantly instigates the preconceived notions associated with word and aligns Marsabelle with the Christians. The romance then provides a detailed, hyperbolic description of Marsabelle: 'Sche was bothe feyre and fre,| The feyrest þynge alyue þat was| In Crystendome or hethynnes,| And semelyest of syght' (ll. 783-86).[447] The combination of bright, fair, and free is common in descriptions of Christians in medieval romance; and the same terms are used in reference to Octavian's wife and both her sons. The added exclamation that Marsabelle was more beautiful than anyone in Christian or heathen lands, even more beautiful than the equally 'bryght' and 'fre' Octavian's wife, is an indicator that Marsabelle will eventually convert to Christianity, as examples from other Middle English romances indicate that a Saracen who excels in knightly prowess or extraordinary beauty must convert in the course of the romance.

[445] Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, trans. by Irene Edmonds, 4 vols (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980), IV, p. 207.
[446] Quotation taken from Cambridge MS
[447] Ibid.

Beyond her first introduction in the romance, there is an emphasis on her bright complexion and fair skin. Although Marsabelle is repeatedly referred to as fair and bright, the romance goes further to describe her as 'That mayden brighte als golden bey' (l. 921), associating her with the wealth of the East; the romance later places a continued prominence on her fair complexion by describing her as 'The mayden whitt als lely floure' (l. 1335). This description is typical of western representations of beauty, especially the comparison with the lily; however, the association with white also symbolises an inner virtue that will allow her to convert to Christianity. In addition, there is an equal emphasis on Florent's fair appearance as a sign of beauty and virtue that inspires Marsabelle to fall in love with him. After Florent 'rauesched' (l. 1216) Marsabelle, the Saracen knights return her to her father's camp at Clermont but the narrator informs the audience that she could not eat or drink 'So mekill scho was in thoghte,| Sumtyme one his faire chere,| And one his coloure, and one his lyre:| Scho myghte forgete hym noghte' (ll. 998-1001).

Since the romance consistently refers to Florent as fair of appearance, Marsabelle's allusion to his 'coloure' and 'lyre' must be a reference to his white skin, required by Western standards of beauty. The symbolic projection of virtue through fairness is even bestowed on Marsaballe's maiden, Olyuayne, the only other worthy Saracen in the romance. On her first appearance in the romance when Marsabelle confides her love for Florent, she is introduced as a maiden who is '[…] full faire of blode and bane' (l. 1009). This may be due to Olyuayne's unique position as Marsabelle's confidante and her role in helping her meet Florent in private. Not only is Marsabelle extraordinarily beautiful, she is also given safe passage by the King of France to watch the battle at Mountmertrons beside the borough of the Queen, which stood over the bank of Seine. The king of France gives her his vow as a king and as a knight that no man will harm her while she watches the battle. That Marsabelle is given safe passage and treated with hospitality in the middle of a war between the Christians and Muslim demonstrates that even in a romance that usually heightens the tension between the opposing sides, there seems to be a

sense of honour and courtesy between the enemies. This code of honour is not restricted to fictional representations of war between the Christians and Muslims, but is also evident in instances of interaction during the Crusades highlighted in the first chapter.

Another historical example of the same level of honour in the treatment of enemies is offered by an account of safe passage and hospitality during the siege of Jerusalem. During the siege, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn accepted a private appeal from Bandouin d'Ibelin to allow safe passage out of the city to two children, Thomassin d'Ibelin and Guillemin of Gibeleth. Not only did Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn allow them safe passage, he also treated them as guests as they were 'enfans de frans homes'.[448] Both episodes also provide evidence for social interaction between the opposing sides beyond the common interaction in the form of prisoners. It is evidence of these sorts of encounters that suggests possibilities for cultural and literary exchange, as the interaction was on friendly and hospitable terms. Similar tales of hospitality during the Crusades are narrated, especially in the later Crusades. Ibn Shaddād also narrates an old Arab tradition that states that if a captive accepts food or drink from his captor, the captive would consequently be considered a guest and could not be harmed. Although this custom did not save Prince Reynolds after the Battle of Ḥiṭṭīn as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn claimed that he had not personally offered him a drink, his brother King Guy was secure due to this custom, and possibly other Christian captives during the Crusades.[449]

As well as Marsabelle's friendly interaction with the Christians, she also falls in love with the Christian Florent, converts to Christianity for his sake, and eventually betrays her father, essentially transferring her allegiance to the Christians. Conventionally, the enamoured Muslim princess is infatuated with a Christian knight either from the beginning of the romance or through reputation even before they meet; however, Marsabelle and Florent do not meet or fall in love until well into the romance. Even

[448] William of Tyre, *La Continuation de Guillame de Tyr*, ed. by M.R. Morgan (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1982), p. 65.
[449] Ibn Shaddād, *Kitāb Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī*, pp. 63-64; *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. by D.S. Richards, pp. 74-75.

though Marsabelle is given safe passage to Mountmertrons 'To see þe Crystyn knyghtys ryde,| On fylde them for to play' (ll. 803-04), she does not meet Florent until he kills Arageous and presents his head to her.[450] It is only after he kisses her and attempts to abduct her that Marsabelle falls in love with Florent. Although Saracen knights attack Florent before he can actually abduct Marsabelle, when she returns to her father's camp at Clermont she confides to Olyuayne that she cannot stop thinking about the knight she encountered and that she is grieved she cannot even recognise him. Olyuayne, her faithful maiden, assures her that she will help her until the two of them can be united. Florent and Marsabelle are unable to meet until Florent, now recognised by Emperor Octavian as his son, rides to the Sultan's camp disguised as a messenger. Marsabelle questions him about the man who '"[…] es so mekill of myghte"' (l. 1214) that defeated the giant and Florent assures her that she will be able to recognise him by her sleeve on his spear during the upcoming battle. His identity is immediately revealed when Saracen knights once again attack him; however, he is eventually forced to retreat to Paris.

After the first battle, instigated by the Sultan's rejection of Florent's olive branch, Florent rides to Borow Lerayne to meet Marsabelle. When she views Florent from a window, distinguishable by her sleeve, she consults Olyuayne for advice for a way to speak to Florent. One again, her faithful maiden consoles her and suggests a test of love. She suggests that they go to the riverbank and if Florent truly loves her, he will not allow the river current to stop him from reaching her. Contrary to the enamoured Muslim princess trope, where it is usually the Saracen princess who begs the knight to be her lover, this condition put forth by Olyuayne suggests that Florent will have to prove the strength of his love for Marsabelle by undertaking the current of the river. Once Florent and Marsabelle finally unite the romance defies convention again and Florent asks Marsabelle to convert to Christianity. Florent directly draws a connection between Christian belief, brightness, and nobility by addressing Marsabelle at their meeting as:

[450] Quotation taken from Cambridge MS.

‘“So bryghte ert þou of hewe;| In alle this werlde es non so free| Forwhi þat þow wolde cristenede be,| And sythen of herte be trewe”’ (ll. 1367-70). This idea of brightness as a signifier of nobility held exclusively by Christians has been alluded to throughout the romance; this notion is unequivocally emphasised when Florent assures her that even though she is bright of hue, she will not truly be ‘free’ until she converts to Christianity.

In true enamaoured Muslim princess fashion, Marsabelle agrees to ‘“[…] lyue in Cristen lyfe”’ (l. 1375) but only if Florent will consent to marry her. She does not actually convert to Christianity, however, until the end of the romance. It is only after young Octavian rescues all the Christian prisoners that ‘Cristenede scho was on a Sonondaye’ (l. 1596) and married to Florent with much revelry. Even though she does not officially convert at the earlier meeting by the river, it is at this moment that she shifts her allegiance to the Christians, assuring Florent that ‘“I wolde forsake all my kyn| Als I þem neuir knewe;”’ (ll. 1372-73). It would seem that Marsabelle completely changes her identity while retaining markers that distinguish her as a Saracen.

Although she eventually betrays her father, much like the women of the Abbasid dynasty, discussed earlier, she holds the confidence of her father and it is precisely that unwavering trust which allows her to deceive him. Unlike the other romances discussed, the audience is given only a brief glimpse of Marsabelle and her father’s relationship. After Marsabelle is ‘raueshed’ by Florent, Saracen knights bring her back to her father’s pavilion. After Marsabelle enters the pavilion, the romance demonstrates the tenderness between Marsabelle and her father. When Marsabelle kneels before her father, ‘Than was þe sowdane wondir blythe| And to his doghetir went he swythe,| And kyssed hir sythes thre’ (ll. 960-62). Despite this seemingly tender love between them, Marsabelle feigns ‘solempnyte’ (l. 965) to inform her father that Arageous was slain. Marsabelle clearly puts up a solemn pretense to maintain her father’s favour as she crassly tells Florent ‘“[…] He was ay trewe of his hete;| When he þe kynges heuede might not gete| His owen he hase me sende”’ (ll. 924-26), when Florent presents her with Arageous’s severed head. Marsabelle

then goes on to inform her father that a Christian knight has almost abducted her and deceives him once again into thinking that she is so distraught that she cannot eat or drink anything for fear. It is obvious that the incident has not left her distressed, since just a few lines later Marsabelle confides to Olyuayne that she is upset not out of fear but love for Florent. In deceiving her father, Marsabelle makes sure that he does not suspect her affection for Florent and maintains his trust. Although this episode precedes Marsabelle's conversion to Christianity, this exchange makes clear that Marsabelle holds her father's confidence and can use her influence in favour of the Christians. Compared to the deception in the other romances, Marsabelle's is not as extreme and she plays a much more passive role in helping Florent than Floripas and Josian in their respective romances. Unlike the other Saracen princesses, Marsabelle does not exact violence to unite with Florent, but uses deception and knowledge of her father's possessions to help the Christian cause.

Marsabelle also equally holds the confidence of her lover. Immediately after she agrees to convert and promises to forsake her kin, Florent, who singlehandedly defeats Arageous and several Sacaren knights on more than one occasion, asks her counsil on how he might defeat her father's army in battle. Marsabelle then gives him information that will most likely lead to the defeat and demise of her own father. She reveals to Florent that:

> "My fadir has a nobille stede,
> In þe werlde es none so gude at nede
> In tornament no in fyghte;
> In his heuede he hase an horne,
> Es schapen als an vnycorne
> That selcouthe es of syghte.
> Sir, if þou myghte þat stede now wyn,
> There were no man in heythen kynn
> Agayne the that stande myghte"
>
> (ll. 1389-97)

Although the unicorn does not save the Christians from being defeated and taken prisoner by the Saracens, the romance ascribes this defeat to the absence of Florent from the battlefield rather than the unicorn not living up to its reputation.

Marsabelle and the Marvellous Unicorn

Even though Marsabelle does not possess any knowledge of medicine, her family's possession of the unicorn links her with the marvellous power which was commonly associated with the East. Individuals from the East were generally perceived to possess knowledge of magic and possession of marvellous objects. The marvellous water clock presented to Charlemagne by the delegates of the Caliph discussed in the first chapter is one such example. The association of the unicorn with Marsabelle seems rather fortuitous: it is symbolic of Marsabelle through its dual connection to Christian iconography and Muslim folklore. The unicorn was often considered a symbol of Christ in the medieval Western world and was often included allegorically in bestiaries. Bodley 764, dating from the thirteenth century, describes the unicorn as:

> […] a little beast, not unlike a goat, and extraordinarily swift . It has a horn in the middle of its brow, and no hunter can catch it. But it can be caught in the following fashion: a girl who is a virgin is led to a place where it dwells, and is left there in the forest. As soon as the unicorn sees her, it leaps into her lap and embraces her, and goes to sleep there; then the hunters capture it and display it in the king's palace.[451]

According to Gravestock, the unicorn is a figure of Christ as Psalm 92:10 states: 'My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of the unicorn, with the horn representing 'Christ's unity with his father and its small size to signify Christ's humility in assuming humanity'.[452] Hassig further explains that since the unicorn could be seized and killed by hunters if baited by a virgin, 'the entrapped unicorn thus became a popular figure of Christ's cruxification'.[453]Unicorns were also represented in medieval tapestries; one such tapestry titled 'The Unicorn is Found' (1495-1505) attests to the pure nature of the unicorn that creates a symbolic link between unicorns and Christ. The tapestry displays a fountain from

[451] Pamela Gravestock, 'Did Imaginary Animals Exist?', in *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. by Debra Hassig (London; New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), pp. 119-140 (p. 127).
[452] Ibid., p. 128.
[453] Debra Hassig, 'Sex in the Bestiaries', in *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. by Debra Hassig (London; New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), pp. 71-98 (p. 72).

which a stream flows, surrounded by several animals. The unicorn stands amidst the animals and places its horn in the water to purify it, an ability which the unicorn horn possessed in medieval folk tradition.[454]

Fig. 4 The Unicorn is Caught [455]

Much like Marsabelle, the unicorn has links to the Eastern and Western world. Zakarīyā ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī's *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa-Ghrāʾib al-Mawjūdāt* (*The Wonders of Creation and the Oddities of Existence*) also contains an image and description of a unicorn-like creature. As Irwin explains, the medieval Arab lands had such an interest in the fantastic that the genre of *ʿajā'ib* or marvels was created to cater to the fascination with the marvellous.[456] Within this wonders of creation tradition al-Qazwīnī's book was one of the most widely disseminated, with its text translated into Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and Çağatay Turkish.[457]

The earliest manuscript for *The Wonders of Creation* survives from 1280. This manuscript was created in Wāsiṭ in 1280 for al-Qazwīnī himself. Now persevered in the Staatsbibliothek in Munich, it provides evidence about its owner. The manuscript opens

[454] Geneviève Souchal, *Masterpieces of Tapestry from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century*, trans. by Richard A.H. Oxby (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1973), pp. 69-71.
[455] *The Unicorn is Caught*, c. 1495–1505, Wool warp with wool, silk, silver, and gilt wefts, 368.3 x 378.5 cm, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
[456] Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin Press, 2008), p. 182.
[457] Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 6-7.

with a rosette which contains al-Qazwīnī's name and title. As Berlekamp explains, the opening rosette in a manuscript would generally indicate the patron or owner, therefore this rosette provides evidence that this manuscript was indeed owned by al-Qazwīnī. Although it is impossible to determine the date at which al-Qazwīnī completed the text, the manuscript itself once again provides evidence of its date of completion. A colophon written by the scribe at the end of the manuscript gives details that it was written by the 'doctor Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Dimashqī and finished on twenty fourth of Shawwal in the lunar year 678 (February 27th, 1280)'.[458] In this book, al-Qazwīnī describes a creature called a Sādhiwār, also known as a Persian antelope; however, it only has a single hollow, branched horn:

> حيوان يوجد باقصى بلاد الروم و يقال له أيضاً أرس له قرن عليه اثنتان وأربعون شعبة مجوفة فاذا هبت الريح يجتمع الهواء فيها فيسمع منه صوت فى غاية الطيب و تجتمع الحيوانات عنده لما تسمع من حسن صوته و ذكرأن بعض الملوك أهدى اليه قرن منها فترك بين يديه عند هبوب الريح فكان يخرج منه صوت عجيب مطرب حتى يكاد يدهش الانسان من سماعه طربا ثم و ضعوه منكوسا فكان يخرج منه صوت حزين حتى يكاد يغلب على الانسان عند سماعه البكاء [459]

> This is a creature that can be found in the furthest regions of the Byzantine empire. It is also called ars. It has a horn, and this horn has forty-two hollow branches. When the wind blows, the air collects inside and one can hear a very sweet sound coming from it. The animals gather around the creature to listen to the sound. It is reported that a horn of one of those animals was given to a king as a gift. He placed it in front of him when the wind blew, whereupon the wind produced a sound such that those who heard it were almost overwhelmed by delight. From the horn came such a wonderful sound that the king's ears almost stopped out of sheer rapture. Then he put it upside down, and out of the horn came a sound so sad that from hearing it people were almost compelled to weep.[460]

Whether al-Qazwīnī's Sādhiwār was known in the West is impossible to say with certainty; however, the popularity of al-Qazwīnī's text in the Islamic world and the

[458] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[459] Zakarīyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa-Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, ed. by Maḥmūd Tawfīq (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Taqaddum, 1886), p. 342.

[460] Anna Contadini, 'Musical Beasts: The Swan-Phoenix in the Ibn Bakhtīshūʿ Bestiaries', in *The Iconography of Islamic Art: Studies in Honour of Robert Hillenbrand*, ed. by Bernard O'Kane (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. 93-101 (p. 94).

common theme of attraction in the two legends suggests that it may have been widely known in the Middle East.

Fig. 5 BSB-Hss Cod.arab. 464, 182r [461] MS Bodl. 764, Fol. 010 v [462]

Although Marsabelle advises Florent to steal her father's marvellous horse and it is Florent who presents it to the Emperor Octavian, it is interesting to note that it is Clement who steals the horse from the Sultan through the use of deception. Clement pretends to be a Saracen and tells the Sultan that he has been with his host for a long time and that '"Sir, þere es no man in heythen thede,| That bettir kane ryde and kepe a stede"' (ll. 1433-32). After the Sultan charges him with the care of his horse, Clement rides off with the marvellous horse in front of the Sultan himself. Although it is strange that Florent does not steal the horse himself, what is more peculiar is that the narrator informs the audience that Clement: 'Full wele he couthe þaire speche speke' (l. 1423). Even though the romance does not provide any further detail as to where Clement has studied the Saracen tongue, this is important as it coincides with references to dragomen in the first chapter. They must have spoken to Muslims in the Levant, which may suggest the transmission of information and oral tales from local Muslims.

[461] Zakarīyā ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *Kitāb ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa-Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, BSB Cod.arab. 464, c. 1280, Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek, Minaturin 156.

[462] MS. Bodley 764, c. 1225-50, vellum, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Even though *Sir Octavian* is a fictional romance, the prevalent Crusading ideology coupled with the fact that literature of the period often drew on historical material, means that it is possible that the author of *Octavian* based Clement's knowledge of the Saracen tongue on the example of dragomen during the Crusades. As suggested above, there were translators who spoke Arabic as war prisoners who may have learnt Arabic during their time in imprisonment. Therefore, it does not seem strange that Clement speaks the Saracens' language. It may be argued that this detail is just a narrative device to make the stealth of the horse more probable; however, the other romances discussed do not justify the interaction of Christians and Saracens through details of linguistic knowledge. The singularity of this added detail in *Sir Octavian* makes it seem significant.

The Popular Tradition of *Floris and Blauncheflur*

Another Middle English romance that features prominent Saracen characters is *Floris and Blauncheflur*. Although the romance contains two lovers who are Saracen and Christian who form the main focus of the romance, the religions of the lovers are inverted, with the hero being Saracen and his lover Christian, and the hero and heroine travel from the Saracen to the Christian world rather than vice versa. Marla Segol, in the discussion of the Old French *Floire and Blancheflor*, views the romance as rewriting a secularised communal history and states that it is a version of history which '[…] expresses ancestral and cultural affinity to Muslims, a secularized view of human relations, and ultimately, a strong argument against crusade'.[463] Even though this romance differs from others discussed in this thesis, containing a softer treatment of Saracens, some of the themes discussed earlier remain unaltered, most prominantly the superiority of the Christian faith and its followers, and in one version of the romance, conversion of a Saracen character.

The tale of *Floris and Blauncheflur* was highly popular from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, as evidenced by the extant versions that exist in Old French, Spanish,

[463] Marla Segol, '"*Floire and Blancheflor*" Courtly Hagiography or Radical Romance?', *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 23 (2003), pp. 233-75 (p. 233).

Italian, Middle High German, Greek, Middle English, Middle Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Old Norse, and Icelandic.[464] The earliest surviving Western versions of the tale seem to be two Old French works, titled by Du Méril as the 'version aristocratique' and 'version populaire' based on their supposed audience.[465] As Hibbard explains, the 'aristocratique' version has an emphasis on 'sentiment and aesthetic detail', while the 'populaire' version is full of action and seems to be modelled on the *chanson de geste*.[466] While discussing the origins of the tale, Grieve explains that there is some disagreement regarding the base manuscript of the oldest European version of the tale, which is the 'aristocratique' version, or version I.

Out of three manuscripts, manuscript A (Paris, BN 375), B (Paris, BN 1447), and C (Paris, BN Supplément fr. 12562), with manuscript C being a copy of A, both A and C are considered base manuscripts as A is slightly longer and older than B.[467] Grieve, however, drawing on the writings of Gaston Paris, suggests that similarities between the sixteenth century Spanish prose romance, Boccaccio's *Il Filocolo*, and the fourteenth century Italian *Cantare di Fiorio e Biancifiore*, all of which divert from the Old French romance, indicate 'their reliance on even more primitive versions of the romance'.[468] Although the differences may indeed indicate a different source, there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that it was composed earlier than the Old French manuscript A.

Despite the popularity of the tale in several languages, this chapter will deal with the Middle English versions of *Floris and Blauncheflur*. According to McKnight, the story of Floris and Blauncheflur became known in England around the thirteenth century, a

[464] John A. Geck, '"For Goddes loue, sir, mercy!": Recontextualising the Modern Critical Text of *Floris and Blancheflor*', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Chichon (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 77-89 (p. 78).
[465] *King Horn, Floriȝ and Blauncheflur, The Assumption of our Lady*, first ed. by J. Rawson Lumbly, later ed. by George H. McKnight, E.E.T.S. o.s. 14 (London: Oxford University Press, 1901), p. xxxii.
[466] Laura A. Hibbard, *Mediaeval Romance in England: A Study of Sources and Analogues of Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), p. 184.
[467] Patricia E. Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 17.
[468] Ibid., p. 16.

hundred years after its introduction in France.[469] There are four extant manuscripts of the Middle English romance. The British Museum MS. Egerton 2862 has been dated as belonging to the end of the fourteenth century or the first half of the fifteenth century.[470] Another version, found in the British Library MS Cotton Vitellius D.III, dates from the latter part of the thirteenth century.[471] Another manuscript that contains the romance, the National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1 (Auckinleck Manuscript) has been dated between 1330 and 1340.[472] Finally, the Cambridge University MS. G. 4.27.2, dates to the end of the thirteenth century.[473] Regardless of differences in opinion concerning the earliest Western instance of the tale, the Middle English version seems to be adapted from a French original. However, McKnight is confident that '[…] the French original that lay before the English adaptor cannot have been exactly as it is preserved in any one of the three extant French MSS., but rather an older, or purer text', which may be distinguished by the absence of attempted suicide of Floris in a lion pit.[474] Even though the Middle English versions follow the Old French, the descriptive passages are condensed, which is reflected in the shortened length of the poem, although enough detail is retained to keep the description vivid.[475] While the MS Cotton Vitellius D.III and the Cambridge University MS. Gg. 4.27.2 are the oldest manuscript versions of this Middle English romance, this chapter will predominantly use the version found in the British Museum MS. Egerton 2862 as it is the longest and most complete version of the tale in Middle English. This thesis will also occasionally refer to the Auchinleck and Cambridge versions for comparison and discussion of certain themes. While the British Museum MS. Egerton 2862 is the most complete, it is missing the beginning of the romance, as are the other three manuscripts; it is for this reason that Heffernan and other scholars have commented

469 *Florię and Blauncheflur*, ed. by McKnight, p. xxxvii.
470 Floris and Blauncheflur: A Middle English Romance, ed. by Franciscus Catharina de Vries (Groningen: Drukkerij V.R.B, 1966), p. 5.
471 Ibid., p. 5.
472 Ibid., p. 1.
473 Ibid, p. 4.
474 Ibid., p. xxxvii.
475 Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England*, p. 187.

on the difficulty of ascertaining the religious identity of Floris and his family, which is important for the purpose of this thesis.[476]

Inversion of the Enamoured Princess Topos in *Floris and Blauncheflur*

It is mostly through references at the beginning of the French versions that scholars have assumed that Floris is Saracen and Blauncheflur a Christian. The beginning of the French source tells the audience that Blauncheflur's mother, the duchess of Orleans, already pregnant with a child, was captured by the Muslim king of Spain and presented as a lady-in-waiting to his wife, who was also pregnant with a child.[477] The French specifically mentions that the king of Spain is a Muslim, and his son, Floris, would also be Muslim, or a Saracen. Apart from the missing beginning, which may have introduced the king as a Saracen, the Middle English romance makes no explicit reference to Floris or his parent's religion. The Cambridge MS begins after Blauncheflur is sold to merchants and the Auchinleck MS begins when Floris is about to set sail to rescue Blauncheflur; however, the MS. Egerton begins much earlier and mentions that the 'Þe Cristen woman fedde hem þoo' (l. 3), referring to Floris and Blauncheflur. While the capture of Blauncheflur's mother is missing from the manuscript, the specific reference to her as a Christian woman suggests that her captors may not be Christian.

Further evidence for Floris and his parents' identity can be found in the parents' objection to Floris and Blauncheflur's love. Although the king does not specify the reason for his objection, he confides in his wife that after Blauncheflur is killed, '"As sone as Florys may it vnder ȝete,| Rathe he wylle hur forȝete.| Þan may he wyfe after reede'' (ll. 49-51). Once again, it is not clearly stated but that the king wants Floris to marry someone of their 'reede' suggests there is something unacceptable about either Blauncheflur's social class or religion; as Blauncheflur is both a Christian and a slave's daughter, it is likely that the king objects on both accounts. The king certainly could not object to

[476] Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer*, pp. 84-85.
[477] Kathleen Coyne Kelly, 'The Bartering of Blauncheflur in the Middle English "*Floris and Blauncheflur*"', *Studies in Philology*, 91:2 (1994), 101-10 (p. 103).

Blauncheflur's beauty or honour as the queen refers to her as '"mayde clene"' (l. 59) immediately after the king's speech and she is consistently referred to as fair in the romance. If Floris and his parents are not Christian, the date of the composition of the earliest version of the tale and the continuing dominance of the Crusades suggests that they are Muslim. The conversion of Floris to Christianity at the end of the romance in the Auchinleck version further testifies to his religious identity. The romance is not simply a tale of love between two children, but addresses issues of the representation of race and religion, as well as class.

Despite the representation of Floris and his parents as Saracens, either the king or Floris beseech Jesus at least once in all four versions of the Middle English romance.[478] In the MS Egerton, after hearing the truth about Blauncheflur's absence, Floris requests supplies from his father to undertake a journey to save Blauncheflur; after assuring Floris that he will receive anything he demands, the king ends his speech with the invocation: '"Ihesu þe of care vnbynde"'; (l. 338). Once again, in the Auchinleck manuscript, after Floris is discovered by Claris in the flower basket and is left alone with Blauncheflur, Floris swears '"[…] Louerd þat madest man;| Þe I þanke; Godes sone;| Nou al mi care ich haue ouercome;"' (ll. 534-36).[479] Geck postulates that these instances of Christian invocation in the manuscripts suggest that Floris is presented as both Christian and heathen in this romance.[480] He further suggests that it is because of this religious ambiguity that Floris, a Saracen, is treated sympathetically in the romance.[481] It is unclear whether the composer of the romance intended to insinuate religious ambiguity, since errors in invocation are not uncommon in Middle English romance. As discussed in the third chapter, after Beues rejects Josian's advances of love, Josian swears by Jesus before agreeing to convert to Christianity. Beyond confusion on the part of the author, the reason

[478] Geck, '"For Goddes loue, sir, mercy!"', p. 77.
[479] *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. by David Burnley and Alison Wiggins (15 March 2004) <https://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/floris.html>
[480] Geck, '"For Goddes loue, sir, mercy!", p. 77.
[481] Ibid., p. 80.

for the premature invocation of Jesus seems unclear in both romances. However, Floris is indeed treated in a sympathetic manner. The other romances discussed in this thesis provide clear evidence for this sympathetic treatment of Saracens.

The gender roles are reversed in this romance as Floris plays the part of the Saracen princesses. As Floris falls in love with the Christian Blauncheflur, saves her life, and even converts to Christianity in the Auchinleck version, it is no surprise that he is not portrayed as a typical heathen or referred to as a heathen. Another factor may be that Floris, as Kelly aptly puts it, '[…] travels, not as an errant knight, but in the guise of a merchant — the better to barter for Blauncheflur'.[482] Indeed there are no acts of prowess as the Middle English follows the 'idyllic sentiment' of the 'aristocratique' version of the French romance rather than the 'populaire' one which includes several scenes of fighting; even so, the composer of the Middle English romance consciously chose to make this change distancing the tale from the general romance tradition.[483] Calkin goes a step further to observe that unlike the darker stories of religious interaction in the Auchinleck, *Floris and Blauncheflur* 'suggests the possibility of a harmonious integration of Saracen and Christian'.[484] Although all does end favourably in the romance, the process of integration of Saracen and Christian is not entirely harmonious. Floris is dealt with sympathetically, but the king and queen of Spain are portrayed as severely unethical rulers and parents. Apart from separating the two children who clearly love each other, they sell Blauncheflur into slavery for '[…] muche Catell and goode (l. 150). It is only after a long journey and a near death experience that Blauncheflur is rescued and the lovers are reunited. Much as in the case of King Ermin in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, integration can only be accomplished after the offending Saracen parents conveniently die and leave their kingdom to their

[482] Kelly, 'The Bartering of Blauncheflur', p. 107.
[483] Derek Pearsall, 'The Development of Middle English Romance', in *Studies in Middle English Romances: Some New Approaches*, ed. by Derek Brewer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988), pp. 11-36 (p. 22).
[484] Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 128.

offspring. Even so, this ending comes after a harrowing adventure for the lovers and the systemic removal of any Saracen influence.

Beyond the sympathetic treatment of Floris and his parents, Metlitzki is taken aback by not only the Saracen setting but also the sympathetic treatment of the emir'.[485] The emir is treated favourably but his religious identity in the romance seems somewhat unclear. In the MS Egerton he appears to be Christian; when Dares gives Floris information about the emir, his tower, and his tradition to choose a new wife every year, Dares tells Floris, 'And þe Amyral haþ a wonder woon,| þat he þat is come of cristendome,| Euery ȝere to haue a new wyf' (ll. 599-601). Although the Egerton manuscript seems to suggest that the emir is a Christian, the Cambridge and Auckinleck manuscripts, by contrast, do not contain any corresponding lines. Instead of the lines noted above, the Cambridge manuscript provides the lines, 'And þe Admiral is such a gume,| In al þe world nis such a sune' (ll. 261-62) and the Auckinleck manuscript follows the Cambridge with the lines: 'And þe amerail is so wonder a gome| Þat euerich ȝer hit is his wone| To chosen him a newe wif' (ll. 275-77). Although the emir seems to be Christian in the Egerton manuscript, the differences in the Cambridge and Auchinleck manuscripts, as well emir's multiple wives, suggest otherwise. As the Emir treats Floris and Blauncheflur mercifully and allows them to be married, he is allowed a sympathetic end through a union with Clarys.

The missing beginning in all four extant manuscripts of *Floris and Blauncheflur* also leads Heffernan to propose the possibility of an incestuous relationship between the lovers. Referring to the missing beginning in the manuscripts, Heffernan asserts that this 'matter of consequence […] leaves the identity of Blauncheflur's father unclear'.[486] However, this is hardly evidence to support an incestuous theme, especially since the French source of the romance clearly mentions, by Heffernan's own admission, that

[485] Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, p. 243.
[486] Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer*, pp. 84-85.

'Floire's father is a pagan king and Blancheflor's a Christian count or earl'.[487] Since all extant manuscripts of the Middle English versions follow the French in most details, it seems unlikely that the Middle English composer would include or imply a radical incest theme in the few missing lines of the beginning of the romance.

Heffernan's suggestion that the fact that Floris and Blauncheflur's familiar features and identical birth dates imply a familial relationship again seems unlikely though the lady of the house where Floris first dines on his journey does note a resemblance between Floris and Blauncheflor in the Auchinleck version: 'Þou art ilich here of alle þinge;| Of semblant & of mourning;| But þou art a man & ȝhe is a maide:' (ll. 53-55).[488] A half-Saracen Blauncheflur would certainly be interesting for the purpose of this study; however, it is common in medieval romance for lovers to mirror each other in appearance; indeed it fits in very well with the theme of doubling in this romance, treating the lovers as inseperable – there is even duality in the floral image of their names. Blauncheflur may not be half-Saracen, but like other Christian lovers in romances dealing with Saracens, she is white, beautiful, and virtuous. Notwithstanding the missing beginning of the romance, the first line of the Egerton manuscript mentions that 'Ne thurst men neuer in londe| After feirer Children fonde' (ll. 1-2). If the favourable price Blauncheflur receives as a slave is not testament enough of her beauty, the rest of the romance repeatedly emphasises her beauty and virtue. Early on the queen testifies that she is 'mayde clene' (l. 59) and Floris eulogises at her false grave that: '"Lytel and muche loueden þe| For þy goodnesse and þy beaute"' (ll. 275-76). Most importantly, soon after the queen reveals the truth about Blauncheflur's grave, the king describes her as '"Blauncheflour with þe white syde,| Blauncheflour, þat fair may"' (ll. 362-63). Even though the king objects to Floris and Blauncheflur's love, even he cannot help but acknowledge her beauty. It is this beauty and whiteness that mark Blauncheflur as virtuous enough to be a Christian, and, as demonstrated in the earlier chapters, identifies Saracens worthy enough to convert to

[487] Ibid., p. 87.
[488] Ibid., p. 86; *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. by Burley and Wiggins.

Christianity. In fact, Floris himself is described '[…] feire and gent' (l. 245) at the start of the romance, and as discussed earlier, remarkably resembles Blauncheflur. This representation is in keeping with Floris's role as a Saracen who falls in love with a Christian; while the fact that Floris later converts to Christianity in the Auchinleck mauscript further explains his fair representation. Although Floris does not convert in the other version of this Middle English romance, his marriage to Blauncheflur in a church, followed by the death of his Saracen parents, signals a change in his identity.

Clarys, a lady in the emir's tower, is also described using the same phrase as Blauncheflur is, 'clarys with þe white syde' (l. 835). Claris discovers Floris hiding in a flower basket as he tries to get into the emir's tower and unites the lovers, cheekily asking Blauncheflur, '"Felow, knowist þou auȝt þis flour?"' (l. 810). Much like Olyuan in *Octavian*, Clarys unites the lovers and helps conceals Floris's presence from the emir. Although Clarys's religious identity is left ambiguous, her positive portrayal may be due to the gracious role she plays in the lovers' union. It is also her role as a fellow victim of the emir that endears her to the audience as the lovers' merciful confidant. Clarys lives up to her beauty through her generosity and merciful nature and Blauncheflur rewards her, as it is through her 'consel' (l. 1068) that 'Clarys was fet doun of þe Toure,| And Amyral wedded hur to queene' (ll. 1069-70).

The Saracen queen of Spain, Floris's mother, does not enjoy such a happy fate. Her Saracen identity is evident not only in her treatment of Blauncheflur, although she acknowledges her beauty and virtue, but also in the omission of any detail of beauty regarding the queen's appearance. This lack of description is important because although she is a secondary character in the romance, it is evident from the representation of the Emperor's fair wife in *Octavian* that even secondary characters are described as beautiful if they are virtuous. Although the queen is not portrayed as either black or ugly, as unworthy Saracens are generally depicted in Middle English romance, the absence of whiteness or beauty is significant as it is generally symbolic of absence of virtue.

However, the queen does share some qualities with the Saracen princesses previously discussed that mark them as quintessentially Saracen. Much like the Saracen princesses, the queen of Spain is not only her husband's confidant, but also holds extraordinary influence over his decisions. When the king notices the growing attachment between Floris and Blauncheflur, the king '[…] tolde hur of his woo,| Off his þouȝt and of his care,' (ll. 42-43). This signifies that the queen enjoys a position of trust with the king; therefore, when the king is frustrated over the love between Floris and Blauncheflur, he confides to her that he plans to kill Blauncheflur and that he is convinced that once she is dead, Floris will forget her. It is after this frank confession that the queen is able to influence his decision and convince him that there would be no honour in killing Blauncheflur as it might result in Floris losing his honour instead. The king accedes to her advice and further defers to her, '"Dame, rede vs what is doo"' (l. 64). The queen advises the king to send Floris to her sister in the land of Mountargis, where her sister will attempt to put an end to the love between the children; the king despite his earlier frustration follows her 'rede'.

This is not the only instance in which the queen exercises influence over her husband. When their initial plan to separate the children fails, the king 'waxe to-brake' (l. 133) and 'cleped þe Queene' (l. 137), vowing, '"Let do bryng forþ þat mayde!| Fro þe body þe heued shal goo"' (ll. 140-41). The queen once again calms him, beseeching him, '"For goddes love, sir, mercy"' (l. 144), suggesting that instead of killing Blauncheflur, he should sell her to Babylonian merchants for a good price. Once again the king agrees to follow her advice and decides to sell Blauncheflur rather than killing her. Even when Floris is about to commit suicide after viewing Blauncheflur's false grave, the queen snatches the knife from Floris's hand and beseeches her husband once more, '"For goddes loue, sir, mercy!"' (l. 300), reasoning with him that it would better for Floris to marry Blauncheflur than to commit suicide. Although the sight of his son attempting suicide does not seem to evoke a compassionate response from the king, after the queen's plea for

mercy, the king immediately acknowledges her rationale and agrees to reveal the truth to save their son's life. The queen's control over her husband is reminiscent of the Saracen princesses' influence over their fathers and Abbasid queens' sway over the political decisions of their husbands and sons.

In addition to her influence over her husband, the queen possesses a magic ring, a talisman against injury, which associates her with the marvellous magic of the East. Before Floris sets sail to rescue Blauncheflur, the queen gives him a ring, instructing him that '"While it is þyne, douȝt no þyng| Of fire brennyng ne water in þe See;| Ne yren ne steele shal dere thee"' (ll. 376-78). Although neither Floris nor Blauncheflur use the magic ring, it is each lover's selfless desire that the other use the ring that leads the emir to recognise their love and take mercy on them. While the queen saves both Floris and Blauncheflur from certain death more than once in the romance, she faces an unceremonious death at the end of the romance, as her death is not even noted at the end. After Floris and Blauncheflur are married, Floris receives notice that his father is dead and returns with his wife to rule the kingdom as king and queen. As there is no further mention of the queen, it can assumed that she dies alongside the king. Both the king and queen are conveniently removed at the end of romance, making way for a Christian queen and her presumably newly christened husband, revealing the underlying Crusading ideology.

Beyond its vestiges of Crusading ideology and Saracen hero, this romance is particularly interesting for its possible Eastern origins, which if genuine, would suggest a literary influence. Such an influence would not be altogether surprising given the several avenues of interaction demonstrated in the previous chapters: the West may have been more aware of Muslim culture, religion, and perhaps even literature in the East than has been previously considered. Kelly neatly summarises current views on the provenance of the tale: scholars disagree as to whether the tale is originally of Eastern origin and modified by Western writers or whether the author of the romance situated the story in an

Eastern setting.[489] Grieve elaborates on the various debated origins of the tale; some critics believe it to be the creation of a gifted French poet, while others hypothesise a Persian, Byzantine, or an indeterminate Eastern provenance.[490] Metlitzki agrees with Grieve and considers the romance 'a genuine oriental romance transplanted to the West probably by way of the Byzantium'; however, she does not believe that there is a direct Arabic analogue for *Floris and Blauncheflur* comparable to that of the ebony horse from the *Arabian Nights* for Girard d'Amien's *Méliacin*.[491] Although the tale of '*Ni'amah bin al-Rabi'a and Naomi his slave-girl'* has some similarities with *Floris and Blauncheflur*, however, it is unlikely that it was its source.

Despite the absence of a truly analogous tale, Metlitzki suggests that *Floris and Blauncheflur* contains Arabian motifs that have parallels in the *Arabian Nights*. She proposes that one such tale is that of '*Ardashir and Hayat al-Nufus'* from the *Arabian Nights* anthology.[492] The tale is that of a prince, disguised as a merchant, and a king's daughter. When the daughter's father sends a eunuch to fetch her from her room, the eunuch discovers the lovers together in bed. Although the tale does not contain the theme of religious diversity as an obstacle to the lovers' union and the trials of the hero to reach the heroine are not present, there are some similar themes, such as the discovery of the lovers in bed, their vow to die for each other, and the king's mercy towards the lovers when he discovers the depth of their love.[493] Other critics provide further parallels between *Floris and Blauncheflur* and Arabic tales. Gédéon Huet suggests a parallel between the second part of *Floris and Blauncheflur*, where Floris goes in search of his lost lover, and '*The History of the Moneylender of Baghdad'*.[494] To these, Heffernan suggests parallels in the tale of '*The Story of Nūr al-Dīn ibn-Bakkar and the Slave-Girl Shams al-Nahar'*, found in Muhsin Mahdi's edition of the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript of

[489] Kelly, 'The Bartering of Blauncheflur', p. 102.
[490] Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor*, p. 16.
[491] Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, p. 191; p. 243.
[492] Ibid., pp. 243-44.
[493] Ibid., p. 244.
[494] Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer*, p. 103.

The Arabian Nights.[495] The story does have the theme of the 'other' as one lover is Persian, while the other is not; it also contains the figure of slave-girl, as suggested by the title, and includes a harem, but otherwise the story bears a very slim resemblance to that of *Floris and Blauncheflur* and certainly could not be a textual source for the romance.

By far the closest parallel to *Floris and Blauncheflur* can be found in another Arabic tale of a slave-girl titled, *'Ni'amah bin al-Rabi'a and Naomi his slave-girl'* from *The Arabian Nights*, discussed by Sharon S. Geddes in her detailed article.[496] The tale does not deal with religious difference or parental objection to the lovers' union, both prominent themes in *Floris and Blancheflur*; however, it does contain two parts, both of which resemble the plot of the romance. At the beginning of the tale, a wealthy man from Cufa, with an infant son, purchases a slave with an infant daughter. The slave's daughter and the man's son grow up together, fall in love, and get married. One day the Viveroy of Kūfah hears the slave's daughter, 'Naomi', singing and abducts her to sell her to the Caliph. The wealthy man's son falls ill when he discovers the loss and his physician concocts a plan to save Naomi. The physician opens a shop in Damascus and hires 'Ni'amah' as his assistant. Meanwhile 'Naomi' pines for her husband and an old woman hired by the Caliph arranges for the same physician to cure her love-sickness. When 'Ni'amah' discovers the identity of the patient he convinces the old woman to help him gain entry into the harem. He disguises himself as a woman, but accidently ends up in the room of the Caliph's sister, who then agrees to help his cause. Eventually, through the help of the sister and a well-chosen story narrated by 'Naomi', the caliph realises his mistake in separating the lovers and 'Naomi' and 'Na'amah' are reunited.[497]

Judging from the parallels in Arabic tales put forth by scholars, there is a possibility that *Floris and Blauncheflur* could have been influenced by numerous Arabic

[495] Ibid.
[496] Sharon S. Geddes, 'The Middle English Poem of *Floriz and Blauncheflur* and the *Arabian Nights Tale of "Ni'amah and Naomi*," A Study in Parallels', *ESRS* (18.3-18.4 & 19.1-19.2) (2012), 14-21 (p. 19). As the summary of the tale has been taken from Geddes article, the transliteration of names in the article have been retained.
[497] Ibid.

tales, although that of '*Ni'amah bin al-Rabi'a and Naomi his slave-girl'* seems to contain the closest parallels.

Overall, *Floris and Blauncheflur* does not stray far from the other romances discussed in its inclusion of and emphasis on Crusading ideology. Although the gender of the Saracen lover is inverted, and a Saracen is positioned as the hero of the romance, this work, much like the three versions of *Sir Ferumbras*, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, and *Octavian*, highlights the superiority of Christianity and places an emphasis on the conversion of Saracens. At the same time, it also reveals influence from the East, not only in its representation of Saracen characters and its inclusion of medicine and wondrous items inspired from the East, but also in the possible influence of Arabic tales.

Chapter Five: The Proliferation of the Conversion Topos: The Mirroring of Themes in The Western and Eastern Literary Traditions

As well in the possibility of Eastern origins of an individual romance, potential Eastern literary influence can be seen in the conversion topos in the previous chapters. Oral knowledge about Eastern culture and literature, especially orally transmitted stories, could have been conveyed to the West through interaction during the Crusades and trade with the Mediterranean region. The translation of Greek medical knowledge and literature from Greek to Arabic commissioned by Abbasid caliphs and consequently the translation of the same manuscripts from Arabic to Latin in the West could also have resulted in the translation of other kinds of Arabic manuscripts, perhaps of classical or popular literature. In addition to translating the works of writers such as Hippocrates and Aristotle, works of Muslim scholars such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who further developed Greek scientific knowledge, were also translated. The unusual history of the ninth-century fragment of *The Thousand and One Nights*, discussed later in this chapter, illustrates the circulation of literary texts and suggests the possibility that aspects of Eastern tales could have found their way to Europe. Although a similar trope dealing with conversion seems to be popular in the Eastern literary tradition, this chapter will only look at a small corpus of tales in detail to provide a small window into the popularity of the trope and to suggest a possible influence on the Western medieval literary tradition. To best illustrate the prevalence of this trope in the Eastern medieval literary tradition, this chapter will be discussing vestiges of the conversion topos in the tale of the encounter between Shāpūr II and Malika in both the *Shāhnāma* and al-Ṭabarī's history, as well as one of the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*. A detailed discussion of the tale of Shāpūr II and Malika in the *Shāhnāma* has been included in this chapter as the epic was very popular in the medieval period; the large number of manuscripts which survive of the *Shāhnāma* demonstrate this. The fact that most of the mansucripts survive from a later

period after its completion around 1010, suggests that it continued to be copied and distributed well after its composition, with the earliest extant illustrated manuscript surviving from the fourteenth century. Al-Ṭabarī, whose version of the encounter between Shāpūr and Malika is also included in this chapter, was a prominent scholar and historian who produced a large corpus of histories; al-Ṭabarī's inclusion of the same tale containing elements of the conversion trope further highlights the popularity of the tale itself and the trope. Although only one of the tales in the *Nights* vast existing corpus has been discussed in this chapter, the inclusion of the trope in several tales within *The Thousand and One Nights* further attests to its prevalence in the Eastern literary tradition. The popularity of the *Nights* in the medieval period is undeniable as the tales continued to be added or substituted in different manuscripts over time. This also demonstrates the vast circulation of the tales, many of which were derived from several countries. The choice of three tales, each one derived from a prominent author or corpus of tales certainly demonstatrates that a conversion trope remarkably similar to the Western trope existed in the Eastern literary tradition and may have even predated it in the case of the tale of the encounter between Shāpūr and Malika's case.

The conversion of the Saracen princess to Christianity forms the centre of the Middle English romances discussed and highlights the prevalent Crusading ideology. This conversion topos, as Geraldine Heng terms it, also features prominently in the account of Bohemond's escape in Orderic Vitalis's *Ecclesiastical History*, discussed in detail by Warren.[498] However, elements of this conversion topos existed in early Persian and Arabic epic and oral textual tradition, some of which predate the earliest extant introduction of this topos in Vitalis's *History*. Although the *Shāhnāma* and a tale from *The Thousand and One Nights* will be discussed in detail in the next two sections of the chapter, the conversion topos was prevalent is several tales within the *Nights* corpus and in the popular medieval sīra tradition. Christie provides a long list of instances of conversion to Islam,

[498] Heng, *Empire of Magic*; Warren, 'The Enamoured Muslim Princess in Ordericus Vital', pp. 341-358.

both in the Nights and sīrah tradition. As Christie writes, the characters in both traditions are non-Muslim women, often of Christian origin, who abandon their faith for Islam, often betray and kill their families and generally behave in ways which would be unacceptable in Muslim society.[499] This description draws strong parallels between these tales and the Middle English romances discussed in the previous chapters. Christie further elaborates that these non-Muslim women usually convert to Islam after falling in love with a Muslim hero.[500] A strong example of this conversion trope in the *Nights* is the tale of *Miriam the Shash-Maker*. In the tale, Miriam falls in love with ʿAlī Nūr al-Dīn, converts to Islam, and betrays her family, going as far as killing her father and her brothers. She even fights with her brother when he confronts her about her conversion and at the end of the fight, severs his head with her sword. Beyond betraying her family, she also defiles her previous faith by initiating sexual intercourse with her Muslim lover in a Christian church.[501] Similar examples of conversion from the *Nights* include Ḥusn Mariyyam, a Genoese princess from ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Abū al-Shāmāt, and a Byzantine princess Sophia from King ʿUmar ibn Nuʿmān and his family.[502] There are several more examples of the conversion trope in the sīrah tradition. In the Sīrat al-Ẓāhir Baībars alone there a several examples, including the Princess Zananir of Qalʿat al-Shams who fights on behalf of her Muslim lover, kills her father, and converts to Islam.[503] In another sīra, Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himmah, Marjānah of ʿAmūdah falls in love with a Muslim hero, frees him and opens the gates of her father's city to Muslims. In addition, she kills her own father for refusing to convert to Islam.[504] As these examples and further discussion of this topos in the next sections demonstrate, narrative framework of the topos in these early Eastern texts also resembles its Western counterpart, suggesting the possible influence of earlier Eastern tradition.

The *Shāhnāma* and the Persian Oral Tradition

[499] Christie, 'Noble Betrayers of their Faith, Families, and Folk', p. 84.
[500] Ibid., p. 86.
[501] Ibid., p. 92.
[502] Ibid., p. 86.
[503] Ibid., p. 87
[504] Ibid., p. 90.

There is evidence of a Persian oral literary tradition from the late tenth to the eleventh centuries and the *Shāhnāma* formed part of this tradition. The *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* (The History of Bayhaqī) written by Abū al-Faḍl Moḥammad Bayhaqī (d.1077) provides evidence of the oral literary tradition within the Ghaznavid court.[505] As Bayhaqī was a secretary at the Ghaznavid court and served the court for almost fifty years from 1021/22 - 1077, he was able to observe the prince's preference for different oral traditions. Bayhaqī makes reference to activities of 'šâ'erân or šo'arâ (poets), motrebân (minstrels or muscicians), and mohaddesân or qavvâlân (storytellers)' at court.[506]The poets held the most esteemed position at the Ghaznavid court amongst the three professions and were present at all ceremonial events.[507] Likewise, the minstrels were close attendants to the Ghaznavid kings, although they were not allowed to sing their own songs and were restricted to the reproduction of popular songs. However, storytellers did not perform on special occasions but were part of the everyday court life, readily available to entertain the princes whenever they needed them; as Bayhaqī relates, 'And every day I waited on him [Ma'ud I] as usual, with my companions [consisting of] musicians (montrebân), storytellers (qavâl), and old nadims. I had something to eat and returned for evening prayer'.[508]

Popular texts such as the *Hazār Afsān(a)* were recited at court: as Al-Nadīm writes that 'the kings who came after Alexander also heard evening stories, especially the *Hazar Afsana'*. Al-Nadīm also mentions other Persian tales such as:

> كتاب رستم واسفنديار ترجمة جبلة بن سالم كتاب بهرام شوس ترجمة جبلة بن سالم كتاب شهريزاد مع ابرويز كتاب الكارنامج فى سيرة انوشروان كتاب التاج وما تفألت به ملوكهم كتاب دارا والصنم الذهب كتاب اثنين نامه كتاب خداى نامه كتاب بهرام ونرسى كتاب انوشروان
>
> *Rustum* and *Asfaniyādh*, a translation of *Jabalah ibn Sālim*; *Bahrām* Chūbīn (translation of Jabalah ibn Sālim): *Shahr-Bazār* and *Parwīz*;

[505] Bayhaqī's history deals with the years 1030–1041 and discusses both Persian and Arabic literature of the period.
[506] Kumiko Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics: Storytelling and Poetry* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 53.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

> Al-Kārnāmak, about the life *Anūshirwān*; The Crown and What Their Kings Drew from It; *Dārā* and the Golden Idol; The Book of Institutions (Āyīn Nāmah); The Book of Lords (Khuday Nāmah); *Bahrām* and *Narsī*; *Anūshirwān*.[509]

Some of these tales came to be included in the *Shāhnāma* and Yamamoto suggests that 'these imply that the Persian national legend, or parts of it at least, were known to people outside the Persian-speaking regions'.[510] Even before Firdausī compiled the *Shāhnāma*, which came to be hailed as a national epic, evidence of one of the earliest records of oral transmission of Persian stories included in the *Shāhnāma* is found in Mecca in the seventh century. Ibn Hishām entertained people in Mecca with stories of Rūstam and Persian kings, and by the eighth century the tales of Rūstam were also known in Armenia.[511] As Yamamoto elaborates, the historian Moses Khorenats'i mentions Rūstam to discuss suspicions of hyperbole in his description of the governor named Turk:

> As the governor of the west he appointed a man called Turk', who was deformed, tall, monstrous, with a squashed nose, deep-sunk sockets, and cross-eyes, from the offspring of Pask'am, grandson of Hayk; they called him Angl because of his great ugliness, a man of gigantic size and strength. Because of the deformity of his face, he called his family the house of Angl. But if you wish, even I am telling inappropriate and contemptible lies about him [Turk the governor], just as the Persians say that Rostam Sagdjik had the strength of 120 elephants. The songs about his strength and spiritedness seemed very disproportionate; not even the tales of Samson or Heracles or Sagdjik could match them.[512]

As both these references to Persian tales predate the compilation of the *Shāhnāma*, the tales must have been orally transmitted to Mecca and Armenia. The tales of Rūstam seem

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[509] Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. by Gustav Flügel, p. 305; Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of Al-Nadīm*, trans. by Bayard Dodge, p. 716. Dodge removes the phrase 'translation of Jabalah ibn Sālim' after '*Bahrām* Chūbīn', which is mentioned in the Arabic text edited by Flügel; therefore, this detail has been added in parenthesis in Dodge's translation. Dodge also notes that there is an error in Flügel's edition when it mentions '*Shahryazād*, which should be *Shahr-Bazār'*. Furthermore, '*Al-Kārnāmaj* should also be corrected to *Al-Kārnāmakh*'. The transliteration for *Hazār Afsān(a)* will follow the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

[510] Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics*, p. 57.

[511] Ibid. pp. 56-57.

[512] Ibid.; Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, trans. by Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 141. Since the transliteration system used is only designed for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and not Armenian, the name of the author in both the footnotes and within the main text has been retained as published in this volume.

to have been popular in Armenia during the eighth century, since Khorenats'i expected his readers to know the tales in order to understand his objections to the governor.

These renowned tales, along with other Persian stories, were collected in the *Shāhnāma* by Abū al-Qāsim Firdausī (c. 935-1016-20) around 1010.[513] The *Shāhnāma*, containing 50,000 verses, one of the lengthiest epics composed, spans the period from the fabricated beginnings of Iran to its Arab conquest in 651.[514] The *Shāhnāma* had a great impact within Persia as princes and kings saw themselves as the rightful successors of the legendary rulers mentioned within the epic and commissioned copies of it to legitimize their claim.[515] Even though the *Shāhnāma* was completed around 1010, its manuscripts only survive from later periods, with the earliest illustrated manuscripts surviving from the fourteenth century.[516] Since its compilation, the *Shāhnāma* was repeatedly copied and thousands of manuscripts have survived to date.[517] The number of manuscripts surviving today attests to the *Shāhnāma's* popularity; the oldest manuscript was written in 1217 and is now in Florence; this manuscript is unillustrated and only the first half of text has survived.[518]

Very little is known about Firdausī himself. He was originally a landowner from an aristocratic background; however, because of his wealth as a landowner he was independent of the court. During his later years, he became impoverished and led a lonely life.[519] Firdausī drew on oral and early written traditions to compile the *Shāhnāma*. Olga Davidson further argues that references to figures such as '*dehqān*' and '*mōban*' in the

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[513] Julia Gonnella, 'Heroic Times: A Millenium of the Persian Book of Kings', in *Heroic Times: A Thousand Years of the Persian Book of Kings*, ed. by Julia Gonnella and Christoph Rauch (Munich: Edition Minerva, 2012), pp. 11-15 (p. 13); Jürgen Ehlers, 'Firdausi and the *Shahnama*', in *Heroic Times: A Thousand Years of the Persian Book of Kings*, ed. Julia Gonnella and Christoph Rauch (Munich: Edition Minerva, 2012), pp. 16-21 (p. 16). There is some uncertainty regarding Firdausī's year of death as Gonnella records it as 1020, while Jürgen Ehlers, highlighting the uncertainty regarding the year of his death, dates it closer to 1016.
[514] Gonnella, '*Heroic Times'*, p. 11.
[515] Ibid., p. 12.
[516] Ibid. p. 13.
[517] Ehlers, 'Firdausi and the *Shahnama*', p. 19.
[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid., p. 16.

epic suggest oral poetic sources for the text. Davidson provides the quotation below as evidence for one such reference in the text:

Bertels III 7.19-20

بگفتار دهقان کنون بازگرد　　نگرتا چه گوید سراینده مرد
چنین گفت موبد که یک طوس　　بدا نگه که برخاست بانگ خروس

Now turn back to the words of the *dehqān*.
Consider what the *sarāyanda* says.

Thus the *mōbad* said, that, one day, Tōs,
At the time when the cock crowed,[520]

She further argues that the use of the word 'sarāyanda' (singer) in the text suggests that metaphorically 'the medium of Ferdowsi is equated in his poem with the medium of the "singer", the sarāyanda'; therefore, this places the *Shāhnāma* within the oral tradition itself. She provides an example of One such use of 'sarāyanda':

Mohl V 424.8 [not in Bertels]

سراینده دهقان موبد نژاد　　ازین داستانم چنین داد یاد

A *sarāyanda*, a *dehqān* of *mōbad* descent,
from this story taught me thus.[521]

Despite Davidson's arguments in favour of these references as evidence for oral sources for Firdausī's *Shāhnāma*, they are more likely to be a literary device to add authority to the tales by associating it with a long literary oral tradition. Rubanovich suggests another possible reason for the scattered references to 'sarāyanda', '*dehqān*', and '*mōban*' throughout the *Shāhnāma*, arguing that the references 'might have entered Firdausi's work from his written sources and functioned as a topoi or rhetorical means'.[522] Rubanovich's reasoning is sound as evidence of knowledge outside Persia of certain Persian stories

[520] Olga M. Davidson, *Comparative Literature and Classical Persian Poetics: Seven Essays* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2000), p. 32.
[521] Ibid., p. 33.
[522] Julia Rubanovich, 'Orality in Medieval Persian Literature', in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. by Karl Reichl (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 653-79 (p. 655).

included in the *Shāhnāma* suggests these stories were part of the oral tradition; therefore, Firdausī's sources rather than Firdausī himself may have been influenced by that tradition.

Among tales of legendary kings, princes, and national heroes, the *Shāhnāma* includes a brief encounter between Shāpūr II and Malika. Malika's actions and interaction with Shāpūr II strongly resemble the role of Melaz and the Saracen princesses in Orderic Vitalis's *History* and medieval romances. The encounter takes its context from the abduction of Shāpūr II's aunt Nūsha by Ṭāʾir, the Arab:

> Ṭāʾir leads an army from Rūm and Persia up to Ctesiphon pillaging as he passes through the country. When he heard of the beauty of Shāpūr's aunt, Nūsha, Ṭāʾir abducts her and keeps her prisoner. After a year of grief, she bears him a daughter 'like the moon and like Narsi' and Ṭāʾir names her Malika. When Shāpūr II, the Sasanian king, reached the age of twenty-six he decided to gather an army of twelve thousand warriors, with each warrior being seated on a camel. He also gathered a hundred guides to complete the army. Shāpūr himself mounts a steed and leads the army in search of Ṭāʾir to avenge his aunt. Shāpūr's army kills many of Ṭāʾir's warriors and takes others prisoner, while those who survive flee to a stronghold in Yaman.
>
> Following the initial conflict, Shāpūr and his army lay siege to the stronghold where Ṭāʾir and his army are hiding. One morning, Shāpūr decides to mount his horse and ride outside, with a bow in his hand, donning a black cuirass, and carrying a black flag. When Malika, residing in the stronghold, looks out from the castle-walls she views the flag and Shāpūr; she is immediately struck by his appearance and instantly falls in love with him. Malika confides her love for Shāpūr to her nurse and refers to him affectionately as her 'world', revealing the strength of her attachment. She then sends him a message claiming kinship with him and promises to help him overcome the stronghold if he would consent to marry her. Under the cover of night the nurse carries Malika's message to Shāpūr's camp. When the nurse relays Malika's message to Shāpūr, he is pleased and rewards her with gifts, eagerly agreeing to Malika's terms. The nurse then returns to Malika with the good news.
>
> To fulfil the agreement with Shāpūr, Malika acquires the key to the provand and wine from her father's treasurer and minister. She then sends Ṭāʾir, the leaders, and veteran chiefs wine with sweet narcissus-blossoms and fenugreek and instructs the server to continue serving them wine until they are intoxicated and fall asleep. When all the men are asleep, she instructs her slaves to cautiously open the gate to the stronghold, allowing Shāpūr and his troops to enter the stronghold and sieze Ṭāʾir's treasures. When he enters the stronghold, he finds most of Ṭāʾir's men either half-asleep or in a drunken stupor; therefore he has no difficulty in seizing the stronghold,

> capturing Ṭāʾir and leading him naked to his camp. When the stronghold is overthrown, Malika 'The Rose of early spring' sat beside Shāpūr's throne wearing 'a ruby coronet and shone| in cloth of gold of Chín'. Eventually, her father is brought in bonds to view her coronation; upon perceiving her betrayal, he cautions Shāpūr not to trust her. Shāpūr, angered by his remark, retaliates by accusing him of insulting his race by stealing the daughter of Bahram and orders the executioner to behead Ṭāʾir and burn his body.[523]

Even a quick perusal of the account reveals that familiar elements are present, including the beauty of the princess, her infatuation with the enemy, and her ruthless betrayal of her father. There are further similarities between some of the Middle English romances discussed and the story of Shāpūr and Malika. When Shāpūr sets his camp outside Ṭāʾir's stronghold, Malika looks out from the high wall 'And saw the flag and head of chiefs, whose cheeks| Were then like rose-leaves and his hair like musk,| His lips like jujubes and his breath musk-scented' and immediately falls in love with him.[524] Similarly, Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras* confesses that she witnessed Sir Guy's prowess from a distance during her father's siege of Rome and fell in love with him. However, Floripas falls in love with Sir Guy's prowess while Malika, despite Shāpūr's display of prowess, is mainly attracted to his beautiful features. Furthermore, Marsabelle confides her love for Florent to her maid and employs her help to meet him. Likewise, Malika confides her love for Shāpūr to her nurse and uses her as an intermediary to communicate with him. Marsabelle and Malika even express their affection for their lovers in similar terms: Marsabelle confides to Olyuayne that '[…] a childe es alle my thoghte' (l. 1014) after her first encounter with Florent and Malika refers to Shāpūr as her world after first viewing him from the fortress. Although the Middle English romances are not directly influenced by episodes from the *Shāhnāma*, the recurring elements discussed above suggest they may belong to the same tradition.

The Fall of Al-Ḥaḍr in the Arab Tradition

[523] Abū al-Qāsim Firdausī, *The Sháhnáma of Firdausí*, trans. by Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner, 8 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1912), VI, pp. 330-34. The title of the edition has been copied with the original transliteration of the translators.
[524] Ibid., p. 331.

According to Mohsen Zakeri, this Persian tale of the fall of the fort of al-Ḥaḍr to a Sasanid King is also transmitted by several Arab authors; however, the story has been retold and often reshaped by changes in or omission of certain minor elements.[525] Al-Ṭabarī mentions a similar account of the fall of the stronghold al-Ḥaḍr; however, the king who conquers the stronghold in his account is not Shāpūr II but Shāpūr I, the son of ʾArdashīr I.

> Al-Ṭabarī relates that in the mountains between the Euphrates and Tigris, there lived a man called al-Sāṭirūn, whom the Arab called al-Ḍayzan. Ibn al-Kalbī writes that this man was the ruler of the land of al-Jazīrah and had innumerable supporters from the tribes of Banī ʿUbaid ibn al-ʾAjrām, as well as the other tribes of Quḍāʿah, and his kingdom stretched to Syria. When Sābūr, son of ʾArdas, was travelling to Khurāsān, al-Ḍayzan attacked al-Sawād; when Sābūr is informed about the attack he immediately gathers his forces and heads towards al-Ḍayzan's fortress. Al-Ḍayzan immediately fortifies himself inside the stronghold, and as Ibn al-Kalbī asserts, Sābūr could not overthrow the stronghold for four years. However, al-ʾAʿshā contradicts al-Kalbī and suggests that the siege lasted for only two years.
>
> After the length of two or four years, depending on the source, one of al-Ḍayzan's daughters was menstruating and was therefore isolated in the outer suburb of the city. Al-Ṭabarī emphasises that al-Ḍaizān's daughter, al-Naḍīra, and Sābūr were the most attractive of their age and instantly fell in love with each other. Al-Naḍīra sends Sābūr a message asking him what form of reward would he give her if she gave him advice on defeating and killing her father; in return Sābūr promises to marry her and elevate her above the status of his other wives. She then informs of the talisman to defeat the city; she instructs him to take: " بحمامة وَرْقاء مُطَوّقه، فا كتب فى رجلها بحيْض جارية بِكْرٍ زرقاء" (a green-coloured dove and to write on its leg with the menstrual blood of a blue-eyed virgin girl); when the pigeon flies over the stronghold walls, the wall will crumble. She further informs him that she will help his cause by intoxicating her father's guards with wine; when they are intoxicated, Sābūr will easily be able to kill them and enter the stronghold.
>
> Sābūr follows her instructions, overcomes the stronghold's defences, and kills al-Ḍayzan. After Sābūr marries al-Naḍīra, she has difficulty sleeping in her bed. After attempting to determine the cause of this difficulty, they discover that a myrtle leaf hidden in the folds of her bed is irritating her fine skin during the night. Surprised by the sensitivity of her body, Sābūr inquires after her diet in her father's household. When al-Naḍīra reveals her diet of cream, bone marrow, honey, and fine wine in her father's household, this prompts Sābūr to conclude that he is dearer to al-Naḍīra than a father who reared her in

[525] Mohsen Zakeri, 'Arabic Reports on the Fall of Hatra to the Sasanids. History or Legend?', in *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. by Stefan Leder (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), pp. 158-167, (p. 158).

> such luxury. Astonished that al-Naḍīra betrayed a father who treated her with such care, and presumably considering her betrayal immoral, Sābūr has her drawn to a horse and killed.[526]

Although it is not explicitly mentioned, the assumption at the end of the tale is that Sābūr comes to the realisation that a woman who would betray a loving father for the sake of a stranger would be likely to betray him as well. Although the ending of the tale differs considerably in the *Shāhnāma*, it is significant that both accounts acknowledge the immorality of the daughter's betrayal and signal a future lapse in loyalty. Even though this warning regarding the deceitful nature of Malika comes from her father and is quickly dismissed by Shāpūr, it provides an interesting contrast to Middle English romances in which the Saracen women's betrayal of their families and religion is effortlessly dismissed as it is for the purpose of helping the Christian knights. Although the princess betrays her father in both versions of the tale, there is an assumption that Malika simply wishes to help Shāpūr capture Ṭāʾir; however, in the version narrated by al-Ṭabarī, al-Naḍīra is specifically aware that her advice will lead to the death of her father. This attitude to the welfare of her father resembles Floripas's heartless endorsement of Balan's death at the hands of the Christian knights. While Balan's capture envokes an emotional response from Ferumbras, leading him to convince Balan to convert, Floripas refuses to give her father a second chance.

Although al-Ṭabarī relates the account discussed above, which is generally accepted as an Arab version of the tale, he cannot firmly be identified as an Arab writer reflecting Arabic tradition, as there is some uncertainty about his ethnic background. Al-Ṭabarī was born around 839 or 840 A.D. in Āmul, about twenty kilometres from the

[526] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusūl wa al-Mulūk*, ed. by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 10 vols (Cairo, 1961), II, pp. 47-50; Zakeri, 'Arabic Reports on the Fall of Hatra to the Sasanids. History or Legend?', pp. 159-60. Al-Ṭabarī also references other writers in his narration of this event.

southern shore of the Caspian Sea.[527] Therefore, he may have been of Persian heritage; however, the town was occupied by Abbasid forces around 758 and was colonised by Arab supporters of the regime. Al-Ṭabarī's family may have been native to the region and Persian, or among the Arab colonisers who settled there after Abbasid occupation of the region.[528] Al-Ṭabarī himself emphasises the anonymity of his heritage in his dealing with a man named Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar. When this man asks him about his ancestry, he replies with a verse by the poet Rūʾbah ibn al-ʿAjjāj: '(My father) al-ʿAjjaj has established my reputation, so call me by my name (alone)! When long pedigrees are given (for others), it suffices me'.[529]

Regardless of his ethic heritage, he travelled widely and extensively, and associated with various scholars of the age, whom he subsequently quoted in his writings. When he was twelve years old, his father sent him to what is now modern day Tehran, to study; therefore his education started at an early age.[530] Al-Ṭabarī left for further studies in Baghdad, the centre of the Islamic world at the time, around late 855 or early 856.[531] Soon after, he travelled to al-Baṣrah, al-Kūfah, and Wāsiṭ, south of Baghdad to continue his studies.[532] After eight years, he travelled even further for the sake of research, journeying to Syria, Egypt, and even Beirut.[533] Thus he could have come across the Arab version of the tale in his extensive travels. Ibn Kalbī, whom al-Ṭabarī quotes repeatedly in his narration of the fall of al-Ḥaḍr, was writing before his time; therefore, al-Ṭabarī must have had access to his works during one his travels to the Levantine area. As Rosenthal suggests, although al-Ṭabarī quoted scholars he encountered in his travels, it is more likely

[527] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī: General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*, 40 vols, trans. by Franz Rosenthal (Albany: State University of New York P., 1989), I, p. 10-11.
[528] Elton L. Daniel, 'Abū Jaʿfar Moḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī', in *Encyclopædia Iranica* < http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tabari-abu-jafar> [accessed 20th November 2017].
[529] Al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī*, I, p. 12.
[530] Ibid., p. 16.
[531] Ibid., p. 16; p. 19.
[532] Ibid., p. 19.
[533] Ibid., p. 21; p. 23.

that he consulted written sources when transmitting information preserved as a heirloom of a particular family such as that of Muḥammad ibn Saʿd.[534]

Although there are clear variations between the Persian and Arabic versions of the tale, as well as minor differences between the various Arab retellings, there is one element of the tale which remains constant in the various versions. That element is the role of the daughter of Ṭāʾir or al-Ḍayzan. Even though the theme of abduction of Shāpūr's aunt as a motive for besieging the fortress of al-Ḥaḍr is removed from the Arabic version of the tale, Malika or al-Naḍīra, regardless of the name given to her, falls in love with Shāpūr and betrays her father by helping him invade his stronghold. The repetition of this tale with slight variations in the Persian and in the writings of various Arab writers demonstrates its popularity; in addition, variations between the Arabic versions suggest oral transmission.

The Persian and various Arabic variations on the fall of al-Ḥaḍr demonstrate the popularity of the tale, as it seems to have circulated among Persians and the Arabs. As the Arabic and Persian tales seem to predate the first instance of the enamoured Muslim princess topos in the West in Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and the popularity of the two tales, it is possible that Orderic Vitalis was influenced by one of them. The dealings between Bohemond and Danishmend's daughter Melaz are fictional: Hodgson relates that it is generally accepted that Bohemond of Taranto was captured by the Danishmend, Malik-Ghāzī in 1100. In contrast to Vitalis, Albert of Aachen relates that Bohemond was released due his own negotiations through a payment of a ransom of 100,000 bezants.[535] The inclusion of Melaz's role in overthrowing Malik-Ghāzī may be attributed to an influence from the *Miracula Sancti Leonardi*. As this work attributes Bohemond's escape to the intervention of Malik-Ghāzī's Christian wife, as well as Saint

[534] Ibid., p. 6.
[535] Natasha R. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 68.

Leonard, Vitalis may have relied on it as a literary source for this event.[536] In refering to this episode, Forester authoritatively notes in his translation of *Historia Ecclesiastica* that 'No one can for a moment attach the character of authenticity to the details of his [Ordericus's] narrative'. However, Ward emphatically rebukes this suggestion and asserts that Vitalis did not treat this account as fictional but narrated it as a factual reproduction of events.[537] It is possible that Vitalis was inspired by the account in *Miracula Sancti Leonardi*; however, the detailed inclusion of a Muslim princess who, attracted to Christianity by the words of a Christian prisoner, goes to great lengths to betray her father and free the prisoners, suggests that it is likely that Vitalis invented the account of Bohemond's escape to suggest the superiority of the Crusaders and Christianity. Even if Vitalis was influenced by *Miracula Sancti Leonardi*, he chose to make a significant change: the substitution of the Christian wife with a Muslim daughter. Such a substitution would surely be strategic on Vitalis's part.

As Hodgson suggests, Vitalis's *History* may contain the earliest account of a Saracen princess betraying her father, helping Christians, and converting to Christianity; however, the tone of the account is significantly different from the rest of his *History*: the narrative contains a considerable amount of dialogue and makes use of literary devices. These differences suggest that Vitalis may have used a separate source for this particular tale.[538] Although the Arabic and Persian versions of the tale of the fall of al-Ḥaḍr discussed provide evidence that Vitalis's version may simply be the earliest written example of its kind in the West, it is possible that Vitalis was influenced by one of the Eastern tales of the fall of Ḥaṭra or by a source influenced by them. There is a possibility that one of the versions may have found its way to the West, particularly through the popular tradition of the *Shāhnāma*.

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[536] Ibid.
[537] John O. Ward, 'Ordericusus Vitalis as Historian in the Europe of the Early Twelfth-Century Renaissance', *Parergon*, 31:1 (2014), pp. 1-26 (pp. 21-22).
[538] Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 69.

Although the explicit emphasis on the difference of religion between the hero and princess is not included in either the Persian or Arabic account of the fall of al-Ḥaḍr, they do contain several similarities to the episode in Vitalis's *Historia* and the later epics and romances influenced by his character of Melaz. The similarities in the Eastern variants are certainly strong enough to indicate an influence. One major difference between Vitalis's account and the two Eastern tales is the conversion of the princess at the end of the account. Neither variants of the Eastern tale discussed emphasises a difference of religion between Shāpūr and Malika; however, it likely that Malika, being the daughter of an Arab king is Muslim while Shāpūr, a king in pre-Islamic Persia was not Muslim. Even though the probable religious difference between Shāpūr and Ṭāʾir is not highlighted, their enmity is certainly a central element of the tale, very much like the inherent enmity between the captive Crusader Bohemond and the jailor Danishmend.

At the most basic plot level both Eastern and Western tales introduce an intelligent princess attracted to her father's enemy. The princess then betrays her father and gives the enemy guidance on how to defeat her father and conquer the castle. The enemy follows her advice, and captures her father and his castle. Although the Eastern tales end with a marriage between the princess and her father's enemy, however, Orderic Vitalis's account does not end with a marriage between Bohemond and Melaz. Even though Melaz does not marry the celebrated Bohemond, she is married to Roger of Salerno, another Christian Crusader. It is noteworthy that the subsequent Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances influenced by the account of Melaz and Bohemond's encounter end with a marriage between a celebrated Christian hero and the rebellious Saracen princess.

In addition to following a similar plot line, the Persian and Arabic tale and Vitalis's narration of Melaz's role in the release of Bohemond and his companions share some important details. In the *Shāhnāma*, during the siege Malika tricks her father, the leaders and veteran chiefs who made up the garrison, by sending them provisions and wine of sweet narcissus blossoms and fenugreek so that they fall asleep; this allows

Shāpūr and his troops to enter the stronghold and catch her father and his men by surprise, thus defeating them. Once again, in al-Ṭabarī's version of the tale, al-Naḍīra tricks the guards by giving them wine so that they are intoxicated by it and fall asleep, allowing Sābūr and his men to kill the guards and enter the stronghold. Similarly, in Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Melaz tricks the guards into believing that her father is too intrepid a warrior to ask his captives for help in the civil war against his brother. Melaz informs the guards that her father has instructed her to arm the Christian captives and lead them to the battlefield tricking the guards into releasing the captives into her custody. Later in the narrative, after Qilij ʾArslān is defeated, Melaz once again tricks the guards into descending from the highest floor of the tower to the lower gate on the assumption that they are summoned to take the Christian prisoners back to the dungeon.[539] Another detail common to the Persian and Latin tales is the princess's authority in her father's castle. In the *Shāhnāma*, Malika easily gets the keys to the stores of provend and wine from the minister of the king. In addition, when she instructs the server, '"Thou pourest wine to-night; give it to Táír| Neat and keep all of them (leaders and veteran chiefs) with wine in hand| That they may fall asleep and be bemused"'; the server does not suspect or question her orders but obediently replies that, '"Thy slave am I,| and only live because thou willest it"'.[540]

Melaz also seems to have great authority in Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. As Vitalis comments after first introducing Melaz, she possessed 'in omni domo patris sui magnam potestatem habens, multasque diuitias et plures ad sui famulatum seruos possidens' (possessed great power in all her father's house, having the command of abundant wealth and a number of slaves to do her will).[541] Later in the narrative, the episode when Danishmend's guards follow Melaz's orders to release the Christian prisoners under the impression that he has instructed her to arm the prisoners is further

[539] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, V, pp. 362-65.
[540] Firdausī, *The Sháhnáma of Firdausí*, VI, p. 333.
[541] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, V, p. 358-59.

testament to Melaz's authority in her father's household. The guards do not for an instance question the authority of her orders and release the prisoners. Most importantly, in the Persian *Shāhnāma*, al-Ṭabarī's *History*, and Orderic Vitalis's *History*, Shāpūr or Bohemond, although celebrated warriors, cannot overthrow the enemy, the princess's father, without the help of the princess. As Hodgson aptly comments in relation to Melaz's role in the chronicle, 'the prince's role was reduced to that of a warrior following instructions'.[542] Although Hodgson's comment refers to Vitalis's *History*, it applies equally to the other two tales as well. Even in *Sir Ferumbras*, Charlemagne's celebrated peers must follow Floripas's orders to survive Balan's siege.

Apart from the rebellious role of princesses, Eastern narratives of the fall of al-Ḥaḍr also bear some similarities to the Middle English romances. Scholars have suggested that the name Melaz in Vitalis's *History* suggests that the princess has a dark complexion, but when Ṭāʾir and the abducted Nūsha's daughter Malika is born in the *Shāhnāma* the narrator writes that 'she bore him| A daughter like the moon and like Narsī (Núsha's father)'.[543] Later in the epic, Shāpūr also refers to Malika as the 'moon-faced maid'.[544] Although it is not entirely clear whether this comparison to the moon is simply evocative of the magnitude of her beauty because of the bright nature of the moon, there is a strong suggestion that she has a white complexion. Although Melaz is not fair of complexion, the Saracen princesses in the Middle English romances discussed earlier are consistently referred to as both fair and bright.

"Would to heaven he would admit me into the faith of al-Islam!": Conversion and Religious Superiority in *The Thousand and One Nights* and Vitalis's *Historia*

Burton's translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* or *ʾAlf Laīlah Wa Laīlah* also contains a tale titled 'The Moslem Champion and the Christian Damsel', which is

[542] Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 70.
[543] Firdausī, *The Sháhnáma*, VI, p. 330.
[544] Ibid., p. 332.

centred around a love-struck daughter who betrays her father for the sake of his enemy. However, unlike the two tales concerning the fall of al-Ḥaḍr, this tale, much like Vitalis's narrative of Melaz's betrayal, has a strong emphasis on religion and conversion – indeed, the title of the tale itself indicates this emphasis on religious opposition. This tale begins towards the end of the four hundredth and seventy-fourth night but Shahrazād has to leave her story unfinished until the next night as the dawn approaches, bringing her time with the king to a close.

> The tale is set in the time of the caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb who decides to carry out a holy war against a Christian enemy before the city of Damascus. His army lays siege to a Christian stronghold and among his army are two brothers whose martial prowess exceeds all others. Therefore, the commander of the besieged fortress seeks to capture them to diminish the power of the besieging army. Eventually both the brothers are captured – the Christians kill one brother and take the other prisoner as the Christian commander considers him too worthy a warrior to be slain. However, the commander hopes to convert him to the 'Nazarene Faith' and fight for his cause. One of the commander's knights suggests that his daughter be given the task of converting him as he has heard that Arabs have a weakness for beautiful women and his daughter could seduce him into forsaking his religion.
>
> The knight dresses his daughter in a beautiful garment highlighting her beauty, and brings the Muslim into a room to feed him; then the knight's daughter waits on the Muslim while he eats his meal. Seeing the beauty of the knight's daughter, the Muslim is overcome by her beauty and recites verses from the Qurʾān to gain control of his attraction to her. As a result of the Muslim's 'pleasant voice and piercing wit', the girl falls in love with him. The daughter serves the Muslim his meal for the next seven days and each day the prisoner recites verses from the Qurʾān to hold his resolve. After the seventh day, the daughter is so overcome by love for him that she exclaims to herself: "Would to heaven he would admit me into the faith of al-Islam!"
>
> At last she loses patience and throws herself on the ground in front of him and begs him to teach her the tenents of Islam. After he teaches her the tenents of Islam, circumcises her, and instructs her the Islamic method of prayer, she officially becomes a Muslim. After she fully embraces Islam, she confesses to him that she only converted to the faith for his sake. The Muslim prisoner informs her that sexual intercourse before marriage is forbidden in Islam; therefore, he requests her to devise some method to release him from her father's captivity so that he can find a witness to marry them. The girl then deceives her father by informing him that the Muslim prisoner is ready to convert but wishes to convert outside the city since his brother was slain in the city and he would not be comfortable embracing his new faith in the city where his brother was killed.

> The Christian knight is delighted by the news and the prisoner is released. Following his release, the Muslm resides in a nearby village with the daughter, however, once evening approaches, the Muslim and the girl escape from the village. The couple stopped by a highway at dawn to pray together when they hear the sound of horses nearby; the Muslim grows afraid that the Nazarenes were following them when the girl reminds him of his faith and to trust in god's protection. After praying together for god's protection, it is revealed to them in his martyred brother's voice that the sounds they heard were the sounds of god's host of angels sent forth to witness and bless their marriage. After they were married, the newly converted Muslim girl and the warrior pray together at dawn and continue their journey. They eventually reach the Caliph ʿUmar who holds a wedding feast for them.[545]

Unlike the Persian and Arabic tales discussed earlier, this tale from the *Thousand and One Nights* has a strong emphasis on religion and conversion. The resemblance to Vitalis's narrative in the *Historia* is clear: the Muslim warrior is taken prisoner by Christian enemy, just as Bohemond is taken prisoner by Danishmend, except that the religion of the captive and captor are reversed. In the *Nights*, the legendary reputation of the Muslim warrior, although unnamed, also mirrors the reputation of the renowned Bohemond within the First Crusade. In both the Latin chronicle and the *Nights* the captor's daughter is drawn to the religion of the captive. Furthermore, in Vitalis's chronicle Melaz bribes the gaolers into allowing her to visit the Christian prisoners and hold discussions with them about the Christian faith, 'profundis interdum suspiriis' (sometimes mingling deep sighs) as she listened to them.[546] Although the Christian girl decides to convert to Islam after she falls in love with the Muslim prisoner, she is overtaken with love due to his faith, especially when he 'applied himself to worship' and started 'reciting the Koran'.[547] His pleasant voice while reciting the Qurʾān instantly captures her heart. Furthermore, just as the

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[545] *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, trans. by Captain Sir R.F. Burton, ed. by Leonard C. Smithers, 12 vols. (London: H.S. Nichols, 1894), IV, pp. 226-31. Although Burton usually gives 'a very faithful translation', without skipping over material or extending it, in the tale of the 'Muslim Warrior and the Christian Damsel' he adds a detail to suit the purposes of his annotation of the text.[545] In the story when the Muslim prisoner teaches the Christian girl the methods of ablution and prayer, Burton adds the circumcision of the girl as part of the process of conversion. Gerhardt suggests that this detail is added by Burton to facilitate a note on female circumcision (Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-telling*, p. 88; p. 91).

[546] Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, V, pp. 360-61.

[547] *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, IV, p. 227.

Christian prisoners teach Melaz about Christianity, eventually leading to her conversion in the chronicle, the Muslim prisoner also instructs the Christian girl on Islamic methods of ablution and prayer, consequently leading to her acceptance of the new faith.[548] Even though the Christian girl is first drawn to Islam because of her love for the Muslim prisoner, unlike Floripas in *Sir Ferumbras* who renounces her new faith at the first sign of trouble, the newly converted girl reinforces the Muslim prisoner's faith when he fears their capture. Although Melaz does not fall in love with any of the Christian prisoners, there are clear similarities between the narrative in the chronicle and the first part of the story in the *Nights*: the most significant is the conversion of the captor's daughter to the prisoner's religion and the daughter's betrayal of her father's trust for the sake of the prisoner. These striking similarities, along with other parallels within a number of tales in the corpus of the *Nights* demonstrate the established conversion trope within the Eastern medieval literary tradition. The inclusion of the same trope within al-Ṭabarī's history and the *Shāhnāma* may suggest an influence from this Eastern tradition on Vitalis's narrative, at least on the basic level of introducing the conversion topos which goes on to be reproduced in the Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances as the enamoured Muslim princess topos.

Although the tales from different narrative traditions discussed in this chapter display striking similarities with each other, strongly suggestive of possible literary influences on the tales, al-Ṭabarī's narrative of the fall of al-Ḥaḍr introduces one notable difference. In all the tales discussed in this chapter, the daughter of the hero's enemy betrays her father and helps the hero either defeat her father or escape from his prison, yet she is not held accountable for the moral failing of betraying her father for the sake of a stranger. However, al-Ṭabarī's narrative of the fall of al-Ḥaḍr not only holds the daughter accountable for betraying her father, but also punishes for her treachery. Although Malika is not punished for her immoral betrayal in the *Shāhnāma*, the narrative does attempt to

[548] Ibid., p. 228.

provide a justification for her behaviour. Since Malika's mother Nūsha was abducted by Ṭāʾir, when Malika sees Shāpūr from the stronghold walls and falls in love with him, she sends him a message claiming kinship with him, stating, 'thou and I are of one race, And of the seed of brave Narsí', and offering to help him if he agrees to marry her.[549] Later in the narrative, when Shāpūr captures the stronghold and Ṭāʾir is brought before him, the *Shāhnāma* attempts to deal with the morality of Malika's betrayal. When brought before Shāpūr, Ṭāʾir warns him of the treacherous nature of his daughter, advising him not to trust her. Instead of condemning Malika in the face of this realistic characterisation by her father, Shāpūr blames Malika's betrayal on Ṭāʾir.[550] The *Shāhnāma* justifies Malika's treachery as a result of ties of kinship with Shāpūr while the original crime of abduction and possible rape of her mother by Ṭāʾir justifies her lack of allegiance to her father.[551]

Orderic Vitalis's *History* and the later Middle English romances provide no such justification for the Saracen princesses's betrayal of their fathers. In the Middle English romances in particular, the Saracen princesses commit all manner of immoral acts, including murder to help the Christian knights, yet their actions are applauded as they further the Christian cause. The tale of the 'Muslim Champion and the Christian Maiden' also does not provide any justification for the behaviour of the maiden; however, as in Vitalis's account, the superiority of the prisoners' religion is suggested as validation for the daughter's actions.

The tale of the 'Muslim Champion and the Christian Damsel' is included in Burton's edition of the *Thousand and One Nights*, but not in Galland's earlier edition of the *Nights*. Burton's translation is mainly based on the printed edition known as Calcutta II, printed in four volumes and published between 1839 and 1842.[552] Calcutta II in turn is based on an 1835 edition of the *Nights* printed in two volumes by the Būlāq press in Egypt

[549] Firdausī, *The Sháhnáma*, p. 331.
[550] Ibid., p. 334.
[551] Although the *Shāhnāma* does not mention the rape of Nūsha by Ṭāʾir, as she was abducted by Ṭāʾir and the narrative does not mention Nūsha falling in love with Ṭāʾir, it can assumed that Malika's conception was a product of rape.
[552] Gerhardt, *The Art of Story-telling*, p. 87.

and is generally referred to as the Būlāq text. The Būlāq text gives no indication of the manuscript used for the printed edition but most scholars judge it to be an eighteenth-century Egyptian manuscript which is now lost.[553] Galland began to publish his translation of the Nights in 1704 using a previously unknown manuscript.[554] However, when Zotenburg carried out his comparison of twenty-two extant manuscripts of the *Nights*, he was able to identify the main manuscript used by Galland for his translation. This was a fifteenth-century Syrian manuscript, written in four volumes, with one volume now lost, and containing two hundred and eighty-one Nights.[555] This manuscript is the earliest nearly complete version which has survived and therefore indicates the nature of tales which were included in early manuscripts of the *Nights*. Through an examination of the different manuscripts Zutenburg discovered that the Egyptian manuscripts contained more stories than the Syrian manuscripts and narrated more shortened versions of them.[556] Therefore, it is not surprising that two manuscript traditions used by Galland and Burton, which differ in style and number of stories, vary in their collections of stories. The fact that the story of the '*Muslim Champion and the Muslim Damsel*' does not exist in Galland's collection does not necessarily mean that the conversion trope may not have existed in earlier mansuscripts of the Nights as this tale is one of the many tales in the corpus that include this trope.

The *Nights* probably belonged to the strong oral culture; as Thomas Herzog explains that the oral culture occupies a central position in Arab culture.[557] From the ninth century onwards there are reports of preachers and orators who narrated events from the life of the Prophet Muḥammad to audiences in mosques and markets. Along with stories of the Prophet, oral culture included South-Arabian legends, stories from Iranian tradition,

[553] Irwin, *The Arabian Nights*, p. 44.
[554] Ibid., p. 42.
[555] Ibid., p. 45-46.
[556] Ibid., p. 46.
[557] Thomas Herzog, 'Orality and the Tradition of Arabic Epic Storytelling', in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. by Karl Reichl (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), p. 629.

and other extraordinary tales with various origins.[558] As the *Nights* borrowed heavily from Persian literature and were compiled using tales with different cultural origins, some of them may have existed as part of this oral culture. Herzog further notes that most of the foundation texts of Arab culture were orally transmitted; although the *Nights* were not foundational, it seems they too were orally transmitted. This would account for the *Nights* travelling to Baghdad, Syria, and Egypt, as evidenced by manuscripts from those regions identified by Zotenburg.[559] A further reason for the exclusion of the tale of 'The Muslim Champion and the Christian Damsel' from Galland's Syrian manuscript may be variation in stories included as a result of changing interests of the period. As al-Musawi explains, 'each period or site of redaction or compilation has unique ideological prelidictions and interests'.[560] Therefore the tale may have existed in an earlier Eygtian manuscript, now no longer extant, but not been included in the Syrian redaction of the *Nights*.

Although Irwin states that *Nights* were unknown in Western Europe before their publication in Galland's translation, Karla Mallete suggests the influence of the *Nights* on the *novelle* of Giovanni Sercambi and Bosone da Gubbio's *Avventuroso Ciciliano*.[561] According to Mallete, Sercambi follows the frame story of the *Nights* but removes the character of Shahrazād from the story. In Sercambi's tale, a powerful man and his companion discover the infidelity of their wives and wander from their home. They eventually have sexual intercourse with a woman whose 'faithlessness astonishes even them, cynical, as they have become'.[562] Even though they return to their home like Shāhriyār and his brother, unlike the brothers in the *Nights'* frame story, they 'beat their

[558] Ibid., p. 635.
[559] Irwin, *The Arabian Nights*, p. 45.
[560] Muhsin J. al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of the Thousand and One Nights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 25.
[561] Karla Mallette, 'Reading Backward: The 1001 Nights and Philological Practice', in *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, ed. by Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Karla Mallette (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 100-16 (p. 109).
[562] Ibid., p. 109.

wives and bed as many women as they like'.[563] Malette further suggests that Bosone da Gubbio's *Avventuroso Ciciliano* is influenced by the tale of '*King Yunan and the Sage Duban*'. Unlike Sercambi's story, the *Avventuroso Ciciliano* retains only one element from the '*tale of Yunan and Dunban*', which is that of the book that poisons its reader as the pages are turned.[564] Whereas the inclusion of the poisonous book in the *Avventuroso Ciciliano* could be mere coincidence, the similarities between the frame story of the *Nights* and Sercambi's story suggest an influence. There is definite evidence that the *Nights* predated Sercambi's story and their popularity as well as extensive trade along the Mediterranean may have facilitated such an influence.

The earliest extant reference to the *Nights* comes from al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab* (*Meadows of Gold*), written around 947 A.D. Referring to *The Thousand and One Nights*, al-Masʿūdī writes that they:

> Have been passed on to us translated from the Persian, Hindu, and Greek Languages. We have discussed how these were composed, for example the *Hazar Afsaneh*. The Arabic translation is *Alf khurāfa* (A Thousand Entertaining Tales)…This book is generally referred to as *Alf Layla* (A Thousand Nights). It is the story of a king, a vizier, the daughter of the vizier and the slave of the latter. These last two are called Shirazad and Dinazad.[565]

Therefore a version of the *Thousand and One Nights* existed at al-Masʿūdī's time. It seems that the frame story of the *Nights* changed after al-Masʿūdī's time, as he refers to Shahrazād and her slave Dinazād, characters who change to Shahrazād and her sister by the time Galland's manuscript was composed. Even the name of Shahrazād's companion changes from Dīnāzād to Dunyāzād. Al-Nadīm also makes another early reference to the *Nights* in the tenth century in his *Fihrist*, writing that the first book of its kind was called Hazār Afsān(a), meaning a thousand stories. He explains that the name for the book comes from the content of the story in which a king marries a woman every night and kills her the next day. Eventually he marries an intelligent woman of royal blood called Shahrazād.

[563] Ibid.
[564] Ibid.
[565] Al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of the Thousand and One Nights*, pp. 43-44.

Shahrazād tells him a story every night but leaves it unfinished in the morning and this continued for a thousand nights.[566]The *Nights* must have been popular in the tenth century to be referred by two such prominent scholars as al-Masʿūdī and al-Nadīm. Both state that the frame story was borrowed from the Persian *Hazār Afsān(a)*, with al-Masʿudī suggesting that some of the stories incorporated in the corpus of the *Nights* were also of Persian origin. As there was already a strong influence from Persian literature, the *Nights* could have included a story influenced by the tale of Shāpūr and Malika, especially since a version of the tale already existed in the Arabic tradition.

In addition to tenth-century references to a collection of stories called *ʾAlf Laīlah*, there is documentary evidence from Cairo of a text called *ʾAlf Laīlah Wa Laīlah*, dated roughly from 1150 A.D.[567] This evidence is significant as it shows an additional night was added to the title of the collection between the tenth century and the year 1150, transforming the name to the well-known title of *The Thousand and One Nights.* This reference is found in the notebook of a Jewish physician (Ms. Heb. F. 22, fol. 25b-52b), who was also a '*warrāq'*, that is, a man who sold, bought, and lent out books, as well as serving as notary.[568] The notebook contains entries related to the Jewish physician's trade in books as well as eight memos of legal deeds. In addition to providing evidence for the current title of the *Nights*, the entry also reveals that there was written transmission of the *Nights* in the period in Cairo. Apart from references to the *Nights* from the tenth century, there is an extant ninth-century fragment of the *Thousand Nights*, which is the earliest evidence for the tales. Although only the title and first page of the text exist in the fragment, it provides evidence of the existence of the tales in the ninth century. This evidence is noteworthy as the date of composition of the Nights as a collection of stories is unknown; however, this fragment provides some indication to its date of compilation.

[566] Ibid., p. 44; Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, p. 304; The Fihrist of al-Nadīm, II, p. 713.
[567] S.D. Goitein, 'The Oldest Documentary Evidence for the Title *Alf Laila wa-Laila*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 78: 4, pp. 301-02 (p. 301).
[568] Ibid.

The paper manuscript containing the fragment was acquired from Egypt by The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago; however, Nabia Abbott suggests that the manuscript was not written and compiled in Egypt which as 'the home of papyrus' continued to use papyrus as writing material until the third century of Islam. Even though paper was an article of trade in Egypt in the ninth century, the manufacture of paper was not introduced in Egypt until the tenth century or the fourth century of the Islamic calendar. Abbott therefore traces the provenance of the manuscript to Hijāz, Iraq, or Syria. As Hijāz was the sacred province of Islam, it did not produce a great deal of secular literature and is unlikely to have been the origin of the manuscript.[569] As the *Hazār Afsān(a)* "Thousand Tales" forms the framework of the *Nights* and various stories were added to it, this Persian tale gives some indication of the formation of this manuscript. Since the Old Persian *Hazār Afsān(a)* was most likely translated into Arabic during the Abbasid dynasty, which promoted Iraq as the imperial province, it is likely that the Persian tales were translated in Baghdad; Iraq also had a stronger Persian influence than Syria.[570] Both these factors make Iraq the likely source of the manuscript.[571] As a result, it seems that the manuscript travelled from Baghdad to Egypt, which gives an idea of how widely the *Nights* travelled within the East.

Trickster Woman or Enamoured Princess?

Apart from the tale of the 'Muslim Champion and the Christian Damsel', the frame story itself provides the figure of the trickster woman in the character of Shahrazād. Some form of this trickster woman is included in all the narratives discussed in this chapter and she plays an important part in the enamoured princess topos. As Mallette appropriately states, 'in the *1001 Nights* we hear a feminine voice in the nights that works

[569] Nabia Abbott, 'A Ninth-Century Fragment of the "Thousand Nights" New Light on the Early History of the Arabian Nights', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 8:3 (July 1949), pp. 129-164 (p. 144).
[570] Ibid., p. 145; p. 154.
[571] Ibid., p. 145.

a mysterious magic on the psyche of the ruler: the voice is Scheherazade's'.[572] Shahrazād convinces her father to marry her to the king, just as the Saracen women in the Middle English romances convince their fathers to bend to their will. Even though her father, the vizier, tries to discourage her from marrying king Shāhriyār, going so far as to tell her an "exemplary tale" to dissuade her, his attempt to convince her is unsuccessful.[573]

Shahrazād is 'knowledgeable, intelligent, wise, and an adiba (woman learned in the arts of literature and society)'; and she uses knowledge and desire to trick the king into allowing her to remain alive night after night.[574] Shahrazād uses her vast knowledge of tales to entertain King Shāhriyār and strategically ends each story leaving him in suspense every morning, desirous to know the end of the tale introduced the night before.[575] Similarly, Malika, al-Naḍīra, and Melaz use their knowledge of their father's castle or stronghold to control Shāpūr and Bohemond, by providing them with strict orders. Even in *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas uses her knowledge of magic and medicine, as well her knowledge of Balan's castle, to control the Christians and give them orders to successfully defeat her father and his forces.

Although the figure of the trickster woman plays a part in the representation of these women, however, the enamoured princess topos plays a more pivotal role in the tales discussed. Moreover, it seems that this topos became so common in Eastern and Western literary representations of women elements of the trope also figure in the representation of Eleanor of Aquitaine by an anonymous minstrel from Rheims writing in 1260. According to the minstrel, when King Louis travelled to Tyre with a great company, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn considered him weak and challenged him several times without any response. When Eleanor

> vit la deffaute que li rois avoit menée avec li, et elle oï parleir de la bontei et de la prouesce et dou sens et de la largesce Solehadin, si l'en

[572] Mallette, 'Reading Backward', p. 107.
[573] Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in the Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Princeton; New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 21.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Ibid., p. 22.

> ama durement en son cuer; et li manda salut par un sien druguement; et bien seust il, pouoit tant faire que il l'en peust meneir, elle le penroit á seigneur et relanquiroit sa loi.
>
> Observed how negative the king was and heard of the goodness, prowess, intelligence and generosity of Saladin, she fell madly in love with him. Then through an interpreter of hers, she sent him greetings and the assurance that, if he could manage to abduct her, she would take him as her husband and renounce her faith.[576]

When Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn received the letter, he was delighted, as he was aware of Eleanor's wealth, and he set off to Tyre from Ascalon with an interpreter. On arriving in Tyre, the interpreter sent a note via a concealed entrance to the queen's room informing her that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was waiting for her in a galley. Eleanor called two maids and and filled two chests with gold and silver to take to the galley, however, one of Eleanor's maids grasped the queen's plans and informed Louis of her escape. On hearing his wife's plan, the king armed his household and accosted Eleanor just as she was about to step onto the galley and King Louis was able to capture the ship since they were taken by surprise. On asking the queen for her reason for her elopement, Eleanor provided his cowardice and good reports of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as the reason. She further informed him that she was in love with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and that he could not to restrain her from leaving him.[577]

Again the narrative follows a familiar pattern: Eleanor hears reports of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's exemplary qualities and falls in love with him, offers to convert to Islam and elope with him. In doing so, Eleanor breaks her marriage vows as well as her husband King Louis's trust. Even though the tale does not explicitly state the superiority of Islam, the exemplary qualities of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the leader of the Muslims in the Seventh Crusades, compared to the cowardice of King Louis, implies the difference in the status of their religions. In the same manner in Middle English romances such as *Sir Ferumbras*, Floripas only converts to Christianity at the beginning of the romance for the sake of Sir Guy; however, Sir Guy and the other Christian knights are representatives of Christianity

[576] *Récits d'un Ménestrel de Reims*, ed. by Natalis de Wailly (Rue de Tournon: Libraire de la Société de l'Histoire de France, 1876), p. 4; D.D.R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Legend and Queen* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), pp. 105-06.
[577] Ibid., p. 106.

and Floripas's affection for Sir Guy, even over her loyalty to her father, implies the superiority of the Christian faith.

Conclusion

A great deal of attention has been paid to Saracen women, both in Old French epic and Middle English romance, but they have mostly been considered as whitened and westernised helpers for Christian knights. As Heng suggests, they are basically 'flatteringly, oneself in another guise', assimilated into the Western guise without any difficulty.[578] However, this would be a very reductive way of analysing these women, and indeed these romances, since they are much more complex. These women possess agencies and identities of their own, often connected to their Saracen or Muslim culture.

Although Saracen women are indeed whitened, often described as either fair, or possessing a balance of red and white in their complexion, they are not entirely westernised. Their representation as fair-skinned, or in some cases brightness of complexion, is crucial to the narrative as it is indicative of virtue in these romances. It seems this is the same quality that allows these Saracen women to convert to Christianity. Following the underlying Crusading ideology, these women initially fall in love with Christian knights, betray their fathers, and eventually convert to Christianity for the knights' sake, demonstrating the superiority of the Christian faith. Despite this indication of superiority, not every Saracen has the ability to convert. While Ferumbras is described as giant-like in terms of height, he is depicted as admirable in physique and strength; therefore he fits the mould of the worthy Saracen and converts early on in the romance. By contrast, black Balan and Arageous, who is so monstrous that Marabelle cannot stand to look at him, come close to being baptised, but both Saracens jump out of the font and are unable to convert. Therefore, Saracen women's fair complexions indicate thir suitability for conversion.

Despite being represented through Western standards of beauty and converting to Christianity, Saracen women in Middle English romance retain characteristics of their Saracen identities; indeed, it is only their allegiance which transfers from their fathers to

[578] Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 187.

their Christian lovers. This shift seems to be made with very little consideration on the women's part. This speedy transference of loyalty is most evident in Sir *Ferumbras*. At the beginning of the romance, after Floripas stealthily saves the Christian knights from her father's prison, she aggressively accuses them of killing her uncle; however within a few lines, she vows to forsake her religion and help the knights against her father in exchange for Sir Guy's hand in marriage. Regardless of the change of loyalty and religion, Saracen women retain markers of their identity. Even before they offer to convert for the sake of love, Saracen women have a strong presence in the romances, asserting their agency through their resourcefulness, their ability to influence and manipulate their fathers, and their tendency to violence in the face of opposition. These qualities seem to be distinctive of Saracen women, as Floripas, Josian, and Marsabelle all possess these attributes. Even the Saracen queen in *Floris and Blauncheflur* has influence over her husband and has no qualms about selling Blauncheflur into slavery to separate her from Floris.

These Saracen women assert just as much influence on their Christian lovers on their fathers. Far from being mere helpers, they guide them and provide the knights with much-needed advice in difficult circumstances; indeed, the knights would not be able to survive without their intervention and advice. In *Sir Ferumbras* The Christian knights would not have escaped Balan's prison without Floripas's manipulation of her father, and King Ermin would have killed Beues if Josian had not reasoned with her father, and finally Florent would not have acquired the marvellous unicorn without Marsabelle's advice. Even when the knights refuse to accept their help, these Saracen women forcefully assert their agency, as in the episode when Josian and Beues are surrounded by lions. Beues attempts to fight the lions but Josian cannot restrain herself from trying to help him, eventually offending his sense of pride.

As elaborated in the second chapter, certain women in the harems of the Abbasid caliphs also held a great deal of influence over the respective caliphs. It seems that women fought to gain favour with the current caliph or successor and once they attained the status

of favourite, they held great sway over the caliph. Perhaps the most extreme example of such an influence is al-Khayzurān's remarks to al-Mahdī. Wāqidī narrates that al-Khayzurān aggressively accuses al-Mahdī of not showing sufficient favour towards her and of being '"a picker of leftovers"'. Although al-Mahdī responds angrily, reminding her that despite having bought her as slave-girl, he bestowed the status of heirs on her sons, he eventually forgives her and continues to treat her as a favourite even after her disrespectful accusations.[579] As discussed, Zubaydah also exercised a great of influence over her husband. Even later, during the First and Second Crusade, Muslim women asserted their agency. There are very few accounts of Muslim women during the Crusades, partly because it would have been considered dishonourable for men of either side to allow women to participate in fighting in any of the battles. Accounts such as these beg the question of whether Western Christians knew more about Islam, the Muslims of the Levant, and perhaps even intrigues of their courts, than is generally assumed. The various forms of contact between Christians and Levantine Muslims in the first chapter definitely suggest that this may be a possibility. The representation of Saracens as idol-worshipers in medieval romance would suggest that Western Christians had extreme misconceptions about even the basic tenets of Islam, yet William of Tyre provides a basic, but accurate description of Islam. While the romances discussed in this thesis often represent Saracens swearing by Mahoun, or worshipping an idol of Mahoun, along with several other gods, William of Tyre in his *Historia* mentions that in one of his lost works he has provided a history of Muḥammad, who claimed to be a prophet. He also adds that in the same work, he gives an account of this man's life, the lands he rules, and his successors. Even within his *Historia* he demonstrates his knowledge of early Islamic empire through a reference to the Caliph ʿUmar as the third caliph after the death of Prophet Muḥammad.[580]

[579] Abbott, *Two Queens of Baghdad*, pp. 45-46.
[580] Wilhelmus Tyrenis, *Wilhelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, ed. by R.B.C Huygens, H.E. Mayer, and G. Rösch, pp. 104-06.

The first chapter also discusses other avenues of contact, ranging from embassies between Charlemagne and the Caliph al-Manṣūr, trade with the Levant, interaction with prisoners, friendly contact up to the Fourth Crusade, and the translation of Greek scientific knowledge. Ibn Munqidh, whose memoirs have been discussed in detail, portrays greater affinity between Muslims and Crusaders than would be expected. Even if ibn Munqidh's accounts exagerrate friendly relations with the Frankish Crusaders, there is likely to be some truth to his accounts. Baldwin's imprisonment with ibn Munqidh's family, as recorded by other chroniclers, gives some authority to ibn Munqidh's memoirs. Both Muslim and Christian prisoners must have also had contact with their captors to learn each others' languages. As de Joinville mentions Muslim translators who spoke French in the Muslim camp in his chronicle, there must have been prisoners on either side who acquired some knowledge of the enemy's language, if only to communicate with them. Considering the various forms of contact discussed in the first chapter, it seems almost impossible that Western Christians did not gain any knowledge about the Muslims. As information about Muslims and the Holy Land would have returned to Europe with Crusaders and pilgrims travelling from the Levant, it seems logical to assume that representation of Saracens as idol-worshiper in medieval romance is a narrative device to highlight the superiority of Christianity.

Information about Muslims that might have found its way to Europe may also have influenced the representation of Saracens. This is certainly possible as one of the attributes that mark Saracen women's identity as quintessentially Saracen in Middle English romance is their knowledge of medicine or possession of marvellous objects. The East was just as fascinated by ideas of the marvellous as the West seemed to be through the representation of marvellous objects and magic in texts, in particular romance. The East's equal interest in the marvellous is demonstrated by the ʿAjāʾib genre; al-Qazwīnī's own ʿAjāʾib lists both real and fictional animals and plants and remarkably resembles a Western bestiary. As discussed in the first chapter, the East was also known for

knowledge of medicine. The extensive translation movement of Greek medical knowledge into Arabic commissioned by caliphs from the Umayyad to the Abbasid dynasties may have fostered this reputation. Medieval Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroës) added to this knowledge. This translation movement later facilitated the translation of Greek knowledge into Latin. Both Josian's and Floripas's knowledge of medicine in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* and *Sir Ferumbras* demonstrates that the East was regarded as a centre of scientific knowledge in the Western imagination. *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* goes further than representing mere knowledge of medicine: the romance describes Josian's training in both herbal and humoral medicine in two of the later medieval period's centres of learning. Beyond fictional representations of this medical knowledge, actual Muslim women did practise herbal medicine for their families, much to the dismay of medieval Muslim physicians who believed their practice of medicine caused more harm than healing.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the romances discussed is the infatuation of Saracen women with Christians and their subsequent conversion for their sake. This trope has been discussed by several scholars, who trace it back to the *Thousand and One Nights*; however, its origins may go further back to Persian or Mediterranean origins. There are numerous examples of Christian women who betray their families to convert to Islam in the *Thousand and One Nights* and the long *sīra* tradition. Niall Christie provides an extensive list of these women in her article on medieval Arabic popular literature.[581] Even though most of the examples from the *sīra* mentioned by Christie date from after the twelfth century, the continued use of this trope suggests that it was very popular in the medieval Arabic literary tradition. The conversion trope was not restricted to the Arabic literary tradition, as demonstrated by the tale of Malika and Shāpūr from the *Shāhnāma*. As a variation of the same tale is narrated by several Arab writers and most notably by al-Ṭabarī, the tale could have been adapted from the Persian oral or literary tradition. As

[581] Niall, 'Noble Betrayers of their Faith, Families and Folk', pp. 87-88.

Shāpūr II was a pre-Islamic, Persian ruler, it is even more likely that the story was either adapted from either the *Shāhnāma* itself or from one of its sources. As both the *Shāhnāma* and the earliest manuscript of the *Thousand and One Nights* predate Orderic Vitalis's account of Bohemond and Melaz may have been influenced by one of these tales.

Although conversion itself was common during the Crusades and there are countless references to it in the Crusading chronicles, the inclusion of a female figure who betrays her family and faith for the sake of a knight of an opposing faith is first recorded in Western literature in Orderic Vitalis's history. Therefore, the similarities between Vitalis's account and variations of the fall of Ḥaḍr are difficult to ignore. As discussed, Vitalis may have been influenced by a similar account in the *Miracula Sancti Leonardi*. This text, written before 1111, recounts the escape of Bohemond through the help of a Malik-Ghāzī's Christian wife. Although there is a shared theme of betrayal, Melaz's Muslim identity and subsequent conversion makes the betrayal more severe. Therefore, Vitalis's episode has closer analogues to the tales discussed from the *Shāhnāma* and the *Thousand and One Nights*. As the thesis has shown, pilgrimage and trade between the East and the West, and in particular within the Mediterranean, were frequent. It would not seem impossible that some variation of the tale found its way to the West through that avenue. The overall representation of Saracen women, then, in medieval romance does seem to suggest some knowledge of the East.

Whether medieval Western literature was influnenced by the Eastern literary tradition or the examples discussed in this thesis reflect a remarkable mirroring of themes, it is hard to deny that the two literary traditions share common themes, and to some extent plots. It would definitely be interesting to trace just how far these similarities and mirroring of themes are evident in other kinds of Western and Eastern literature and the manner in which they may have been altered to suit the narrative.

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