

Cannibalism, the First Crusade, and the Genesis of Medieval Romance

It has been suggested that romance is an evasion of history (and thus perhaps attractive to a people trying to evade the recent past). But I am more persuaded by arguments that find in it the head-on encounter with very real, pressing historical forces and the contradictions inherent in them as they came to be experienced by writers. Romance, an exploration of anxiety imported from the shadows of European culture, made possible the sometimes safe and other times risky embrace of quite specific, understandably human, fears. . . . (Morrison 36)

[Storytelling] is one of the most reassuring things. It seems its very basis is that it reassures you that there is a sense to things. . . . The story creates a form, and the form reassures them so that you can almost tell them any story. . . . [T]here is something very powerful in stories, something that gives you security and a sense of identity and meaning. (Wenders qtd. by Modleski 70)

. . . historical trauma is transmitted complexly across generations. (Balakian B6)

Almost nine hundred years ago, between 1130 and 1139, the legend of King Arthur erupted for the first time in full literary form in England, elaborated out of obscure hints and sketchy entries in written history and Celtic legendary tradition by Geoffrey of Monmouth in an infamous, celebrated chronicle-history, the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, or *History of the Kings of Britain*.¹ Geoffrey's *Historia* was simultaneously celebrated and infamous, in part, because its status as history was called into question, then as now, by the pervasive aura that the *Historia* contrived of the fantastical, an aura more usually associated with the medieval literary genre known as romance than with historical writing.² Although the separation of genres distinguishing the narration of history from the narration of spectacular fiction was less secure in the twelfth century than today (if such separation is secure today), conventions of historical writing had nonetheless been sufficiently rehearsed by the twelfth century for historians among Geoffrey's near contemporaries to

respond with “ambivalence,” admiration, and outrage at the *Historia*’s bold-faced inventions.⁵

It is because Geoffrey offers his narrative as a history—and invokes the authenticatory apparatus of historical narration, complete with the citation of earlier historical sources, provision of chronologies, onomastic and geographical descriptions, and a scrupulously causal and sequential recitation of Britain’s past—that scholars today prefer to identify the emergence of medieval romance in general, and Arthurian romance in particular, with the more consistently fantastical creations of Chrétien de Troyes (whose corpus was also written, of course, not in Latin but in Old French or *Romanz*, the language that subsequently came to lend its name to the genre). But scholars are generous in their agreement that romance *episodes* and *material* abound in the *Historia*, jostling ubiquitously against more palpably historical matter, and have been at odds to explain why romance in its earliest formations should thus mingle with history, beyond the simple consideration of adding to the historical text’s appeal, even as it conspicuously undermines the historical text’s claims to authenticity and authority.⁶ Scholarly explanations have proliferated, most of which invoke Geoffrey’s authorial ambitions, Norman patronage, and aims of ethnic and insular glorification.

To these critical accounts I would add another, of a differing but not inconsistent kind: an account that will address the articulation of fantasy and history in Geoffrey’s text as varieties of cultural work negotiating—I will suggest—the shock of communal trauma in the period of European and Norman history preceding the *Historia*’s appearance. Romance, I will argue, is the name of a developing narrational modality and apparatus in Geoffrey’s text that coalesces from the available cultural matrix at hand to effect specific forms of cultural rescue. The evolution of romance thereafter, through the Middle Ages and beyond, attests to the successful tenacity of the genre in harnessing the characteristic resources of a literary empire of fantasy, so that in the hands of able manipulators romance may offer a ready and—equally important—a *safe* language of cultural discussion, and cultural transformation, in the service of crisis and urgent contingency. For the *Historia*, the special appeal and serviceability of romance-in-history is witnessed by the survival of an impressively large number of medieval manuscripts still extant today: 217 at latest count, in 1995, almost nine centuries after the *Historia*’s popular and controversial inception.

*The Vocabulary of Romance: King Arthur and a
Contingent Tale of Two Giants*

Critics often agree that narrative interest in the *Historia* is organized to culminate in the appearance of King Arthur, whose life and achievements are typologically foreshadowed, Biblical-fashion, by those of preceding British kings in the *Historia* and form the crowning fulfillment of earlier hints and guesses laid down as textual preparation for the Arthurian story that occupies one-fourth of the *Historia*'s narrative attention. Indeed, some have even detected a loss of textual interest after Arthur's exit from the narrative, after which, it is asserted, the *Historia* seems to wind fairly rapidly to a close. The performance of the Arthurian segment itself is marked by an extraordinary, fabricated tale of a double giant-killing enacted by King Arthur: a tale that eventually attracts the eye of every critic of the *Historia*, all of whom agree—even when they agree on nothing else—that the tale is an exemplary encapsulation of the quintessential features of romance. Perhaps the most memorable romance moment in the *Historia*'s Arthuriad, this drama of giant-killing would rapidly come to identify and inhabit the corpus of Arthurian romance, attracting attention and reworking, so that a version of it can still be found in Thomas Malory's late-fifteenth-century prose romance at the close of the Middle Ages (*Works* 1:54–56). The episode may be summarized as follows:

King Arthur, on his way to battle the forces of Rome, is temporarily diverted to Mont Saint-Michel to rescue Helena, an aristocratic maiden who is the daughter of Arthur's kinsman, Hoel of Brittany. The maiden has been borne away by a giant who has mysteriously emerged "ex partibus Hispaniarum"—generally translated as "from parts of Spain" ("from certain regions in Spain" [Thorpe 237], "out of the parts of Spain" [Evans 179], "from the shores of Spain" [Giles 252]), despite the curious genitive plural of the place-name, "Hispaniarum." The giant has already vanquished many would-be knightly rescuers by land and sea, casting down rocks on their ships like a very Polyphemus, and *eating* many captured knights while they were still half-alive (Wright 1:117). Arthur defeats the monstrous cannibal in single combat, in a fight that is prefigured by an allegorical dream vision. He arrives with only two companions at the giant's habitat on Mont Saint-Michel—too late to rescue Helena, who has mercifully died from terror as the giant was about to rape her—but successfully effecting the rescue of Helena's aged nurse, a loyal crone who has been repeatedly raped by this barbarous savage ("inhumanus"

[Wright I:118]). In addition to devouring humans, the giant is ostentatiously staged as a gory and hideous devourer of pigs. After Arthur kills the giant with his sword Caliburn (the “Excalibur” beloved of Arthurian devotees) he has the giant decapitated, for exhibition of the monster’s head to the king’s army. In the aftermath, Arthur reminisces: the monstrous strength of this giant of Mont Saint-Michel reminds Arthur of another giant Arthur had fought earlier in his career and also killed, “*Rithonem gigantem in Arauio monte*” (Wright I:119), which is usually translated as “the giant Ritho on Mount Aravius” (Thorpe 240; see also Giles 254)—a mountain that scholarship traditionally identifies as Mount Snowdon in Wales. Ritho had had a curious trophy, a cloak made from the beards of kings he had slain, and had demanded that Arthur skin off Arthur’s own beard and send it to him. The giant had challenged the king to combat, on the terms that whoever proved the victor would have the beard of the vanquished and the cloak. Naturally, King Arthur had defeated Ritho, and taken the giant’s beard and trophy; till now, Arthur concludes, he had met no one more powerful. The king and his companions return to camp, the head of the giant of St. Michael’s Mount is exhibited, and Arthur is praised as someone who has liberated the country from a great “maw”—i.e., a bestial devourer (Wright I:119). Finally, a grieving Hoel has a church (“basilicam”) built over Helena’s grave, and to this day, we are told, the mountainous site has taken its name, “Helena’s Tomb,” from the maiden’s tumulus (Wright I:119).

The source of this curious romance tale of two giants has sometimes been assumed to be Welsh or Breton folklore or local tradition (e.g., Tatlock 203, 389), because of the Welsh (or Breton) elements that are an unquestionable part of the *Historia*’s fabric—a feature itself accounted for by the author’s presumed ethnicity as a Welshman or Breton. It is on the basis of an assumed Welsh origin for the tale that “*Mons Aravius*,” the home of the giant Ritho with the cloak of beards, has been cited in scholarly work—as recently as 1994 (Curley 91)—as signalling Snowdon in Wales, although, interestingly, the episode of the two giants is in fact *missing* from the Welsh manuscript offered by Griscom and Jones as representing the Welsh and Irish manuscripts from which the *Historia* might have derived its materials (Griscom 470–73).⁵ Celtic provenance has been assumed, moreover, largely by default, in the apparent absence of other source-evidence. That the *Historia* is the ground of a cunning hybridity of materials, all of which at different moments assume the character of a mask, has, however, been recognized. Where Geoffrey

has openly declared a source as his authority, scholars have found none; where he has not acknowledged a debt, scholarship has discovered multiple instances of covert borrowing.⁶ Critical analysis does well, therefore, to grant the *Historia*'s debt to diverse cultural materials: historical texts of the sixth to ninth centuries, such as Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae* (*On the Ruin of Britain*), Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*), and the *Historia Brittonum* (*History of the Britons*) as well as a rich web of Welsh, Breton, Biblical, and Classical resources.

In that spirit of allowance, I want to suggest that folding into the vectors of the *Historia* meticulously mapped by scholarship is another, less commonly perceived, layer of materials: a tissue of references deriving not from the distant past of Britain's history—the Celtic, Roman, and Saxon eras that furnish the surface limits of the *Historia*'s chronology—but from the events of the recent past of Geoffrey's time, from contemporary history. Though the *Historia* might deploy imaginative materials whose figures may originally have derived from folklore, the Bible, or antiquity, the trajectory of use points well past the originary matrix of the materials the *Historia* conjures with or conjures up, toward the materiality of recent, disturbing historical event. That uncanny tale of the two giants issues less from the pressure of shadowy traditions than from an urgent residue of memory in active circulation in early-twelfth-century England and Europe, imported home from the shadows of the First Crusade. "*Mons Aravius*," I will argue, is merely a single node in an extraordinary mesh of coincidences in the *Historia* that can only be adequately read when we look in the direction of the Orient, and the territories and history of the First Crusade of European Christendom. In its skillful negotiation of history, memory, and cultural trauma, the story of two giants and mountains then becomes an allegorical performance of the very genesis of Arthurian and medieval romance out of the exigencies of historical occasion—a performance that intimately signals how and why romance functions, and what romance is able to offer through the centuries that follow.

***The Vocabulary of History: The First Crusade and the
Narration of Contingent Horror***

In December 1098, seven months before the capture of Jerusalem by the militia of the First Crusade, Ma'arra an-Numan—a city in

northern Syria—was sacked and its inhabitants put to the sword, one instance among many of the massacre of Muslims and cultural others enacted in the course of holy-war-cum-pilgrimage.⁷ At Ma'arra, however, according to the three surviving eyewitness histories of the First Crusade written independently by Latin participants, the unthinkable happened: the crusaders roasted and ate the flesh of enemy corpses, an act of such unviated horror that all three chronicles are immediately driven to defend the cannibalism by invoking extreme famine as exigent explanation.⁸

Fulcher of Chartres's *Historia Hierosolymitana* (*History of the Expedition to Jerusalem*) sounds a note of anguish in its description of the event:

When the siege had lasted twenty days, our people suffered excessive hunger. I shudder to speak of it, because very many of our people, harassed by the madness of excessive hunger, cut off pieces from the buttocks of the Saracens already dead there, which they cooked and chewed, and devoured with savage mouth, when insufficiently roasted at the fire. And thus the besiegers more than the besieged were tormented.⁹

The version in the *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolimitanorum* (*Deeds of the Franks and Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem*), written by an anonymous crusader in the army of Bohemond, the controversial Norman leader of the Crusade, is more tersely brief and delivered without comment, though not without naturalizing explanation:

While we were there, some of our men could not satisfy their needs, either because of the long stay or because they were so hungry, for there was no plunder to be had outside the walls. So they ripped up the bodies of the dead, because they used to find bezants hidden in their entrails, and others cut the dead flesh into slices and cooked it to eat.¹⁰

The narrative of the Provençal Raymond d'Aguilers, the *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Iherusalem* (*History of the Franks Who Captured Jerusalem*), details more explicitly than the other two the response of the crusaders and others who learnt of the incident, and reveals the consequences as the act reverberates in popular report; the inhumanity of the Christians, attested by the marker of their anthropopagy, is confirmed through disseminating knowledge of their deed:

Meanwhile, there was so great a famine in the army that the people ate most greedily the many already fetid bodies of the Saracens which they had cast into the swamps of the city two weeks and more ago. These events frightened many people of our race, as well as strangers. On this account very many of us turned back. . . . But the Saracens and the Turks said on the contrary: "And who can resist this people who are so obstinate and inhuman, that for a year they could not be turned from the siege of Antioch by famine, or sword, or any other dangers, and who now feed on human flesh?" These and other most inhuman practices the pagans said exist among us. For God had given fear of us to all races, but we did not know it.¹⁴

Crusader cannibalism may also have irrupted at Antioch, a few months before its advent at Ma'arra, but the documentary evidence here is of a less secure, more enigmatic kind, the principal evidence appearing in texts authored by cultural enemies of the Latins. Arabic chronicles by Ibn al-Qalanisi, Ibn Al-Athir, and Kemal al-Din point to an outbreak of crusader cannibalism in Antioch after the capture and sack of the city in June 1098, following a debilitating siege of seven and a half months, when the occupation army found itself weakened by famine, demoralized by desertions and pestilence, and pincered between siege forces without—led by Karbuqa, atabeg of Mosul—and an undefeated Turkish garrison within that still held the citadel.¹² Another commentator hostile to the Latins memorializes the Antiochene cannibalism in suggestive if not entirely confirmatory terms. The Byzantine princess, Anna Comnena, writing a mid-twelfth-century biography of her father, Emperor Alexius I, features in her narrative a letter from Bohemond—a letter that has not survived, if it existed—in which Bohemond reports a devastating famine at Antioch, “a famine unsurpassed in living memory, so bad that most of us were even reduced to eating meats forbidden by the law” (*Alexiad* 358).¹⁵

The Latin participants themselves are reticent or equivocal on the subject of cannibalism at Antioch. A passage in the *Gesta* offering a long, poignant account of the horrors of the Antiochene famine ends on a cryptic note as the author rhetorically refuses or is unable to give a name to some crusader afflictions: “these and many anxieties and difficulties which I am unable to name [or mention, speak about: *nominare*] we suffered” (*Gesta* 62). Significantly, the *Gesta*'s admission of cannibalism at Ma'arra is also the most reticent among the Latin chronicles. One other

eyewitness Latin source is important. A letter to Pope Paschal II, dated September 1099, from Laodicea, and signed by three of the most prominent leaders of the crusading forces—Godfrey of Bouillon, Raymond de Saint-Gilles, and Daimbert, Archbishop of Pisa—confesses the famine at Antioch was so extreme “that some might scarcely restrain themselves from eating human flesh” (“ut uix ab humanis dapibus se continerent aliqui” [Hagemeyer, *Kreuzzugsbriefe* 169]). Curiously, in what seems here a report of self-vindication, an infinitesimal uncertainty creeps into the locution of these crusading leaders, an ambiguity pivoting on how the word “scarcely” (*vix*) performs. Suggesting (mostly) denial of wrongdoing, but also intimating the possibility of a tacit half-admission, “scarcely” here introduces a suspicion that hints at the authors’ grammatical tact. The letter confesses in the same vein to cannibalism at Ma’arra: “there was so great a famine in the army that the putrid bodies of the Saracens were now eaten up by the Christian people” (“tanta fames in exercitu fuit, ut corpora Saracenorum iam fetentium a populo Christiano comesta sint” [Hagemeyer, *Kreuzzugsbriefe* 170]). That this necessary admission also troubled the Crusade leaders is detectable in a minuscule evasiveness here as well. The switching-over to the passive voice at the point where the correspondents confess to the occurrence of cannibalism casually decides that those who cannibalize are displaced from their position as the grammatical subject of the main clause, while their victims—the rotting corpses of dead Saracens—occupy the foreground, presenting the imagination with an arresting spectacle that helps to retire the agency of the cannibalizing subject from the center of the addressee’s attention.¹⁵

Ma’arra or Antioch: that a difference exists in the specified location of crusader cannibalism—the fact of cannibalism itself being the irreducible, repeating feature in the diverse documentary evidence of the period—is perhaps not so remarkable, given the vicissitudes of prolonged war, the many occasions of famine, vast cultural variation in narratorial methods, intelligibility, and purpose among the ethnic communities offering evidence, as well as the legendarily unscientific conditions of information retrieval in the Middle Ages. That being said, it is fair to add that scholars today might prefer to apportion more weight to the eyewitness Latin reports, since the enemy is likely to constitute an even less reliable witness of crusader atrocity than the crusaders themselves, whose reliability here at least extends to uncoerced if reluctant testimony of the guilt of their own community. As their cumulative and mutually corroborating testimony is evaluated, the Latin narratives may also seem

persuasive to some by virtue of their specular authority. Finally, we might note that the ghastly, self-indicting nature of the offense possessed precisely the kind of memorable luridness that supported medieval habits of memory among the literate in the Latin communities.¹⁵ Scholars agree, moreover, that the eyewitness Latin chronicles were written very soon after the First Crusade, when the memory of events would have been recent: Fulcher of Chartres is believed to have begun his between 1100 and 1102, a bare two to four years after Ma'arra (Munro 327; Runciman I:529; Peters 25; Fink 20); Raymond d'Aguiliers is thought to have completed his before 1105, and possibly as early as 1102 (Krey, *First Crusade* 9; Hill and Hill, *Historia* 7); and a copy of the anonymous *Gesta* already appears at Jerusalem in 1101.¹⁶ It is widely believed that the *Gesta* was begun at Antioch, and perhaps completed as early as the end of 1099, after the battle of Ascalon—scarcely a year after Ma'arra (*Gesta* ix, Runciman I:528).

Whatever might seem authoritative or persuasive to a historian today, however, we can hardly deny that the material *facticity* of the cannibalism, in its minutiae of time and place, recedes from us, 900 years after the performance of the event. Furthermore, we have been taught to understand that an event is not itself necessarily or fully significant at the point of its occurrence: that events occur in historical time but are experienced as historical phenomena only by being placed in a signifying process determining their intelligibility. The phenomenality of crusader acts of cannibalism is thus realized at the precise moment of the passing of those acts into the discursive field of historical report, a practice that produces the meaning, and the existence, of those acts as historical occasions. Even as the facticity of the cannibalism is buried in, and dispersed across, the wavering details of time and place in late-eleventh-century Syria, the experienced reality of the cannibalism as a historical eruption is guaranteed by the traumatic accounts of the eyewitness Latin documents that ostensibly function merely to report and witness. More than at any moment of their (f)actual occurrence, crusader acts of cannibalism were experienced as real after their inscription in the chief cultural documents of Crusade history and the crusader imaginary.

It is important to note, moreover, that the center of that experienced reality is the *trauma* which issues from anthropopagic atrocity: a trauma that slivers through the shock, torment, and anguish expressed by the narratives recording the drama of the unspeakable for peers and posterity. Though the taboo against cannibalism remains strongly in force

in the twentieth-century West, it is virtually impossible for moderns to grasp the precise horror and dimensions of abhorrence, the trauma to the cultural imaginary of medieval Christendom caused by crusader cannibalism of the Muslim enemy. The crusaders were represented by their Pope as pilgrims enjoined to rescue from infidel pollution the sacred places of the Holy Land, not to visit the contagion of heathen pollution upon themselves. Death, including death by famine, was honorable, and repeatedly honored as martyrdom. Beyond the taboo, moreover, medieval Christians inhabited a world in which eating was overlaid with sacramental, ritual, and symbolic significance, in which time itself was experienced as a pattern of fasts and feasts that shaped the liturgical year, with allowed and proscribed foods on particular days, occasions, and seasons: the regimen of a culture in which what one ate, how much or how little, and when, distinguished between sin and grace, orthodox and heretical practice, inclusion or exclusion in the fellowship of God and of Christian humanity. The apotheosis of that culture turned, of course, upon the symbolic eating of sacramental food, the body of the Eucharist—a sacred cannibalism, as the doctrine of real presence becomes consolidated in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries—the shared experience of which created and bound the identity of the individual Christian to a symbolic community that crossed divisions of nationality, region, ethnicity, family, tribe, class, and race. Over and over, the crusaders describe themselves as a special transnational race of people defined by their religion, and blazoned by the cross they bore: *gens Christiana*. a race and nation of Christian subjects constituting the privileged army of God (*exercitus Dei*).¹⁷

That eating God brought medieval Christians salvific reward was emphasized in doctrinal thinking from the mid-eleventh through the first quarter of the twelfth century, in the arguments of Lanfranc of Bec, Guitmund of Aversa, Alger of Liège, Rupert of Deutz, and others, doctrine shaped partly in response to the Berengarian controversy, but consolidating as a cornerstone of Eucharistic theology. Concomitantly, Eucharistic theology in the first decades of the twelfth century—as represented, for example, by Alger of Liège and Rupert of Deutz—stressed the *deification* secured by Eucharistic ingestion, an act that sealed the communicant's union with the Son and the Father. Twin convictions prevailed, then, in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, on what it meant to eat the flesh and blood of God: eating God would set one along the path of divinity, through union with godhead, and it would enact personal

salvation.¹⁸ In this context of what it meant to eat the living body of Christ, what might it mean to medieval Christians to eat the dead bodies of an infernal race? –a race, moreover, whose practices and physical presence had been described by Pope Urban II and the chroniclers as polluting the holy places of Jerusalem? As a goad, the crusading address of Urban at the Council of Clermont in 1095, in the report of Robert the Monk, presents to the audience of clergy and laity the vision of an unbearable contamination: “Let the holy sepulchre of the Lord our Saviour, which is possessed by unclean nations, especially incite you, and the holy places which are now treated with ignominy and irreverently polluted with the filth of the unclean” (*Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens occidentaux* III:728). In Baldric, Archbishop of Dol’s account of Urban’s homily, the medieval Pope describes Jerusalem as “reduced to the pollution of paganism and . . . withdrawn from the service of God” (*RHC, Occ. IV:13*). Fulcher of Chartres breaks into an ecstatic paeon of rejoicing after the liberation of the Holy Sepulcher, and ends: “Cleansed from the contagion of the heathen . . . so long contaminated by their superstition, it was restored to its former rank” (Hagenmeyer, *Historia Hierosolymitana* 305–06).¹⁹

Cannibalism *per se* was not, of course, unknown in medieval Europe. In the eleventh century, cannibalism attended famine in England in 1005 and 1069, France in 1031, and Europe in 1016 and 1022.²⁰ The eating of native flesh was possibly less troubled by a problematic of bodily and spiritual pollution and injury to the imagined community of Christendom; at least, there is evidence to suggest that by the thirteenth century a regimen of excoriation and discipline might be imagined by a medieval pope and implemented for the infliction of this particular horror upon one’s own kind.²¹ But it has also been observed that the eschatological teleology of the Judaeo-Christian tradition functions to render cannibalism an especial abomination, committed on any race: “ultimately the importance placed on the body led Jews and Christians to view human sacrifice and cannibalism with a fundamentally disproportionate horror” (Tannahill 32); “Jews and Christians . . . are dedicated to the proposition that eating the dead is worse than murder” (34). Bynum points out that “cannibalism—the consumption in which survival of body is most deeply threatened . . . is the ultimate barbarism, the ultimate horror” for early Christians (*Resurrection* 55): Christian theorists decisively rejected any possibility that Christians might commit cannibalism.²² Even under the reified conditions of a uniquely sanctioned, doctrinally recommended

Eucharistic cannibalism—the only circumstances in which human sacrifice and cannibalism are conceivable in Christianity, and conceivable *precisely* because of intensive mediation by a prolonged process of doctrinal reification that strategically utilized the attractions of paradox and contradiction—a residual unease might be sensed to persist: traceable, perhaps, in the periodic eruptions of theological dissent and heterodox repudiations that haunted Eucharistic discourse of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.²⁵ The great texts of medieval literature, in which are encoded the responses of culture to a range of imagined conduct, confirm an overwhelming revulsion to cannibalism. From the *Liber Monstrorum* and *Beowulf* in northwestern Europe of the eighth century, to Dante's *Commedia* in the fourteenth-century Mediterranean, the flesh-eating cannibal is presented as a subhuman, grotesque demon: a misshapen Cyclops of hideous grisliness; nightmarish descendant of the line of Cain, like the bestial Grendel and his dam; or the monstrous, abhorrent devil himself, crushing sinners between his jaws and skinning them in the innermost circle of hell (*Inferno* canto 34).²⁴

Concomitantly, medieval texts of social history and popular tradition cannot conceive of the European Christian as a cannibal: instead, they enact the supposition that the act of cannibalism decisively constructs a living creature as something other than Christian, European, or human. Charlemagne's twelfth capitulary, in mandating death for cannibalism, routinely equates the cannibal with the witch or sorcerer (Tannahill 97); and Jews, in one late-twelfth-century incident at Bray, in France—an incident typical of the medieval blood-libel against the Jewish population—are accused of crucifying a boy to use his blood for their Passover bread (Tannahill 95).²⁵ Even medieval Hebrew literature groups the cannibal with the magician (*mekhaséf*) or witch (*mekhaséfah*), who might be born with teeth and a tail (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* XI:707–08). In fourteenth-century Scotland, wild men, savage tribes, or cave dwellers might be cannibals (Tannahill 104); but the Hereford *mappa mundi* of the late thirteenth century prefers to consign the race of anthropopagi safely to northeast Asia (Friedman 95). Suggestively, Jon Block Friedman traces the hagiographic tradition of St. Christopher—whose legend had immense popular currency in Western Europe—back to a founding allegory in the Acts of Andrew and Bartholomew among the Parthians, in the Ethiopic *Contendings of the Apostles*, an allegory that features the repudiation of cannibalism at the point of entrance into the Christian community. A pagan cannibal called “Abominable” is converted to Christianity, ceases

to be a cannibal, and is rewarded by the apostle Andrew with the new and blessed name of “Christianus” (Friedman 70–75).²⁶ Plainly, the record of the Middle Ages suggests that the charge of cannibalism is one of those instrumentally useful technologies of definition by which the malignant otherness of cultural enemies and outcasts can be established and periodically renewed. Witches, Jews, savages, Orientals, and pagans are conceivable as—indeed, must be—cannibals; but in the twelfth-century medieval imaginary, the Christian European subject cannot, and must not. Indeed, Latin, the language of transnational Christendom in the eleventh century, did not originally have a word for “cannibal,” and needed to be furnished with one by the Greek: literally a sin that could not be named, an obscenity that was nameless as well as unspeakable, cannibalism to the medieval Christian was that dehumanizing, monstrous condition that canceled out the coordinates of recognizably human identity, and reduced the sentient to the subhuman.

An atrocity that is conscionably unthinkable and that is not acknowledged by a language and cultural procedures for its discussion—only for its denial and evacuation from culture—soon ceases to be consciously thought and discussed. Accordingly, the eyewitness narratives record crusader cannibalism, then move on in silence, obligations to truth accomplished; the narratives greet only common garden varieties of sin with discursive attention. Fulcher of Chartres inveighs against “avarice,” “pride,” “dissipation,” “rapaciousness,” and—Fulcher’s *bête noire*—cowardice and desertion among the crusaders; Raymond d’Aguiliers thunders against “sloth and avarice,” “despair,” behavior that “displeased the Lord,” “idleness and riches,” “adultery,” “sloth and fear,” ignoring of God, “filthy deeds,” and various unspecified sins; and the *Gesta*—whose textual unconscious is the most perceptibly troubled by the cannibalism—weighs in against lust with Christian and pagan women. If the textual foreground of the chronicles is preoccupied with such commonly castigated sins as sexual misdemeanors, an oddly pervasive obsession with food nonetheless hovers in the recesses and interstices of the narratives: a fascinated obsession with the details, quantities, excess, or lack of food and drink, and a concomitant attachment to metaphors of ingestion, hunger, and devoration. The *Gesta*, whose description of the cannibalism at Ma’arra is the most compressed and taciturn of the three texts, never fails to observe punctually the presence or absence of food, or to mention famine, and, in one singularly vivid choice of figuration, describes the crusader forces as “thirsting and craving for the blood of Turks” (25).²⁷

That the atrocity of cannibalism could not find adequate discursive voicing was consonant with the repeated and punctilious expression of concern with crusader sins. The crusade was “a religious expedition, undertaken for the sake of the souls of the participants as well as to free Jerusalem” (Porges 14); thus the participants’ state of sinfulness or grace would consciously be scrutinized and periodically discussed. However, questions of morality were also necessarily subject to military imperatives of morale: “morale was vital,” since its loss, in conditions of war, might mean “disaster, the destruction of the Christian army” (Porges 9)—an army whose constantly thinning ranks, as Raymond’s chronicle avers, had been further reduced by the popular report of crusader cannibalism.²⁸ A blockage to official discussion of the cannibalism in the three eyewitness chronicles also owes something to the fact that the patrons of the chroniclers were the great military leaders of the Crusade, with whom responsibility for the army of God ultimately rested. Fulcher of Chartres was chaplain to Baldwin of Boulogne, later count of Edessa, and subsequently the first crowned king of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. The author of the *Gesta* was a subordinate, perhaps a vassal, of the Norman Bohemond, first prince of Antioch, who became legendarily famous throughout all of Latin Christendom as a crusading hero after his return to Europe and marriage to the daughter of the king of France. Raymond d’Aguiliers was chaplain to Raymond de Saint-Gilles, count of Toulouse, leader of the Provençals, close associate of the Papal Legate, Adhémar of Le Puy, and arguably the Pope’s and the Byzantine Emperor’s preferred delegate among the crusading barons. Indeed, since both Bohemond and Raymond de Saint-Gilles are consistently placed by a variety of reports at Ma’arra an-Numan, the integrity of the chroniclers is glimpsed in their very mention of crusader cannibalism at all.²⁹ Finally, even as the chronicles described the agents of Crusade history, to whom their authors were linked by bonds of dependency, vassalage, or patronage, they also explicitly functioned as the ideological instruments of their patrons and of ethnic partisanship. The chronicle of Raymond d’Aguiliers is unabashedly a narrative advertisement in the service of the Provençal cause, which it champions and promotes with relentless energy; and the historian A. C. Krey (“Neglected Passage”) argues that the *Gesta* expressly circulated in twelfth-century Europe as an ideological instrument in Bohemond’s bid for self-legitimation and the legalization of his retention of the principality of Antioch.

One final aspect of the significance of crusader cannibalism

deserves attention. In medieval culture, eating has *political* as well as religious valency, as amply demonstrated in the feasts hosted by the great lords of medieval history and literature in which the display and strategic consumption of food function to mark the social status, economic position, and political or military power of he who provisions and he who eats. That eating is an exercise in power is visible even in sacramental communion—a cannibalism that guarantees the acquisition of divine power and status through union with godhead. The self-defilement and pollution enacted by crusader cannibalism of Muslim cadavers is, then, complexly overdetermined. While eating an infernal race might overwhelmingly invoke the horror of infernal contagion to medieval Christians accustomed to the sacred politics of eucharistic ingestion, the very act of eating your enemy is also a potent demonstration of political power. Indeed, the tremulous question posed by Raymond d'Aguiliers (a question, we note, he places in the mouths of the enemy) unites crusader cannibalism with triumphant military invasion: “And who can resist this people who are so obstinate and inhuman, that for a year they could not be turned from the siege of Antioch by famine, or sword, or any other dangers, and who now feed on human flesh?”

In the realm of the political, what after all is cannibalism but a hideously somatic literalization of the language of military conquest, a literalization that encompasses how successful conquerors swallow up and absorb unto themselves the land and possessions of the defeated? The eminently successful First Crusade installed the crusader states and fiefdoms of “Outremer” as colonies of Latin Europe overseas, in the territories of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine taken from the Turks, Armenians, Jews, and Byzantines. The description of the crusader territories as the first overseas colonies of a transnational European colonial enterprise is not modern: Guibert of Nogent, writing in the twelfth century, specifically calls the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem a new colony (“*novae coloniae*”) of holy Christendom (*RHC*, Occ. IV:245). As the historian Joshua Prawer notes, “The definition of the Crusades as a colonial movement . . . dates back several centuries to a time when this term had no pejorative connotation” (*Crusaders’ Kingdom* ix).³⁰ Divine sanction for the seizure and occupation of foreign lands issues from no less an authority than Pope Urban himself, in Robert the Monk’s report of Urban’s crusading address at Clermont:

this land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your

large population; nor does it abound in wealth; and it furnishes scarcely food enough for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder one another, that you wage war, and that frequently you perish by mutual wounds. Let therefore hatred depart from among you, let your quarrels end, let wars cease, and let all dissensions and controversies slumber. Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves (RHC, Occ. III:728).

By the third book of his *Historia Hierosolymitana*, Fulcher is able to depict the Latin colonies in the Levant as blessed examples of successful colonial assimilation and governance, in an extraordinary narrative portrait that has no parallel before the recognized ages of modern European expansion:

*Consider. I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transformed the West into the East. For we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilaeen, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already they have become unknown to many of us, or, at least, are unmentioned. Some already possess here homes and servants which they have received through inheritance. Some have taken wives not merely of their own people, but Syrians, or Armenians, or even Saracens who have received the grace of baptism. . . . One cultivates vines, another the fields. . . . Different languages, now made common, become known to both races, and faith unites those whose forefathers were strangers. . . . Those who were strangers are now natives; and he who was a sojourner now has become a resident. Our parents and relatives from day to day come to join us, abandoning, even though reluctantly, all that they possess. For those who were poor there, here God makes rich. Those who had few coins, here possess countless besants; and those who had not had a villa, here, by the gift of God, possess a city. Therefore, why should one who has found the East so favorable return to the West? . . . You see, therefore, that this is a great miracle, and one which must greatly astonish the whole world. Who has ever heard anything like it? (Hagenmeyer, *Historia Hierosolymitana* 748–79)¹¹*

Despite the “miracle” of successful overseas colonization accomplished by the First Crusade, however, the memory of Christian cannibals, officially lodged in the documents of that Crusade, seems to have remained, an anxious, undigested presence. Within a decade of Ma’arra, secondary historians in Europe, working at geographical and temporal removes from the events and personages of the Crusade, and thus free of the dependencies bedeviling the eyewitness historians, began to give the problem cultural attention. Of the secondary histories, possibly the most important and one of the earliest is Guibert of Nogent’s *Gesta Dei per Francos* (1106? 1109?), whose advertised subject—the deeds of God through the medium of the Franks—hints at the palliative solution it would find. Guibert, who in his preface discusses the problem of not being an eyewitness himself, equivocally and parenthetically admits the facticity of crusader cannibalism, but quickly follows the admission with an account of a hyperbolic *rumor* of cannibalism which then takes center stage—a rumor, moreover, that flatteringly expresses fear in the cultural enemy.⁵² As Lewis Sumberg is prompted to remark, his *mise-en-scène* for the cannibalism intimates a smidgen of anxiety: “the almost-frantic manner in which the Abbé of Nogent seeks to dispel this vicious *oui-dire*, would seem to suggest that it was generally believed by a large number of his contemporaries” (242).

More importantly, Guibert rehearses another solution to the problem, one that would ultimately find elaborate ramification in the crusade cycles of the *chansons de geste* or heroic epics of the late twelfth century and after.⁵³ The historian strategically introduces an internal difference into the army of God. Separating out a special category of the poor—called, he claims, “Tafurs” in a barbarian language, or “Trudennes” by the Latins—Guibert presents this subaltern class of useful, ragged workers as that segment of the army which specifically commits the cannibalism at Ma’arra and anywhere else (“et sicubi alias”), a deed performed—he magnanimously adds—as rarely as possible (*RHC*, Occ. IV:242). To seal his association of cannibalism with these unfortunates, Guibert then offers an indelibly picturesque *tableau* in which “Tafurs” are shown to roast the body of a Turk in full, melodramatic view of the enemy. His conjuration of a shadow army within the main Christian army, set off from the larger body of crusaders by poverty and perhaps ethnicity, with blame assigned to that subaltern category of the poor thus produced, is perhaps a logical solution for a culture as stratified by caste as medieval culture.⁵⁴ The shadow army is even supplied with its own “king” of

Norman origin, like Baldwin I of Jerusalem, but in inverted image—the “king” of the “Tafurs” is a rogue personage who has fallen in status, having become a foot soldier by virtue of having lost his horse (“ex equite tamen pedes factus”), and thus traveling in the opposite direction from Baldwin, who had risen to the kingdom from the County of Edessa by the accord and election of the council of Jerusalem, on his brother’s death. The two parallel bodies of crusaders are contrastingly partnered, with Guibert volunteering that it is the “Tafurs,” more than the great leaders of the crusading army, who are especially feared by the Turks (*RHC*, Occ. IV:242).

Despite Guibert’s intellection, his crusading history visibly takes liberties with eyewitness evidence here, and at key junctures elsewhere. Guibert’s baroque rendition of Urban’s crusading address, for instance—an account deeply absorbed in its own elaborate eschatological vision, splendid rhetoric, and highly involved logical display—bears little surface resemblance to other extant accounts. His replay of history, moreover, conspicuously tends to shift around responsibility among groups of historical actors. Where Fulcher’s chronicle and the *Gesta* record, for example, that the crusaders cut open enemy bodies to search for bezants, Guibert has Muslims perform the inquisitional surgery upon Christian victims.³⁵ Most tellingly, Guibert’s singling out of a special subaltern category in conjunction with the cannibalism is not attested by either the eyewitness narratives or the crusading leaders’ letter to Paschal, all of which assign blame in no uncertain terms to “our people,” or “the Christian people” (emphasis mine), a single body of crusaders sharing responsibility for atrocity as well as victory. This is not to suggest that unlike Guibert the eyewitness chronicles were blind to the poor in the Christian forces, or to the heterogeneous composition of the crusading army. Fulcher discusses both the Latin crusaders and populations in Syria and Palestine by ethnicity and language, and Raymond d’Aguiliers gives the poor meticulous, frequent attention, without, however, any discovery of Tafurs or of a legend of cannibalism that is the specialized property of the Christian poor.

In the event, the materialization of scapegoats within the ranks of crusaders, though an intelligible innovation, seems not to amount to an adequate cultural strategy. Representing perhaps an intermediate stage of figural development between the eyewitness histories and the cultural negotiation to come, it is unsatisfactory to the extent that Guibert’s intervention yet leaves the taint of a dehumanizing atrocity linked to

recognizably Christian pilgrims on a spiritual mission of rescue: a reminder that even in the early twelfth century the writing of history as a serious endeavor obligated to the attestation of veracity had conventions and circumscriptions that Guibert the historian was required ultimately to respect.³⁶ It remained for the unresolved matter of Christian cannibalism to be taken up again two decades later, by a historian-cum-romancer in Anglo-Norman England less bound by authorial decorum: Geoffrey of Monmouth.

History into Romance: King Arthur Materializes at the Vanishing Point of Historical Narration

Intensive historical writing follows “a crisis in national affairs” that alienates a people from its past, suggested R. W. Southern, in his 1973 presidential address to the Royal Historical Society. Thus the Norman conquest of 1066, Southern reasons, was followed by a resurgence in historical narratives one generation later that worked to reinstall order and intelligibility by retelling the past. If external invasion produces a disorder that requires one kind of cultural work, the invasion of foreign lands requires another—especially when that foreign invasion also renders the invaders foreign to themselves, and denatured, by their own unrecognizable and self-transformative performance. It is possible to glimpse a fantasmatic hallucination of what the crusader-cannibals had become, one generation after their alienating offense, in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s nexus of the Norman and European cultural imaginary: a distorted, miasmatic giant in the Arthuriad of Geoffrey’s *Historia*, a giant whose nightmarish cannibalism is the unmistakable mark of his disproportionate and inhuman monstrosity. In the hallucinatory figure of a giant in whom monstrosity and power—including the power to eat your enemy—are conjoined, atrocity and pollution can be seen to work their transformative power in dreadful tandem. The giant monster is shockingly and violently located where no monsters should be, suddenly materializing without explanation at a renowned pilgrim site in medieval Europe: Mont Saint-Michel, lodged in the pilgrim heart of Europe itself, a holy place whose very prominence retrieves the memory of another celebrated pilgrim territory where no monsters or monstrous acts should also have been. Named after Michael, the patron saint of warriors and a favorite of the Normans, Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy is magically a name that recalls war in tandem with pilgrimage, and serves as a fitting index to summon the memory of a crusading venture.³⁷

It is commonplace, of course, to find cultural enemies depicted as giants—or cannibals—in the literatures of nations and periods, especially in narratives of territorial invasion and conquest.⁵⁸ It takes a crisis of subtle alienation, however, to produce *oneself* as a giant of monstrous proportions, requiring the intervention of a cultural savior plucked from the distant past (an older, intact representative of cultural identity) to rescue the contemporary past, and—by restoring proportionate dimensions with giant heroism defeating gigantic horror—protect and secure the proper possession of a right-sized future. A crisis of subtle alienation requires, and discovers, a medium of subtle transformation: not the cultural mechanisms of history, with its known circumscriptions, but the powers of the magical genre of culture, known as romance.

The figural transformation effected in the Arthurian tale of St. Michael's Mount is aided by the fact that the crusaders were already giants of a physical and spiritual kind even before they were rendered disproportionate to themselves by their acts. Anna Comnena and Arab chroniclers exclaim over the—to them—impressive physical size of the Latins, Anna representing the Norman leader Bohemond as a veritable behemoth: “The sight of him inspired admiration, the mention of his name terror. . . . His stature was such that he towered almost a full cubit over the tallest men. . . . there was a hard, savage quality in his whole aspect, due, I suppose, to his great stature . . . even his laugh sounded like a threat to others” (*Alexiad* 422). According to the historian Orderic Vitalis, Bohemond was named by his father, Robert Guiscard, from the legend of a gigantic man called Bohemond (“fabula de Buamundo gigante” [Orderic VI:71]), thought by Guiscard an apt name for “his own giant son” (Yewdale 5). Anna reports with hostility that Bohemond's nephew, Tancred, also saw himself as “a mighty irresistible giant, with his feet firmly planted on earth” (*Alexiad* 440). The mammoth mission assigned to the crusaders by their Pope—a near impossible undertaking against overwhelming odds—simultaneously conferred upon this large body of Christians a certain moral and spiritual gigantism, a stature underscored by the crusading privileges, indulgence, and special protections bestowed by their Pope, and unavailable to lesser Christians.

If the cannibal of Mont Saint-Michel and King Arthur both constitute figurations of European culture imagined at its demonic and sublime extremes, a cleavage is also visible at the local level in the linguistic presentation of the monster's imagined origin. Geoffrey's giant has come to threaten Europe from out of “Hispania,” curiously rendered in this episode of giant-killing as a genitive plural, “Hispaniarum”—a

covert pointing, I suggest, to a double referent for the word, beyond the obvious referent of “Spain.” Coincidentally, “Hispania” is also a geographical designation that routinely appears in the eyewitness chronicles of the First Crusade to signify the interior regions of Syria. Though sometimes given as “Spain” in translations, the crusading leaders’ letter to Paschal announces, unmistakably, that the Christians “entered into the interior of Hispania” after the cannibalism at Ma’arra (Hagenmeyer, *Kreuzzugsbriefe* 170) and before reaching Jerusalem; and Raymond d’Aguiliers’s narrative plainly refers to the regions around Ma’arra and Antioch when it mentions Raymond of Toulouse’s, and Bohemond’s and Robert of Flanders’s, foraging expeditions into “Hispania” for food (Hill and Hill, *Liber* 101; Peters, 153, 154; see also 159, *passim*). As Tatlock observes, the name “Hispania” is “often applied vaguely to Moslem regions in Asia Minor and eastward” (“Contemporaneous Matters” 219).³⁹ Concealed in the genitive plural, then, lies a trace of the double origin of gigantic monstrosity. The cannibal comes from within Europe—ostensibly Spain—and also from the interior regions of Syria, from the territorial history of the First Crusade. Not only are the origins of the cannibal linked to Muslim-associated geography, but the giant is depicted in a grisly scene as devouring pigs: the most insultingly derogatory and offensive metaphor that Geoffrey’s narrative can find with which to signify Muslims, since pork is a chief marker in Islam for unclean and forbidden meats, with explicit prohibitions in the sacred text of the Koran against its consumption (e.g., in *Koran* 11:3, VI:146, XVI:115). To equate Muslims with pigs, moreover, reduces the detested cultural enemy to the level of the subhuman and bestial, and perhaps fugitively expresses, in a covert superscription, a wishful excision of atrocity.⁴⁰ For cannibalism is the single traumatic atrocity at which the crusade narratives evince real horror: massacres of the enemy so bloody that the crusaders literally wade ankle deep in gore, as had occurred at the conquest of Jerusalem, are described noncommittally, and even with approval, by the eyewitness chronicles.

But what of Arthur’s memory of a *second* giant that he had earlier fought, Ritho “in Arauio monte”? Translations usually render the home of Ritho as “Mount Aravius”—signifying Snowdon in Wales, as we have said—since the two moments where the name of the mountain appears in the *Historia* (once in the accusative, “super montem Arauium” in the prophecies of Merlin, and once in the ablative, in the giant-killing), urge a second-declension noun of “Aravius” in the nominative. Observe,

however, that if we were to treat “Aravius” not as a proper noun, but as an adjective that declines identically to a noun—a grammatical alternative—“mons Aravius” can plausibly be read as “the Arabian mountain,” which would return the giant Ritho, like the giant of St. Michael’s Mount, to an origin in the Orient.⁴¹ This giant Ritho collected the beards of kings, which he wore as an insolent, emblematic trophy of his superordinate masculinity in overcoming monarchs, a superior species of men. Commenting on the bizarre collection of kings’ beards, Tatlock points to the perplexing fact that Normans of Geoffrey’s period in fact rarely wore beards, as observed in the Bayeux tapestry and by William of Malmesbury (*Legendary History* 349). Indeed, beardless Latins (and especially the Norman Bohemond) were much remarked upon in the Orient during the time of the First Crusade, since the beard functioned in the Levant then, as now, as an exhibitional symbol of masculinity—“the characteristic feature of a man, the glory of the face, the chief dignity of man,” as the great Latin historian of Outremer, William of Tyre, intones (Babcock and Krey 480).⁴² Among hierarchical distinctions of dress and appearance introduced into the crusader colonies, Praver (“Medieval Colonialism” 29–30) singles out the possession or absence of a beard as a powerful and highly visible separator demarcating native subjects—the ruled—and Latins—the rulers. In Europe, the beard also circulated as a symbol of racial difference: Orderic Vitalis quotes Bishop Serlo of Séez in Normandy who, in preaching at Carentan in Easter, 1105, in the presence of Henry I, rudely likened bearded men to “goats” and “Saracens” (Orderic VI: 64, 66).⁴³

Significantly, however, one renowned Norman king and crusader did wear a beard—which, according to a humorous anecdote, he was almost compelled to lose. William of Tyre reports that Baldwin, the first crowned monarch of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, successfully induced his father-in-law, the Armenian Gabriel, to part with thirty thousand gold bezants—coins, we note, that in the Orient were called “micheles” (see n. 37)—by claiming that he, Baldwin, had mortgaged his beard to his retainers as a pledge for the payment of their services: a beard which—now that he was in financially straightened circumstances—he was required to tender to his men, in fulfillment of his word. So horrified was the Armenian at the imagined injury to the symbolic manhood of his son-in-law, then Count of Edessa, that Gabriel parted with the micheles rather than allow the monster of economic duress to strip the emblem of masculinity off a redoubtable leader of men (Babcock and Krey 478–81).⁴⁴ We might, then, read Arthur’s anecdote of a second giant—a giant who only

exists in the memory of a fictional king who, like the historical Baldwin, kept *his* beard and dignity—as furnishing a supporting layer of symbolic figuration. For not only does atrocity turn a man into a monster—and here, a personified monstrosity that collects the symbolic pelts of the defeated in the Orient as grisly trophies—but monstrosity redounds to destroy the visible honor, the manhood and dignity, also of Christian kings, iconic representatives of European culture at its apex. Arthur, who has aptly found these two giants the mightiest creatures he has ever fought, is summoned from an earlier cultural order to vindicate the humanity, masculinity, and cultural honor of Christian kings and knights by his double defeat of symbolic beasts from the Arabian mountains.⁴⁵

That Arthur is ostentatiously styled as a Norman king, presiding over a Norman court, is an old axiom of criticism on the *Historia*, antedating even the insight that Arthur's materialization as a cultural hero furnished the ruling élites of Anglo-Norman England with a cultural mythology rivaling in ideological magnitude the fabulous legacy of Charlemagne in France (Paton [Evans xxi], Gerould 45, Southern ["Classical Tradition 193–94"], Tatlock [*Legendary History* 311]; see also Fleischman 289). The various Anglo-Norman magnates to whom different manuscripts of the *Historia* are dedicated underscores, moreover, ambitions in cultivating not only individual patrons of proven munificence but more especially an attachment to the interests of a *ruling group* of Norman élites. Thus the conflicting dedications of the *Historia's* manuscripts—variously to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, supporter of his half sister, the empress Matilda, and her son, Henry of Anjou, for succession to the throne of Matilda's father, Henry I; to Robert and Waleran, Count of Meulan and sometime supporter of King Stephen, Matilda's cousin in the opposing camp of the royal succession struggle; and even, astonishingly, to both Stephen *and* Robert—are less perplexing when read as marks of the *Historia's* shrewd evasion of political differences within the Anglo-Norman ruling caste, and careful preferment of a cultural mythology that is serviceable to the group.⁴⁶

The Anglo-Norman royal family and ruling caste were, of course, in the first rank of the military leaders of the Crusade, a movement dominated by the Normans of England, France, and Southern Italy. The eldest son of William the Conqueror—Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy—was the highest-ranking Norman on Crusade, and headed an Anglo-Norman contingent that included Stephen of Blois, husband to Robert's sister, Adela; Odo, Bishop of Bayeaux, the half brother of the Conqueror; Robert's

cousin, Robert Count of Flanders; Ralph de Gael, former Earl of Norfolk; Godehilde of Tosni, the first wife of Baldwin of Boulogne, and other prominent members of the baronial families and landowners of Norman England (Tyerman 15–16). More significantly, unlike Stephen of Blois, who infamously turned back at Antioch, Robert of Normandy and Robert of Flanders—often referred to collectively, in the *Gesta*, as “the counts”—returned from the Orient only after the successful close of the Crusade, and were present at Ma’arrab during the crusader cannibalism (*Gesta* 78; Ralph of Caen, *RHC Occ.* III:674; Albert of Aix, *RHC Occ.* IV:448).

Intimate relations between the royal family of England and the politics and personages of the East continued after the Anglo-Normans returned. Robert of Normandy’s sister, Adela, Countess of Blois, championed Bohemond’s cause with her brother, Henry I of England, when the Prince of Antioch sought aid in Europe against the Emperor Alexius (Runciman II:48); and, according to Orderic Vitalis, she generously provisioned the marriage celebrations of Bohemond to the daughter of King Philip of France in 1106 (Orderic III:182). Her son Stephen, King of England after Henry, married the niece of King Baldwin I of Jerusalem. In 1108, Robert of Normandy’s son, William Cliton, a newly arrived crusader in the East, conducted a successful raid on “a wealthy Arab princess who was journeying . . . from Arabia to Damascus” (Runciman II:97); William was briefly married in 1123 to Sibylla, daughter of Fulk of Anjou, the third King of Jerusalem. In 1118, Robert of Normandy’s chaplain, Arnulf, crowned his career by becoming Patriarch of Jerusalem (David 217), and with Baldwin II became instrumental in shaping political culture and policy in the Latin Kingdom (Runciman II:82–86). In 1119, the heir to the throne of England—William, the son of Henry I—was married to another daughter (Matilda) of Fulk of Anjou and Jerusalem. In 1128, Hugh of Payens, founder and Grand Master of Knights of the Order of the Temple in Jerusalem, visited England as Baldwin’s representative on a recruitment and propaganda campaign (Tyerman 23, Runciman II:179); and in that same year, the empress Matilda of England married Geoffrey, the son of Fulk of Anjou and Jerusalem (Runciman II:178; Chibnall 56–57), a crusading monarch who had given three of his children, at different times, to the royal family of England.

It might be reasonable to suggest that a vigorous fascination with the Orient and crusading lore would persist and actively circulate in Anglo-Norman England in the opening decades of the twelfth century, with passage to and from the Holy Land, and close relations with the East—

fueled moreover by “the widespread phenomenon of Crusade propaganda” which continually urged “European contributions of money and of men to support the newly found Crusader states in the Levant” (Seidel 383). Copies of the *Gesta Francorum* were disseminated by Bohemond’s supporters in 1105–06, to fan the legendary crusader’s reputation and legitimate his claims to Antioch, according to the historian A. C. Krey (“Neglected Passage” 74–75). Fulcher’s chronicle circulated in Europe, and was used by Guibert de Nogent, Ekkehard of Aura, and Ralph of Caen, among others. The *Gesta* found its way to England, and was adjusted for Anglo-Norman reputations. Rosalind Hill notes that a revision of the *Gesta*, in a twelfth-century hand, promotes Robert of Normandy (*Gesta* xxxix), who is also promoted by an editor of the revision, whose work in three copies—all of English origin—survive alongside an abbreviated text of the *Gesta* in England that “shows its devotion to the Duke of Normandy still more” (*Gesta* xl).

The busy production, revision, and copying of numerous histories of the Crusade in the first decades of the twelfth century—along with intercalations of Crusade material in biographies, national and regional histories, and texts of other kinds—suggest that the meaning and implications of the First Crusade had not yet settled, and were still being actively processed and pursued when Geoffrey’s *Historia* appeared. Inevitably, the First Crusade’s image of military success—ameliorating the criticism that had attended the Crusade from its inception (Siberry 190)—was soon tarnished and challenged by the tragic losses and humiliating defeats of the crusade of 1101 (Runciman II:18–31); after which, it might be assumed, the contest for the reputation of the Crusade might have taken on some urgency. It comes with little surprise, then, that in 1102–05, Raymond d’Aguiliers defensively declares that he is writing his chronicle to answer negative criticism of the First Crusade (Hill and Hill, *Liber* 35). It is in the context of such interventions that Geoffrey’s *Historia*, dedicated to members of the Anglo-Norman royal family and their supporters, offers not only a national mythology of an imperial Arthur, but also the calculated romance of an Arthur who serviceably defeats monstrosities from a crusading history that is integrally intertwined with the Anglo-Norman past and present, the meaning of which continued to be revised, contested, and pursued.⁴⁷

Why is Arthur, an obscure military hero briefly mentioned in the *Historia Brittonum*—the ninth-century chronicle that served as the “most important source” of Geoffrey’s “elaborate construct” (Wright,

“Bede” 31)–the chosen figure who is plucked from the distant past to serve the present? The *Historia Brittonum*, in reciting early insular history, mentions in passing a war leader (“dux bellorum”) called Arthur who fought twelve battles against the Saxon heathen, with dramatic victories in the eighth and twelfth, and who carried the image of the Virgin Mary on his shoulders (“super humeros suos”) in the eighth battle (Morris 76).⁴⁸ This tantalizingly brief glimpse of an early Arthur is supplemented by an entry in the *Annales Cambriae*, or Welsh Annals, whose text appears with the *Historia Brittonum* in the crucial manuscript Harley 3859, an entry which enigmatically records that in the year a.d. 516, Arthur “carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for three days and three nights on his shoulders and the Britons were the victors” at the battle of Badon (“Arthur portavit crucem Domini nostri Jhesu Christi tribus diebus et tribus noctibus in humeros suos et Brittones victores fuerunt” [Morris 85]). A few more sketchy hints appear in this rudimentary annalistic and chronicle vehicle: one section on the marvels of Britain mentions a dog, as well as a son, of Arthur (“qui erat canis Arthuri militis” and “filius Arthuri militis erat” [Morris 83]), references in which Arthur pertinently features not as *dux*, now, but as *miles*—a lexical designation that, in the twelfth century of Geoffrey’s era, though not in the ninth century of the *Historia Brittonum*’s, can suggest to an emergent stratum of military and cultural élites that Arthur might have been, like them, a knight.

The appeal of a cultural hero of shadowy origins, whose very obscurity in the annalistic and chronicle record invites embellishment, need not be belabored, particularly if the cultural figure also circulated, as scholars believe, in stories of folkloric or popular tradition.⁴⁹ We see that the Arthur of annals and chronicles, before his dramatic entrance into literary narrative in the medium of Geoffrey’s *Historia*, already possesses irresistible, indeed, indispensable features: he is victorious against the enemies of Christianity and performs as a great warrior and military leader of men, like the barons of the First Crusade; he resembles a knight and might become, like Baldwin of Boulogne, a king; and, most indelibly of all, Arthur’s identification as a Christian warrior takes dramatic, exhibitional form in the pious symbols he bears on his shoulders for inspiration or proclamation: his splendid display of what visibly resembles a crusader’s cross.

That Arthur’s campaigns in the *Historia* are invested with the aura of the First Crusade has been partly recognized. Tyerman, for instance, shrewdly notices that Archbishop Dubricius’s speech to Arthur’s

militia, in the Saxon wars, presents Arthur's men as "marked with the sign of the Christian faith (i.e. the cross)," and carries unmistakable echoes of Urban's crusading address, down to the offer of the Crusade indulgence and absolution (22). Tatlock notices the strange infusion of Muslim and Oriental kings and their forces into the ranks of the Roman army confronting Arthur, although "Geoffrey knew as well as we do that the Roman army in the sixth century was Christian," and concludes that Geoffrey "wished to secure for Arthur the nimbus of a crusader, which meant so much in the twelfth century" (*Legendary History* 262).

But the depiction of Arthur in the *Historia* is not only as *dux bellorum*, a Christian leader of crusadelike forces against the Saxon and Saracen foe. Arthur is also newly deployed as a figure in *romance*, a strategy that shifts the commemoration of the Crusade and the retrieval of crusading memory in the *Historia* into a different register. No explicit memorializing of the Crusade, or direct retrieval of history, occurs in the giant-killing episode: the defeat of the cannibalistic monster in the heart of Europe issues not from the wars of Christendom, but from the urgent necessity of rescuing a single, helpless individual—an aristocratic maiden in peril.

A Definition of Romance: Gender, Magical Transformations, and a Language of Cultural Discussion

Medieval romance requires figures of gender for its narrative apparatus. Perhaps because gender, like romance, is a cultural invention that participates in both fantasy and reality, existing in oscillation between two modes, it lends, I will suggest, a ready and serviceable vocabulary to romance: a body of texts whose practices require an expressional medium that is able to perform the real as the fantastical, and the fantastical as the real, without the requisite necessity of explanation or apology. In the full-length vernacular fictions of Chrétien de Troyes and others, it can readily be seen that gender acts as the special vocabulary of medieval romance, serving as the mediating and expressive terms that enable the articulation of urgent aristocratic concerns. In Chrétien's and later romances, the romance system of gendered service, for instance—knights on quest, aiding maidens—makes available a fantasmatic consideration and resolution of critical feudal problems and the concomitant vindication of the ideological apparatus and institutions of feudal knighthood.⁵⁰ Arthur's romance at Mont Saint-Michel in Geoffrey's *Historia*

ushers in, then, willy-nilly, a prime instrument in the narrational machinery of medieval romance—the chivalric rescue of aristocratic maidens.

In this early paradigmatic romance episode of giant-killing, the gender apparatus of medieval romance is already visible and firmly in place: Helena, an aristocratic female-victim is the fetish and screen that occults an unbearable historical exigency even as she facilitates its articulation and surreptitious resolution through the giant-killing. As in later romances, the resolution enacted by the cultural hero is rendered as *incidental* to the objective at hand—the objective here being, not defeating the memory of cannibalistic atrocity, but saving a maiden—and thus a romance sleight of hand is accomplished while the readerly gaze is held by the female victim in the foreground. Indeed, we are generously given *two* female victims to consider, signifying the poles of youth and age, and thereby instantiating between them all womankind: a young maiden of aristocratic lineage, and therefore a valuable victim by virtue of class, youth, and sexuality; and her devoted old nurse, who is less valuable by virtue of age and presumptive social inferiority. In a chivalrous gesture of his own, Geoffrey graciously allows the aristocratic maiden to perish without sexual despoiling; the threatened body of the sexually endangered maiden evanesces before our eyes as the narrative ruthlessly substitutes her old, socially inferior nurse as the scapegoat-victim of repeated rape. Though the crone had earlier warned Bedivere, Arthur's companion, that the giant cannibal would destroy the flower of knightly youth, a warning whose meaning on the figurative level, as much as the literal, is appropriately transparent: Helena's premature death shows how romance insists that it is women, after all, and not male cultural élites who truly figure the constituency at risk, and whose crises prompt and require splendid resolution.

Helena's youthful female body vanishes at her death, but her name is tropologically encrypted and resurrected later when her grieving father erects a memorial edifice over her tumulus. Indeed, Helena's bodily removal is urgently necessary in order that her *name* might be fetishistically enshrined—essentialized, purified, and emptied of any original reference—so as to serve as an ethereal cipher, or verbal relic, through which to index the newly transformed cultural memory that would henceforth issue as its appropriate referent. “Helena's Tomb,” then, becomes the resounding cipher that invokes the place and moment in culture where a historical monstrosity triumphantly metamorphoses into celebratory romance.⁵¹ As a site of mourning without melancholia, Helena's Tomb marks the precise

location in culture where historical trauma is successfully introjected and memorialized within the medieval cultural imaginary. Simultaneously the vanishing point of history and the instantiation of cultural fantasy, the moment is productive of, and defines, romance. My description thus argues not that romance requires a forgetting, but that it circulates a remembering; that romance inaugurates, not a hypothesis of burial and repression, but of *transformation*, through the strategic entrance and manipulation of difference. For the historical trauma here has not been buried so much as it has been metastasized and re-formed, in order that it might be made harmless by being remembered *differently*, and famously, in the (lime)light of another place—the once and future European present—displacing the shadows of a lurking, Oriental past. Saint Michael's Mount—now synonymous, we are told, with the name of Helena's Tomb—can be Mount Pilgrim writ large, a celebration of Christian and military space, offering a monument to memory that can be fearlessly exhibited to the public gaze. That this monumental transformation effected in culture requires as its foundational matter the dead body of a sacrificial child-maiden, the violation of an old woman, and the celebration of a monarchical conqueror merely testifies to the feudal politics of medieval courtly fantasy.

Thus analyzed, it can be seen that the Arthurian romance of the two giants in the *Historia* allegorizes, by virtue of its structure and operations, the narrational habits and modalities of romance as a genre. Deploying figures of gender as a means to discuss the virtually indiscussible, romance represents a medium that is neither wholly fantastical nor wholly historical, but in which history and fantasy collide, the one vanishing into the other, almost without trace, at the location where the advantage of both can most easily be mined. For romance does not repress or evade the historical—as has sometimes been claimed—but *surfaces* the historical, which it transforms and safely memorializes in an advantageous form, as fantasy. As surely as it is futile to repress the historical—for history itself has repeatedly shown that repression returns in ever more dangerous guises—it is equally futile and impossible to refute the fantastical (as confirmed by the absurd twelfth-century spectacle of William of Newburgh sentimentiously attempting to rebut the *Historia*'s sensational fictions). Thus negotiating history and fantasy to special advantage, the genre of romance offers the skillful manipulator an ideological medium of incomparable value.

Romance, of course, freely cannibalizes from extant cultural

material—from bodies of older texts, floating metaphors and motifs, bits of tales, legends, superstitions, mere hints and guesses—and organizes its hybrid matter into a pattern and a structure that it instantiates at a particular historical moment. Romance thus is impure at its very emergence: an emergence “produced through a particular stage of forces” (Foucault 148), and designating “a place of confrontation but not . . . a closed field” (150), an emergence that is not the *origin* of romance as such—the coming-into-being of what has never existed—but a genesis, a re-patterning and re-beginning that is constitutive of an exemplar. Just as we may only sporadically track, in disparate moments, the spoor of history in the operations of cultural fantasy, the rapid and massive ramification of romance after the *Historia* argues for the impossibility of tracing the chronology or unbroken evolution of medieval romance: instead, what is available to us is a rich genealogy, a ramifying web, through time, of exemplary romance moments and texts without an overarching drive toward teleological meaning and conclusion.⁵²

*The Empire of Magic: Arthur's Empire, "Rome"/
Byzantium, and the Crusader Colonies of Outremer*

From the very inception of the genre, Arthurian romance is imbricated in the history of medieval European empire formation in the Levant: a colonial experiment for which the cultural rescue and popularity of Arthur's deeds offers ideological support. Beyond the processing of a memory of atrocity into monumental celebration, the story of Arthur's deeds in the *Historia* furnishes for crusading history as large a cultural aura and nimbus as the aura of crusading history furnishes for Arthur's deeds in romance. Arthur's aggressive empire formation—which has been read as culturally justifying Norman territorial conquests of the eleventh century, including the invasion of England—is also a literary homology for the experiment in empire constituted by the crusader states of Outremer. Arthur's empire is a virile and modern competitor to the exhausted empire of the Romans, represented textually by the greybeard Roman emissaries to the youthful Arthurian court. The multiracial composition of “Rome”'s forces massed against Arthur indicates, I suggest, that “Rome” in the *Historia*'s Arthuriad refers as much to the Eastern Roman Empire that is the detested rival of the youthful crusader states in the Levant—twelfth-century Byzantium, or Constantinople—as to sixth-century Rome. The presence of Turcoples, Cumans, Patzinaks, and other Oriental races

in the polyglot Byzantine army was of traditional standing: but their presence in the Byzantine ranks mounted a cultural shock for the Latins of the First Crusade on their arrival in the East, for whom these races were the collective visage of the hated Oriental enemy. “Rome,” significantly, was the name by which the Byzantine empire was known in the East, to Byzantines themselves, and to the native populations of the region. Anna Comnena routinely calls Constantinople “Rome” (e.g. 117), the Byzantine empire “the Roman empire” (e.g. 119, 323), and her people “Romans” (e.g. 323, 338, 358). Arab chronicles call the Byzantines “the Rumi,” and the formerly Greek territory of Iconium or Anatolia in Asia Minor, “the Sultanate of the Rum.” Even the Latin chronicles refer to Byzantium through a configuration of the Roman name, as “Romania.”

Oriental kings and races are conspicuous in the “Roman” army of the *Arthuriad*: among them, Mustansar, king of the Africans (“rex Affricanorum” [Wright I:116]); Aliphatima, “rex Hispanie”; the kings of Egypt, Babylon, Bithynia, Phrygia, Libya, and Syria; and the kings of the Parthians, the Medi, and the Iturei (Wright I:116, *passim*). Tatlock observes that these names, together with the kings of Greek lands mentioned, invoke not only the boundaries of the Roman empire at its broadest, but assemble a virtual cartography of the Orient, including the territories of the Byzantine empire in Geoffrey’s day. Tatlock points out, moreover, that “Al-Mustansar” was the name of the eighth Shi’ite Fatimid Caliph of Egypt close to the time of the First Crusade (1036–1094), while “Aliphatima” combines the names of the founders of Shi’ite Islam (the Islam of Egypt’s breakaway Fatimid caliphate)—the prophet Mohammed’s cousin, Ali, and Mohammed’s daughter, Fatima, who married Ali (“Contemporaneous Matters” 207). Orderic Vitalis’s own invocation of the very same names suggests that the combination of “Ali” and “Fatima” arrested the attention of more than one early twelfth-century historian interested in Norman crusader history in the Orient (VI, 116).⁵³ Finally, Tatlock adds that “Leo,” the name given to one of the two co-emperors of “Rome” in the *Arthuriad*, is coincidentally “that of the latest emperor at Constantinople (Leo I, 457–474) before the disappearance of the Western Empire (476)” (“Contemporaneous Matters” 215).

Tatlock takes the argument no further, but in the narrative of Arthurian imperial conquest, “Rome,” I suggest, functions much like the signifier “Hispania”—that is, as double-writing, a term twinning dual referents that command stereoptic, simultaneous attention. By Geoffrey’s day, the Roman empire in the East was viewed in the West with suspicion,

contempt, and a hostility that amounted to loathing. Early in the twelfth century, Latin eyewitness chronicles and letters had held the Byzantines guilty of failing to fulfill the promises of assistance made by Alexius in the reconquest of Syria and Palestine, after the taking of Nicaea, a failure that seriously jeopardized the crusading mission at Antioch and elsewhere. As early as 1098, in fact, a letter to Urban II signed by the leaders of the Crusade, including Robert Curthose, casually damns the Byzantines as “heretics” (Hagenmeyer, *Kreuzzugsbriefe* 164). Where a scant few years earlier Urban had emphasized at Clermont the commonality of Christians East and West, the crusaders’ letter crudely points up the incommensurably schismatic and deviant character of Greek and Eastern Christians. The failed crusade of 1101, with disastrous massacres suffered by the Latins, was also blamed by its participants, predictably, on the Greeks. Finally, Bohemond’s self-interested, wide-ranging campaign in Europe to raise a “crusading” army against Alexius—a campaign that involved embassies to the Pope, the French king and nobles, and direct or mediated contact with Henry I of England—consolidated the negative image of the Eastern Romans in Western Europe (Yewdale 106–09; Runciman II:48; Krey, “Neglected Passage” 69–70). The twelfth-century Norman historian Orderic Vitalis routinely disparages Alexius I, as does the otherwise magisterially judicious William of Malmesbury’s *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*. Geoffrey’s *Historia* tellingly portrays Romans as cowardly, treacherous, disloyal, and militarily inferior, and, even before the entrance of Arthur, had undercut its niggardly acknowledgment of even Julius Caesar’s historical conquest of Britain with fantasy depictions of counterconquests of Rome by Britons. Arthur’s empire fulfills these earlier countervailing conquests, which it organizes into an intelligible pattern: the Arthurian empire, like the empire of the crusader states, is a newly arrived, virile alternative to the superannuated empire of the (Eastern) Romans, who are mockingly derided through metaphors of gender also used by the *Gesta Francorum*. In the *Gesta*, the Romans who are the rivals of the crusader colonies are mocked as an effeminate people (“effeminatis gentibus” [*Gesta* 67]); in the *Historia*, the Romans who are the rivals of the Arthurian empire are derided as the effeminate heirs (“muliebres”—womanish beings [Wright I:128]) of a degenerate imperial legacy, who act womanishly, like women (“muliebriter” [Wright I:129]).

That romance supplies ideological support for empire formation is also suggested in the *Historia* at the level of narrative structure and plot. Arthur’s empire is inaugurated soon after a romance interval of

twelve years of peace, during which Arthur establishes an Arthurian culture of such supreme romance courtliness that its codes of dress and arms inspire international emulation and win a peerless reputation for his knights. Because of that peerless reputation, the romance logic of the *Historia* proceeds, kings of kingdoms across the seas begin to fear Arthurian invasion, thus prompting Arthur to consider conquering all Europe (“totam Europam” [Wright I:107]). The campaign of imperial conquest immediately begins; and soon, Arthur is the virtual master of Europe. Seamlessly, without hesitation, the courtly moment of Arthurian romance has opened into the military moment of Arthurian imperial invasion, the logic of the former driving the momentum of the latter, into which it vanishes without trace or apparent obstacle. At the inaugural moments of Arthurian romance we thus find in operation violence of related kinds: the rape and sacrificial death of women; domination of racial and religious others; and aggressive empire formation. This critical nexus of violence lodged at the very genesis of medieval Arthurian romance—a contamination-at-origin—will be harnessed for strategic and political uses by both the producers and the consumers of culture through the Middle Ages and beyond.

Arthur’s now-famous, ethically problematic birth in sin, treachery, and deception emblemizes Arthurian romance’s contamination-at-origin. Romance themes, motifs, and structures in the *Historia*—which do not begin with Arthur, but exist in minor key from almost the beginning of the *Historia*—are fulfilled with Arthur’s entrance into the narrative.⁵⁴ But romance elements and moments in fact intensify earlier, with the entry of Merlin, the magus whose sensational prophecies signal a capture of the historical narrative by the magical aura of fantasy. The entrance of a magician and his magical words have the effect of suddenly transforming, magicalizing the narrative: at once a vocabulary materializes that is full of lurid figures, fantastical allusions, and wild allegorical suggestiveness, giving free rein to a procession, in language, of dragons, giants, boars, snakelike women, lions, Arabs, Africans, and other such exotica, under the subtle rubric of prophecy.⁵⁵ In effect, Merlin’s auguries cunningly devise an early form of the romance marvel, for their fantastical and exotic aura has performative value. Aurelius Ambrosius, pre-Arthurian King of the Britons, makes this plain when, desiring (to hear) marvels, he commands Merlin to speak of the future (“iussitque futura dicere cupiens miranda audire” [Wright I: 90]): that is, to *perform* the marvelous by *speaking* of the marvelous. In later literature, Arthur would make a

similar equivalence between the marvel of listening to the performance of a story and the actual performance of a marvel itself, these becoming conventional and oftentimes interchangeable *topoi* in Arthurian romance. And Arthur himself would become a marvel. Merlin, a figure of the author in the Middle Ages (Bloch, *Etymologies* 2) is more marvelously prophetic than he or his author can possibly realize from the vantage point of 1130–39, when the magus optimistically proclaims, “(Arthur) will be celebrated in the mouth of peoples and his deeds will be food/nourishment to narrators of tales” (“In ore populorum celebrabitur et actus eius cibus erit narrantibus” [Wright I:74]).⁵⁶ In Arthurian literary history, the interventions of Merlin conjure so efficacious a magical aura that the magus is eventually imported into the constellation of Arthurian romance, with which he is not, in fact, initially associated.

Notwithstanding the durability of Arthur’s legend, however, the formation of empire, whether in Arthurian romance or in the history of military Christendom, is an anxious experiment that is invariably subject to the reverse momentum of military reprisal. The fate of the militarily insecure fiefdoms of Outremer, geopolitically surrounded by the enemy and constantly vulnerable, was particularly dependent on the domination exercised by the ruling King of Jerusalem. In 1131, Baldwin II, last of the original barons of the First Crusade, and a military and political leader of shrewdly forceful character, died, and was replaced by Fulk of Anjou, a king whose power and prestige were unhappily undermined by the reputed adultery of his wife with one of his younger nobles, with divisive consequences in the aftermath.⁵⁷ The *Historia*, composed sometime between 1130 and 1139, also records the departure of a crusader-like king, the fabled Arthur, after which, we discover, during the reign of the ineffectual Karetic (the historical Ceredig or Cerdic), an Islamic army of Africans is poised for invasion on the threshold of post-Arthurian Britain.

The *Historia*’s first mention of Muslims–Arabs and Africans–occurs in the prophecies of Merlin, where the presence of the exotic foe is insubstantial if startling, since they are merely figures that inhabit the histrionic register of mysterious, impressive-sounding prophecy. In the *Arthuriad*, however, Muslims amplify into kings of the Orient leading armies against the Britons, and, after Arthur’s exit and the mention of five kings in rapid succession, Muslims suddenly swarm and multiply, as an invading force of 160,000 Africans, led by an African king, materializes in Britain after conquering Ireland. The Muslims ravage fields, torch cities,

destroy settlements, and submit people and priests to the sword or fire in a hallucinatory reign of terror whose moments recall the Saxon or Viking invasions, but whose explicit Islamicization here suggests nothing if not a countercrusade (Wright I:133). This reverse invasion, directed at the home country, the hearthlands of Britain itself, is developed from an episode in Gildas's *De Excidio Britanniae* (Winterbottom 97–98), where, however, the invading force is, accurately, Saxon: the *Historia* thus plays with history, with deliberate calculation, by Islamicizing and Orientalizing the invaders whom it projects, frighteningly, as a swarming vision of countless Africans led by a tyrant (Wright I:134). So horrific is the nightmarish countercrusade of accelerating terror and chaos—even involving, as an authenticating gesture, the reverse-conversion of the nephew of the Frankish king away from Christianity—that the narrative breaks into a first-person voice whose histrionic tones recall not only Gildas but also Merlin's prophecies, bewailing the fate of Britons at the hands of the impious infidel (Wright I:133–34).⁵⁸ It would seem, after all, that Arthur's defeat of a monstrous cannibal settled only one half of a twofold dilemma; and that an intransigent horror of *pollution*—of an invasion of the communal body by foreign contaminants from without—still remained secreted within. We remember that the Christian cannibals had been tormented by their self-contaminating deed; and we see that the horizon of torment can be imagined as stretching beyond the boundary of the body envelope to envelope the borders of a living collectivity of bodies in Christendom.

The African invasion empties out the communal body, eviscerating Britain as the surviving remnants of the population disperse and flee, to find no safety elsewhere. Finally, the king of the Africans gives the portion of Britain called Loegria—England south of the Humber and east of the Severn—to the Saxons: Muslims, according to this romance, were responsible for the historical domination of England. Eventually Britain is peopled by mixed nations of Saxons and Britons, and the *Historia* attempts a final concretion of romance, designed to banish the phantom of pollution and restore the communal body to purity and health.

***National History as Family History: Or, the Family
Romance of Brian and Cadwallo***

The *Historia* offers “a romance” of two princes (Tatlock, *Legendary History* 390), one Saxon, by the name of Edwin, and the other British, by the name of Cadwallo, both of whom are born of royal women

at the same time, in the same household, and fostered together in intimacy through their infancy, childhood, and adolescence—a folkloric motif that drives narrative pretexts in romances and lays through the Middle Ages. In maturity, however, the two fosterlings become political enemies, as a result of intervention by Cadwallo’s nephew, Brian, who pleads with the royal Cadwallo in an emotional scene not to grant Edwin the crown and legitimacy that the Saxon seeks, and thereby consolidate several generations of hated Saxon occupation of the island. In the struggle between Cadwallo and Edwin that ensues, the Saxon enlists the aid of a soothsayer-magus from “Hispania” (“auger ex Hispania” [Wright I:138], “magumque Edwini regis” [Wright I:140]) called Pellitus, an alter ego of Merlin, from either Muslim Spain or the East or both. Pellitus’s powers are Merlin-like, in that he advises Edwin by forewarning him of approaching misfortune, but through distinctly Oriental skills and knowledges linked to astronomy/astrology and the flight of birds—mysteries that William of Malmsbury, in discussing Pope Sylvester II’s travels for education in similar arcana, records as Saracen knowledges (Tatlock, *Legendary History* 129 n. 65). After a defeat by Edwin as a result of magical foreknowledge, and a maritime catastrophe during which he loses his other ships, King Cadwallo of the Britons, Edwin’s foster brother, is stranded on the isle of Guernsey with some companions, and falls ill from grief and anger, refusing all food. An extraordinary episode then follows.

Brian, who had been responsible for the falling-out of the royal birth-companions, is among Cadwallo’s companions on the island. This nephew had first made his appearance in a bucolic idyll where Cadwallo had been lying in Brian’s lap or bosom (“in gremio” [Wright I:137]): it was Brian’s tears, trickling down upon the King’s face and beard, and Brian’s explanation for those tears—caused, he said, by grief at the Saxon occupation of their homeland, and Cadwallo’s intention to honor the foreign barbarians by sharing kingship with Edwin—that had caused the rift between Cadwallo and his foster sibling (Wright I:137). Now, on the fourth day of his fast, Cadwallo is seized by the greatest yearning (“maxima cupiditas”) for game (“ferinam carnaem”), summons Brian, and announces what he eagerly desires. Brian hunts for game throughout the island, but fails to find any, and is in the greatest torment at being unable to satisfy his lord’s desire (“appetitum suum explere”), fearing that death would follow from Cadwallo’s weakened condition. Then, in an inspired moment, Brian opens up his own thigh, slices away a piece of flesh from it, roasts the flesh on a spit, and takes it to the King, telling his

uncle that the meat is venison (“et ad regem pro uenatione portavit”). Cadwallo eats, marveling that he had never discovered such sweetness in other flesh before. When he is sated, the king becomes more joyful and lighthearted, and after three days is wholly sound again (Wright I:138–39).

Almost unbelievably, we have here a *second* romance in the *Historia* in which cannibalism appears—but a cannibalism that appears in order to be inserted within a startlingly rescripted context. This time, a King of Britain is not produced to defeat the cannibal: he *is* the cannibal. Yet his cannibalism is not an atrocity, and does not turn the man into a monster of savage visage and proportions, because his cannibalism is inadvertent and involuntary, not of his will, and goes unrecognized by him. Instead—in a wonderful reversal of responsibility—the guilty culprit is *the victim*, and a victim, moreover, who is only guilty of loving concern for the cannibal, whom he instates as a cannibal by virtue of wishing upon him an offering of his own living flesh that heals. In this family drama of sacrificial food and love, offering and healing, the iconicity of the gift could not be more transparent: for in the family of Christendom, what other living, sacrificial offering of flesh and blood, lovingly made by a willing victim, and accepted by a weakened recipient, restores, saves, and heals? Revealingly, the economy of this eucharistic sacrifice that restores the body and spirit of the king who is the human sign of the country itself, takes place entirely within the closed circuit of a family romance, involving neither outsider nor foreigner. Strategically appearing toward the end of the *Historia*, the romance of Brian’s eucharistic offering rescripts the historical paradigm of guilty Christians and foreign cadavers, dissipating the fantasy of fearful pollution by echoing the familiar, comforting affirmations of Christian ritual as the romance remakes a traumatic atrocity safely and nobly back into sacred cannibalism.⁵⁹ At this vantage point two removes from the crusader cannibalism that occasioned the eruption of Arthurian romance, we see exemplarily how romance bypasses the paradigm of true and false to shift attention onto *representation as magical performance*: the subtly aggregational re-creation of a perilous thing in the direction and in contexts of ever increasing safety. Evolving through modalities of mourning, transformation, exorcism, and celebration, the performative power of romance in the *Historia* becomes ineluctably irreducible, by this point, to its originary occasioning moment.

Brian’s romance, then, closes the trajectory of Arthur’s giant-killing, and completes the literary evolution of a historical act originally

performed on foreign and desanctified ground, by circling back home into the most familiar of sacerdotal rituals performed upon domestic terrain. Earlier, by alienating Cadwallo from Edwin, Brian had successfully expelled the foreigner who was intimately lodged within the bosom of the royal family and the bosom of the British nation—an alien raised as twinned to the king, as a nation of Saxons had been intergenerationally twinned with Britons on national soil. Indeed, Brian’s tribal and national patriotism has had the more personal effect of wresting the foster sibling Edwin from the affections of the King’s very breast: for, in the course of reciting to Cadwallo the history of their race as national history, while he was explaining the reason for his tears, Brian seems invisibly to replace Edwin as Cadwallo’s chief companion. After the scene with the tears, the rupture between Cadwallo and Edwin is sudden, decisive, and final; and Brian assumes an increasingly larger and more active role in Cadwallo’s and Britain’s affairs. In a reversal of their original mutual affection, Edwin and Cadwallo then become linked by bonds of mutual hostility and enmity instead.

This peculiar triangulation of the affective flows interconnecting three men—Edwin, Cadwallo, Brian—is highlighted by the oddity of the bucolic idyll in which the king had tenderly lain in the lap or breast of his nephew (“in gremio cuiusdam nepotis sui” [Wright I:137]). The features of the *tableau vivant* of king and nephew lying on a river bank might seem, at first glance, faintly familiar—though disturbed in present context by the scene’s strange affective status—since the tableau carries a faint trace of a trope of masculine relations in an older feudal culture, where a retainer’s head might rest in the lap of his lord, a lord who is the symbol of hearth and home in the Anglo-Saxon military ethos. We find that comforting image, for instance, in the elegaic poem, “The Wanderer,” where the speaker, shorn of a lord, wistfully retrieves a nostalgic memory of resting his head in the lap of his lord, who represents, in his culture, a loving and all-powerful paternal presence as much as a military leader. We might think to read Cadwallo and Brian’s idyll, then, as simply sketching a variant of old military relations, though mildly inexplicable in its reversal of roles between retainer and lord, and its deviation from normalcy. There are, however, other correspondently odd moments in the *Historia*. Framing the idyll, and the cannibalistic episode of the family romance, are two other telling descriptions of deviations from normalcy. Before Brian and Cadwallo appear there is the mention of a homosexual king, Malgo, who is described in glowing terms as handsomer than almost

all the other leaders of Britain, powerful in arms, more generous than his predecessors, and driving away many oppressors—all the most prized qualities of a king—but who is then summarily dismissed by the narrative as hateful to God because of the pestilence of sodomy—despite, we note, his responsible provision of the kingdom with two male heirs and an abbreviated empire that resembles a rudimentary version of Arthur's (Wright 1:133). The depiction of Malgo strikingly reworks its sources, the *Historia Brittonum*, where "Mailcunus" is briefly mentioned but not characterized (Morris 79), and Gildas's *De Excidio*, where "Maglocunus" is extensively vilified, not lingeringly admired, and where the vice of sodomy is more obliquely attached to him as one of many vices of a vilified king (Winterbottom 102–05). In addition, after Brian and Cadwallo's idyll, and the romance of the sacred cannibalism, there is a terse description, in a recitation of British history by Cadwallo to his foster father, the king of Brittany, of excessive sexuality indulged in by the Britons, of a kind unheard of among other races or nations (Wright 1:139).

The romance of sacred cannibalism is itself strange: it is staged as an impromptu drama that is triggered by the sudden, uncontrollable desire of a king, whose appetite must be satisfied if the king is to live. The mysterious and intense longing by which the king is suddenly seized, and Brian's fear that Cadwallo might die if his desire is not fulfilled, are symptoms that astonishingly echo those of the lover's malady, an affliction of heterosexual lovers last seen in the *Historia* afflicting Uther, whose desire for Igerne, described in terms that much resemble Cadwallo's yearning for another kind of flesh, results in time in Arthur's birth, and in the birth of Arthurian romance. In this suggestive context, Brian's response—his offer of flesh from his own thigh—might be read as encoding a homoerotic offer of some kind, an offer that cannot be rendered or accepted more explicitly in the circumstances of present narrative culture, as the narrative's dutiful condemnation of the otherwise much admired homosexual king, Malgo, shows. As a euphemism for a sexual zone, the thigh has a long literary history, from the birth of the sexually ambiguous Dionysius to the sinful wound of the Fisher King in medieval Arthurian romance. Brian's offer of flesh from his thigh—an offer accepted and enjoyed, indeed, relished by the innocent Cadwallo—might suggest, then, that a covert sexual presentation, as well as a covert sacramental one, is being scripted into the scene, the one figuration dovetailing into the other. One can only speculate on what else might be encoded here, in metaphors that seem simultaneously to wish to express and also

conceal: for this symbolic exchange between men, it should be remembered, takes place within the ambit of royal family relations, and perhaps delicately, sympathetically comments—in oblique, allegorical, and safe fashion—on the homoerotic culture that putatively inhabited the courts of William II, Robert Cuthose, and select Anglo-Norman nobility of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries.⁶⁰

If a homoerotic exchange is fugitively encoded into this romance, our understanding of the *Historia's* subtle presentation of the operations of romance would complexify. The romance of Brian and Cadwallo, featuring good cannibalism, is, after all, propped upon the romance of Arthur's giant-killing, featuring bad cannibalism: the Arthurian romance, which itself offered a vocabulary for articulating the unutterable, has thus become the implicit vocabulary through which the romance of Brian and Cadwallo might articulate—or at least sketch out the suggestive horizons of—its own unutterable concerns.⁶¹ In Brian's and Cadwallo's romance, desire can safely surface within an apparitional exchange between men to express or affirm a dynamic that might otherwise be impossible to legitimate in the dominant culture of the *Historia's* period. In 1102, at the Council of London at Westminster, excommunication had been pronounced by no less an authority than Anselm, on those who committed sodomy; and by 1120, the Council of Nablus conjoined the forces of civil and religious authority in determining that death by burning was the appropriate legal penalty for those committing sodomy, inscribing into law for the first time in the medieval period the death penalty for that offense.⁶² The apparitional exchange here, occurring so early in the development of medieval romance, might suggest to us that the circuit of desire animating courtly romance—a circuit of desire that has always been assumed, in the literary history of romance, to be heterosexual—might be homoerotic, as well as homosocial in character, although expert at assuming heterosexual guise: or at least, that multiply overlapping and overdetermined modalities of desire traverse medieval courtly romance. Romance, of course, is a medium traversed by desire, which it thematizes, contemplates, and apotheosizes, even as it is powered by desire. Not least of these animating modalities, I have attempted to suggest in this paper, is the desire of culture to give voice to, and speak, its traumas in a safe medium.

But the story of Brian and Cadwallo is unfinished, and does not end with the joyful and discreetly honorific exchange of flesh. While Cadwallo and Edwin are historical personages derived from a brief

account in book 2, chapter 20 of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (where, however, true to Bede's Northumbrian sympathies, Cadwallo is rendered as a barbarously and bestially savage rebel and usurper, and it is Edwin who is the lauded king), neither the salvific Brian nor the magician Pellitus is historical: absent from the source text, they may be read as the *Historia's* own deliberate invention. Indeed, "Brian" is a name that Geoffrey of Monmouth—whose principal dedicatee for the *Historia*, in an overwhelming majority of manuscripts, is Robert of Gloucester, Henry I's illegitimate son and one of two of the staunchest supporters of Henry's daughter, the empress Matilda—might well wish to commemorate; and this he might do so as to honor Brian Fitz Count, Matilda's other indispensable supporter who offered unwavering and staunchly loyal support (see, e.g., *Gesta Stephani* 90, 134, and William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella* 5, 35, 51). In the period of the *Historia's* probable composition, "Brian" is not as common a name among the political figures of England as many others (e.g. the ubiquitous "Robert" or "William"), and therefore conspicuous; Brian Fitz Count, moreover, was a Breton who served the Norman royal family—an ancestry and a service not unlike Geoffrey's—and who had been raised in the court of the Norman king, Henry I (Chibnall 53), just as Cadwallo and Edwin had been raised in the court of the Breton king, Salomon (Wright I:136).⁶³

Brian, the salvific agent who heals the king's body and eradicates the foreigner in the body politic, decisively exorcises the last foreign contaminant in the collective body: Pellitus, the skulking magus from Muslim Spain or Syria, whose alien presence yet festers in the text, affecting the textual future, like Merlin or the shadow of the author, by magical foreknowledge of events that an augurer can avert or bring to pass.⁶⁴ Dressed as a humble pauper—to recall the Tafurs, perhaps—Brian makes an iron rod ("baculum ferrum" [Wright 140]) sharpened to a point, and, with this pilgrim's staff ("burdonem" [Wright 141]) stabs Pellitus with an upward thrust into the chest, as the magus walks among the poor, an assassination that the magician presumably was unable to foresee.⁶⁵ This vampire-like killing, involving an instrument faintly reminiscent of that famous, if controversial, Antiochene relic of the Crusade, the Holy Lance, is powerfully performed with the symbol of the pilgrim's staff that recalls the best intentions of the First Crusade. The killing of this final specter of foreignness magically lays to rest, at last, all ghosts from the East. No more Arabs or Africans haunt the *Historia* thereafter, and national history is allowed to take its course without hallucinatory shadows from the Oriental past.

*Postscript: The Once and Future Text, and Variations on
a Theme of Cannibalism*

The narrative, which had begun with the journey of Brutus, the great-grandson of Aeneas and eponymous founder of Britain, from Troy, soon winds to a close with the death of Cadwallader, Cadwallo's son, after which the journey of the *Historia* itself famously begins—a journey through literary history and cultural and national politics that would take several centuries to complete. Kings of England would be drawn to the ideological usefulness of the Brut, as the genre of that vast, accumulating corpus of texts retelling the *Historia*'s invented national narrative of Brutus, Arthur, and other kings, would come to be called. An example of the Brut's ideological usefulness to English monarchy is Edward I's claim to England's sovereignty over Scotland, in a letter to Pope Boniface VIII in 1301—a claim Edward makes based on the “proof” of Albion's division among the fictive Brutus's three sons, a proof that is buttressed by the equally fictive Arthur's restoral of Albany or Scotland to Augustelus, who was then supposed to hold Scotland from Arthur, as an underking (Keeler 88, 130). Literary scholarship has noted the ideological value of Arthur, who “gave the English a national hero, one of the Nine Worthies, and the type of the ideal Christian monarch” (Matheson 265), so that “Plantagenet, Lancastrian, and Tudor kings” were able to deploy Arthurian legend as “a convenient historical fiction to support the claim for a sovereign England,” so that “[s]everal, including Edward I, Edward III, and Henry VII, clearly recognized and exploited its potential as political propaganda for their imperial ambitions” (Keiser 37). Finally, as I argue elsewhere, the foundational myth and regnal genealogy fashioned by the *Historia* produce an indispensable moment in culture that imagines an insular collective totality that is driven by continuity-through-disruption as its specific engine of historical development, thus conditioning a productive matrix for the future project of imagining medieval England as a nation-to-be.⁶⁶

The gigantic popularity of the *Historia*, whose narrative was sometimes retold in scarcely altered form, sometimes in expanded, abbreviated, revised, or vernacular formats, finally issued in a Middle English prose *Brut* that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries constituted “the most popular secular work of the Middle Ages in England, second in the number of surviving manuscripts only to the two versions of the Wycliffite translation of the Bible” (Matheson 265). The proliferation of the *Historia*'s narrative has an apt, if ironical, consequence: “As new

chronicles were written, they did not supersede the more popular of the older works, which continued to be copied and read. . . . By the end of the fifteenth century, it was forgotten that all such works had a single ultimate source in Geoffrey's *Historia*, and, as a result, the individual chronicles were seen as independent witnesses to the truth of Geoffrey's account" (Matheson 263).

In the twelfth century, soon after the *Historia*'s creation, the "truth of Geoffrey's account" was translated, expanded, and selectively revised in 1155 by the Norman author, Robert Wace, whose courtly *Roman de Brut* in the French vernacular, scholars agree, pushed the *Historia*'s materials further along the direction of romance, one track of which culminated a decade and a half later in the well-known Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes.⁶⁷ Revealingly, Wace's usage of the *Historia*'s romances expresses the Norman's own tactful sense of the limits of reconfiguring historical subjects in romance form. Wace's patrons, like the *Historia*'s chief dedicatees, were Anglo-Norman royalty, but Wace, who—unlike Geoffrey—was himself Norman, and wrote in a vernacular familiar to Norman and Parisian courts alike, was more closely linked to the powerful than was Geoffrey by direct ties of patronage: we know that in 1160, after the completion of his *Brut*, Wace was commissioned by Henry II to write a history of the dukes of Normandy, and in 1169 awarded a canonry at Bayeux as a token of royal favor. Significantly, in his treatment of the romance of Arthur's giant-killing, Wace prefers to omit any mention of the fact that the giant of St. Michael's Mount is a cannibal: between verse 11306 and verse 11307 of the *Roman de Brut*, where the description of the giant's cannibalism should be, is only pendant silence (Wace II:590). Even unconscious and involuntary cannibalism makes Wace uncomfortable; though not famed for its concision, his *Brut* elects not to have Cadwallo dwell on the sweetness of his nephew's flesh, nor does the text linger on the happy results of King Cadwallo's tabooed act (Wace II:744).

If a cultural memory of cannibalism at which prominent Normans were present—or even the mere literary presentation of cannibalism—made the Norman Wace uneasy, the anonymous author of the First Variant Version of the *Historia*—whose text (largely an abbreviated recension of Geoffrey's) is witnessed by eight of the 217 known surviving manuscripts, and believed to be written almost immediately after the appearance of the vulgate *Historia*—is even more reluctant to repeat depictions of cannibalism than Wace.⁶⁸ The First Variant not only omits any mention of the

giant's cannibalistic and Polyphemos-like qualities in the Arthurian adventure of St. Michael's Mount (Wright II:158), but excises even the episode of Cadwallo's inadvertent cannibalism (Wright II:181–82). So unaccommodating on taboo subjects is this anonymous reviser, that the First Variant removes the suspiciously intimate details of the scene between Cadwallo and Brian on the bank of the river Douglas—the one in the other's lap/breast, the tears intimately touching the king's beard/face, etc.—and the acceptance of flesh from Brian's thigh: a decision, we might speculate, that might touch on the controversial nature of the twin subjects of cannibalistic atrocity and aristocratic homoeroticism in the culture of Geoffrey's era.

If the twelfth-century Norman Wace, and his courtly vehicle written with an eye to Norman royalty, are nervous at the mention of cannibalism (we are told that Wace presented a copy of the *Roman de Brut* to Queen Eleanor [Lazamon, *Brut* lines 21–25]), Lazamon's *Brut*—written in the thirteenth century or after, in the English language rather than French, and clearly not intended as a courtly vehicle—does not share the cultural predicament of its parent source, the *Roman de Brut*. Finally, more than a century after Ma'arra, in a narrative intended for a class of folk who used the English tongue, rather than the French of courtly culture, and whose humble author was without known ties to powerful Norman patrons, the specter of cannibalism has no terrors for the writer—and Lazamon's *Brut* has no difficulty restoring cannibalistic details to both the giant of St. Michael's Mount (*Brut* line 12816) and the fortunate Cadwallo (*Brut* lines 15248–15276).

It remained, however, for an Arthurian text positioned toward the close of the Middle Ages to produce the most wittily sensational treatment of cannibalistic fetishism after Geoffrey's *Historia*. In the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, not only is the giant of St. Michael's Mount a cannibalistic monster, but his cannibalism is gloriously lurid, detailed, and gory, surpassing even Guibert of Nogent's *Taufurs*. The *Morte* delights in its romance recreation of crusading history: a Templar announces the giant's arrival to an Arthur dressed in a "jupon" from "Jerodyn" (Jordan); Arthur announces his quest as a pilgrimage in a prolonged joke playing on pilgrimage and rescue; and at last, the two giants—of St. Michael's Mount, and with the cloak of beards—are unmasked as a single monstrosity, whom Arthur defeats and handily emasculates in revenge for eating Christians by the hundreds. In this wonderful text, written after the conquest of Constantinople ("Rome," in the *Morte*) by the Fourth Crusade, and the

defeat of the massed European forces at Nicopolis in the Ninth—and fantasmatically recounting, I argue, crusading history after its effective closure—we might say that Geoffrey's *Historia* finds its ultimate typological fulfillment.

But that argument, as the tellers of tales might have it, is another story.⁶⁹

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Notes

1 I use Neil Wright's edition of the Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 568 of the vulgate *Historia* (henceforth Wright I), but also refer to his edition of the First Variant (henceforth Wright II) surviving in eight of the 217 known mss of the *Historia*, and R. E. Jones's translation of a fifteenth-century Welsh manuscript, Oxford, Jesus College, MS 61, in Griscom's edition of the *Historia* (henceforth Griscom), since Griscom and Jones believe their Welsh *Brut* to represent mss that might include the Welsh text that Geoffrey claimed—in a narrative pretext that scholars today treat as a fiction—to have used as his source. Despite textual differences among the 217 known manuscripts, "a remarkable homogeneity of text" obtains among the 90% that comprise the vulgate (Dumville, "Early Text" 2),

a homogeneity on which—given the lack of a reliable text history and the unpublished, unedited, and widely scattered manuscripts—any critical discussion of the *Historia*, including my own, must depend. A Second Variant is represented by fifteen mss (Emanuel 104). Still unpublished, the Second Variant seems an abbreviated recension of the vulgate. For a catalogue of the *Historia*'s mss, see Crick (*Summary Catalogue* and "Newly Located"; Wright (l:xlvii–li) and Dumville ("Early Text") rehearse the difficulty of establishing a text history. Tatlock offers 1130–33 as the *terminus a quo* for the *Historia* (435–36), Wright suggests it was begun "at some date before 1135" (l, xvi), and most other scholars offer dates between 1130 and 1135. The *terminus ad quem* is accepted as before January 1139,

when Henry of Huntingdon was shown a copy of the *Historia* at Bec, as recounted in his letter to Warin the Briton, in Robert of Torigni's *Chronicle* and some texts of Henry's *Historia Anglorum*. Dumville believes the *terminus ad quem* of the Bern ms to be before October 1147 (21–22), and Wright “the last quarter of the twelfth century” (11).

- 2 I begin here with a rudimentary description of romance as fantastical narrative, a description I complicate as my argument develops. Though it will be obvious that there are signal differences between my evolving definition of romance and established definitions, my debt to the tradition of scholarship will be equally apparent. For definitive moments in the discussion of romance, see Baugh, Bloch, Bloomfield, Comfort, Crane, Doby, Everett, Finkayson, Fleischman, Frye, Gamm, Gravdal, Hanning, Hibbard, Hume, Jackson, Jameson, Ker, Knight, Köhler, C. S. Lewis, Mehl, Nerlich, Parker, Patterson, Pearsall, Shoaf, Strohm, Vance, Vinaver.
- 3 The obligations of twelfth-century historiography are summed up by William of Malmesbury, the most magisterial medieval historian after Bede, when he relates in *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* (*On the Deeds of the Kings of the English*, c.1125) that he has “followed the genuine laws of history” (“*veram legem secutus historiae*” [II:518]), in offering nothing but what he has adduced from “truthful relators or writers” (“*fidelibus relatoribus vel scriptoribus*” [II:518]). On conventions governing historical writing in medieval England, see, especially, Gransden, Hanning, and pertinent material in Fletcher, Leckie, and Partner. Gransden

names a number of the *Historia*'s admirers (I:200, I:208–12). The *Historia*'s popularity and wide circulation soon after its appearance is attested by the large number of surviving mss from the twelfth century alone (58 or 59 at latest count, in 1995); by manuscript provenance (on the “extensiveness of the *Historia*'s popularity on the Continent,” see Crick, “Dissemination and Reception” 216–17); and by the rapid use of the *Historia* by Henry of Huntingdon, Alfred of Beverly, Robert Wace, and Geffrei Gaimar. Outrage at Geoffrey's spectacular fictions—particularly the Arthurian inventions—is famously expressed by William of Newburgh, who almost devotes the entire, oft-quoted prologue of his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (*History of English Affairs*) to a fiery refutation of Geoffrey's untruths. An anecdote recounted by Giraldus Cambrensis is also often quoted: “a certain Meilerius, of the region of Urbs Legionum, being possessed by devils, was by them endowed with the capacity of discovering any falsehood with which he was brought into contact. When the Gospel of John was laid on his lap, the devils vanished; but when Geoffrey's *History* was substituted, they returned in greater numbers than ever” (Fletcher 180). In the fourteenth century, Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* “cast doubt on the authenticity of Geoffrey's account” (Patterson 206). William Camden, in the sixteenth century, quotes John of Whethamstede's attack on Geoffrey's credibility, in a mid-fifteenth-century work (Keeler 81–84). Leckie observes that “ambivalence” toward the *Historia* has been “a recurring feature of the work's reception” (20), although “Geoffrey's construct provided the standard framework for historiographic

- depictions of early British history" (20) from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, after which the *Historia's* status as a legendary or romance history of Britain resurfaced. Ward, who suggests that twelfth-century England witnessed a clerical and court culture where "men [had] to wheedle, flatter, couse, win favour to secure posts in a situation in which eligible claimants [were] beginning to exceed the number of places available" (68), argues for a narrational culture that strategically inserts a break between "truth" and language, in favour of "oblique" narrational forms such as "the 'Romance-parody-satire' history of Geoffrey of Monmouth" (68)
- 4 Though not described as a romance, the *Historia* has been given due credit for helping to usher in Arthurian romance (see, e.g., Fletcher 56, Bruce I:20, Gerould 35, Tatlock [*Legendary History* 179]). Genuinely historical accounts of the chief occasions of insular history, such as Roman invasion and occupation, the Augustinian mission, and the Saxon arrival, mingle with the *Historia's* inventions of fantasy for Britain's past (and Geoffrey's text takes liberties with even the historical occasions). The *Historia's* necessary dependence on early documents of British history—its use of Gildas and Bede, and the *Historia Brittonum* has most recently been traced, with acuity, by Wright ("Gildas," "Gildas Revisited," "Bede")—makes it vulnerable, to error in the historical sources themselves (see, e.g., Dumville, "Historical Value," 16–20, on factual errors and legendary material in the *Historia Brittonum*), a vulnerability Geoffrey's text shares with more conventional twelfth-century histories. Thorpe's introduction
- also suggests confirmation of genuine historicity in the *Historia* by archeological discoveries (*History* 19).
- 5 Sebastian Evans's translation, in 1896, actually translates the name, "Mons Aravius," into the Welsh "Eryri" (181) within the text of the *Historia* itself. Arguing from oral traditions and archaeological survivals in Wales, saints' lives, the Welsh chronicle tradition of *Bruts*, the *Mabinogion*, and other materials, Celticists and others have offered Welsh sources for the *Historia*, although in the case of the Welsh chronicles, as Wright ("Bede") puts it, "the search for a Welsh source never recovered from the discovery that the Welsh *Bruts* were translations of the *Historia* rather than vice versa" (27 n. 2) and "Geoffrey's claim that the *Historia* was a Latin translation of a very ancient book written in Breton or Welsh is . . . not now generally accepted" (27). The "Continental" school of the Arthurian legend, working from economic history, materialist, cultural studies, or psychoanalytic perspectives, reception theory, or *ideologie kritik*, has emphasized the continental development of Arthurian material. Disagreements in the two strains of scholarship—which cannot be efficiently rehearsed here—have marked twentieth-century medievalist scholarship. Thomas Jones's article is an example of Celticist scholarship that continues to be cited. For examples of arguments on Welsh hagiographic literature and the *Historia*, see Tatlock ("Dates") and Rider; Loomis's compendium features useful articles on Welsh sources of the Arthurian legend, and Gillingham presents important new historical evidence for the Celticist argument ("Context").

- 6 To an extent, unacknowledged borrowing of the work of others is a reflex of twelfth-century historical writing, but in this instance scholarship has found highly self-conscious strategies in Geoffrey's extensive, hidden manipulations (see e.g., Wright, "Bede," "Gildas," "Gildas Revisited"). After Geoffrey, writers of romance frequently deploy the fiction of an original book from which they "translate" their own work, for whose contents, then, they may assume diminished responsibility, even as their texts borrow from the aura and authority of the projected "original" (see Tatlock 424 n.11 and Brooke 79 for examples of fictional ur-texts).
- 7 The Hebraic chronicles of Solomon bar Simson, Eliezer bar Nathan, and the Mainz Anonymous, movingly document the genocidal atrocities of the Popular Crusade against Jewish communities in the Rhineland (see Edelberg and relevant extracts from Latin chronicles in Krey, *First Crusade*, and Peters). The slaughter of the Jewish community in Jerusalem on that city's capture is well-documented (see, e.g., Prawer's *Crusaders' Kingdom and History of the Jews*). For an overview of the crusades' impact upon medieval Jewry, see the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* ("Crusades" V:1136–45). Anna Comnena (*Alexiad* 511) and Albert of Aix (*Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, series *Historiens Occidentaux* [henceforth abbreviated to *RHC*, Occ.] IV:284) record cannibalistic atrocities and torture by the Popular Crusade against what would have been a population of Eastern Christians and others in the environs of Nicaea. On the pilgrimage nature of the Crusade, see Blake 17).
- 8 The terms "crusaders" and "crusade" evolved gradually, and were not in active circulation until the late twelfth century; I use them for convenience of discussion. Eyewitness chronicles and contemporary documents refer simply to "pilgrims," "Christians," "Franks," etc. Anna Comnena calls the crusaders "Latins," "Normans," "Kelts," etc., and a variety of pejorative sobriquets. A large body of chronicle literature on the First Crusade exists, some of which is controversial as historical evidence. I concentrate only on records that have been agreed upon by scholarship as genuine eyewitness documents written during, or a scant few years after, the First Crusade. For that reason, I omit Peter Tudebode's chronicle, which may be derivative (but for claims on Tudebode's behalf, see Hill and Hill's edition). Because their status as epic literature and dating (late twelfth century) render even the oldest of the crusade cycles of the *chansons de geste* problematic as historical sources, I have also chosen not to treat them. I refer selectively to non-eyewitness accounts, such as Anna Comnena's biography, Arab chronicles, and Guibert de Nogent's later history, but my argument on crusader cannibalism at Ma'arra does not depend on the evidential reliability of these accounts.
- 9 "ubi obsidione per XX dies acta, famen nimiam gens nostra pertulit. dicere perhorreo, quod plerique nostrum famis rabie nimis vexati abscedebant de natibus Saracenorum iam tibi mortuorum frusta, quae coquebant et mandebant et parum ad ignem assata ore truci devorabant. itaque plus obsessores quam obsessiangebantur" (Hagenmeyer, *Historia Hierosolymitana* 266–67).

- 10 “Fuerunt ibi ex nostris qui illic non inuenerunt sicuti opus eis erat, tantum ex longa mora, quantum ex districtione famis, quia foris nequiverant aliquid inuenire ad capiendum, sed scindebant corpora mortuorum, eo quod in uentribus eorum inueniebant bisanteos reconditos; alii uero caedebant carnes eorum per frusta, et coquebant ad manducandum” (*Gesta* 80). The translation is the editor’s. Unattributed translations are my own.
- 11 “Interea tanta fames in exercitu fuit, ut multa corpora Sarracenorum iam fetentium, que in paludibus civitatis eiusdem .ii. et amplius ebdomadas iacuerant, populus avidissime comederet. Terreabant ista multos tam nostre gentis homines quam extraneos. Revertebantur ob ea nostri quam plures Sarraceni uero et Turci e contra dicebant: Et quis poterit sustinere hanc gentem que tam obstinata atque crudelis est, ut per annum non poterit revocari ab obsidione Antiochie, fame, vel gladio, vel aliquibus periculis, et nunc carnibus humanis vescitur? Hec et alia crudelissima sibi in nobis dicebant esse pagani. Etenim dederat deus timorem nostrum cunctis gentibus sed nos nesciebamus” (Hill and Hill, *Liber* 104). I have slightly modified Krey’s translation (*First Crusade* 214).
- 12 Al-Qalanisi’s account (see Gibb 46), written before his death in 1160, is the most contemporary; the author was resident in Damascus during the First Crusade. Ibn Al-Athir’s is in Vol. I (194) and Kemal al-Din’s in Vol. III (585) of the *Recueil des historiens des Croisades: historiens orientaux*. The *RHC* has been criticized for its selection of extracts, textual errors, and translations of Arabic into French, but remains invaluable as a source. I quote from the *RHC* as a last resort, when no other more recent editions/translations are available. Ibn Al-Athir on cannibalism at Antioch: “Treize jours s’étaient écoulés depuis que les Francs étaient entrés dans Antioche. Ils n’avaient plus de quoi manger; les riches étaient réduits à nourrir de bêtes de somme, et les pauvres de corps morts et de feuilles d’arbres.” Kemal Al-Din’s thirteenth-century account is in a history of Aleppo: “Les Francs, enfermés dans Antioche, en étaient réduits à manger la chair des cadavres et des animaux morts.” Gibb’s translation of Al-Qalanisi refers to “carrion,” rather than cadavres, and the Arabic texts point to cannibalism at Antioch, but are silent on Ma’arra. The Arab documents are, of course, late texts.
- 13 Anna also recounts cannibalism by the Popular Crusade in 1096 around the outskirts of Nicaea, in Asia Minor (see note 7 above), a year before the armies of the First Crusade, with their eyewitness chroniclers, had arrived in the East: “they cut in pieces some of the babies, impaled others on wooden spits and roasted them over a fire; old people were subjected to every kind of torture” (*Alexiad* 311). The episode is also described by Albert of Aix, whose polyglot chronicle from heterogeneous unidentified sources appeared more than a generation after the close of the First Crusade. The historicity and accuracy of Albert’s chronicle has been controversial; some modern historians continue to cite the chronicle as evidence, while others eschew it altogether.
- 14 Paschal is the successor of the pope who had been the initiator and spiritual leader of the First

- Crusade, a crusade ostentatiously planned by Urban II as a holy pilgrimage as much as a holy war. This confession to Urban's successor of cannibalism performed by his Christian pilgrims must have been an uneasy task for the signatories here, who had been Urban's special delegates. Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine, was by this time "Defender of the Holy Sepulchre," and effectually king of Jerusalem, despite his refusal to be crowned. Raymond de Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse, had spent much time with Urban in preparation for the Crusade, and was Urban's preferred secular leader. Archbishop Daimbert, who became Patriarch of Jerusalem, was the highest ranking Latin ecclesiastic in the East, following the death of Adhémar of le Puy, the Papal Legate, and William, Archbishop of Orange, *en route* to Jerusalem.
- 15 See Yates and Carruthers, on medieval training in memory, and Woods on the role of lurid imagery in school texts. Ironically, Fulcher was absent from Antioch and Ma'arra, having accompanied Baldwin of Bolougne, whose chaplain he was, to Edessa, a fact not always remembered when considering the "specular authority" of eyewitness evidence (Munro, "Crusader" 327; Krey, *First Crusade* 9).
- 16 Runciman believes Raymond's chronicle to have been completed even earlier, in 1099, and begun during the siege of Antioch (I:328); the two oldest manuscripts derive from the mid-twelfth century (Hill and Hill, *Historia* 7). In 1101 Ekkehard of Aura found a chronicle in Jerusalem that scholars agree is the *Gesta*; like many, he appears to have used the *Gesta* as his source (Krey, *First Crusade* 7; Runciman I:329; Peters 5, *Gesta* 1x).
- 17 Fulcher and Raymond above are typical in their use of "gens"—race, people, or nation—to describe the multiracial body of Christians. Even more pointed is the example dramatized in the vision of Stephen of Valence, where Christ questions Stephen on the identity of the occupation army in Antioch: "homo, quenam est hec gens que civitatem ingressa est?" ("man, what race is this that has entered the city?"). Stephen's reply describes the multiethnic Latin forces as a single entity: "Christiani" (Hill and Hill, *Liber* 72–73). On the importance of the Christian name in establishing a "transnational" and "transethnic" community, see Bartlett 250–54. The Eucharist, as Bynum and others remind us, occupied a central symbolic place in sustaining that communal identity: "From the very beginning, the eucharistic elements stood . . . for human beings bound into community by commensality" (48); "Eating Christ's body was an inclusive act, one that created community" (49).
- 18 Berengar of Tours's rejection, in the mid-eleventh century, of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, recantation (in 1059), and oath (in 1079), and the Berengarian controversy's influence in shaping eleventh- and twelfth-century Eucharistic theology are landmarks of medieval theology. My principal interest is in the resolution of the Berengarian "heresy," and the doctrinal establishment, in the eleventh century, of real presence, salvific promise (and, in the twelfth century, transubstantiation), and the communicant's share in divinity. Bynum emphasizes gendered and ecstatic aspects of sacred cannibalism; Macy, Rubin, and Paul Jones have excellent accounts of Eucharistic theology. For a medieval

- historian's account of the Berengarian heresy, and contemporary belief in real presence, see William of Malmsbury's *De Gestis Regum*, c. 1125 (II:338–41; II:341–42).
- 19 Eating an infernal race confers special horrors since eating—as Maggie Kilgour puts it—“creates a total identity between eater and eaten” and “the law ‘you are what you eat’” ensures that the identity of the cannibal becomes confounded with that of the victim (7). Interestingly, cannibalism at Antioch—unlike Ma'arra—may have been committed on Latin or Oriental Christian cadavers, since the victims are not expressly identified as Muslim. One element in the horror of eating human flesh—infernal self-pollution, and loss of Christian identity—may not feature in the Antiochene cannibalism. The translation from Robert the Monk is by Munro (*Urban and the Crusaders* 6), Baldric of Dol by Krey (*First Crusade* 33), and Fulcher by McGinty (in Peters 78–79).
- 20 Askenasy records cannibalism in England in 1005 and Europe in 1016 (61); on cannibalism in England in 1069, see Tannahill (47). See Sumberg, 245–46 and note 91, on cannibalism in France in 1031.
- 21 In 1202, a letter from Innocent III addressed to ecclesiastics at large described the letter-bearer as a confessed, repentant cannibal who had killed and eaten his daughter during a famine, at the order of his Saracen captors. The penance issued by Innocent for this “great sin” is lengthy and detailed, enjoining upon the penitent a three-year pilgrimage to the shrines of saints; chastisement “with rod or whip” before entering any church; exactions of fasting and prayer; prohibition from marriage, recreational entertainments, the consumption of meat, and residence in any place for more than two nights; and admission of the offense to the “archbishops, bishops, abbots, and priors to whom this letter shall come.” After three years, the penitent was to return to the Apostolic See “to seek mercy, and take pains to observe what shall *then* be enjoined upon him” (*Patrologiae Latinae* ccciv, 1063, emphasis mine). One might argue that if this later medieval Pope was able to negotiate the horror of cannibalism with a punitive regime, eating your own race might not be so unthinkable after all. Of course, one might also argue conversely that the proliferation of punishments here testifies to panicked confusion as to how to establish an adequate regimen of punishment and recovery. The long list of exactions the Pope imagined inflicting on the penitent seems to have appeared inadequate to him even as he devised it, explaining his determination to leave open the option of future additional exactions after the initial three years.
- 22 “Theophilus sees cannibalism as the most heinous charge leveled against Christians, and the most heinous act performed by pagans” (*Resurrection* 31). “Defending Christians against charges of cannibalism, Athenagoras argues, as did Theophilus, that pagans are the real cannibals” *Resurrection* 33).
- 23 “Heretics,” in particular, “homed in on the horror of [Eucharistic cannibalism], just as Christians had once accused pagans of cannibalistic excesses” (Rubin 360). Although the ecstatic aspects of Eucharistic cannibalism have been stressed (e.g., by Bynum, in her highly influential *Holy Feast*),

- unease at cannibalizing the body of Christ—one of the issues that had troubled Berengar, and required much ingenuity to resolve—continued to wind through the sporadic dissidence which accompanied the doctrinal consolidation of real presence and transubstantiation, dissidence represented at one extreme by the rejection of real presence by heretical communities such as the Cathars. Unease can be detected even among the orthodox. For Rupert, Abbot of the Benedictines at Deutz, the “externally sensed species of the bread and wine are . . . a covering, a veil taken up by Christ because of our natural repugnance to eating flesh and drinking blood” (Macy 67). In the eleventh century, Cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida, and Gutmund, Bishop of Aversa, had rejected the notion that any part of the species might undergo “the normal digestive processes” (Macy 54, 49), a sign, surely, of anxiety over the implications of cannibalism. It is therefore necessary to allow for the possibility that, once real presence had been established, discomfort at the cannibalism inherent in Eucharistic ingestion might shadow all representations of cannibal figures in twelfth-century texts, including the cannibalistic giant of Saint Michael’s Mount. That being said, we must remember that by the twelfth century, spiritual and mystical reception of the body of Christ was also being accorded attention; and in the layering over of the multiple meanings of Eucharistic ingestion, the peculiar specificities of sacred cannibalism may well have been ameliorated or eclipsed.
- 24 Pallister notes that the mouth of hell, and the devil, in medieval illustration, are apt to be figured as cannibalistic, gigantic monstrosities: “Several especially notable examples can be found in the *Hours of Catherine of Clèves* (Flemish, fifteenth century). Here we find a monstrous head with seven human beings in its gigantic, toothy mouth; it has bulging, bloodshot eyes and sheds rays, like Lucifer. . . . Satan as a giant satyr-ogre is torturing and devouring lost souls in Pol of Limbourg’s ‘Enfer,’ a miniature found in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*” (508).
- 25 Although scholars sometimes date confirmed reports of the blood-libel from the thirteenth century, twelfth-century incidents are listed in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: in England (VI:747), at Norwich (1144), Gloucester (1168), Bury St. Edmunds (1181), Bristol (before 1183), and Winchester (1192), and perhaps as early as 1130 in London (XI:470); in France, at Blois (1171), followed by Loches, Pontoise, Joinville, Epernay, and Bray (VII:13–14).
- 26 “The story of Abominable’s conversion and his new life as a guide and soldier of the Apostles strongly influenced the *acta* of Saints Mercurius and Christopher” (Friedman 71). St. Mercurius was one of three phantom leaders of heavenly troops seen by the crusaders outside Antioch, swelling the thin ranks of the crusading army against Karbuqa and aiding in the conquest of Antioch (*Gesta* 69). In reporting on heavenly helpers at Antioch, it is poignant that the crusade chronicles chose to specify a saint—Mercurius—whose legend is so strongly associated with the guilt of cannibalism, and the forgiveness and salvation that follow the repudiation of cannibalism.

- 27 See, e.g., 3, 17, 28, 33, 34, 43, 61–62, 85, 89, 90. Raymond's chronicle, the least repressed on the subject of crusader cannibalism, is also the least obsessed subtextually with food. The *Gesta's* words—"thirsting and craving for the blood of Turks"—also astonishingly echo the medieval blood-libel against the Jews, who were often accused of requiring Christian blood for ritual practices. The blood-libel can thus be read as a projective accusation by Christians, the historical basis of which lay in *Christian* rather than Jewish atrocity against cultural others: significantly, the genealogy of medieval blood-libel may begin as early as the twelfth century (see n. 25 above). Christian anxiety over the palpable vampirism inherent in ingesting the blood of Christ in Eucharistic reception may also underpin the inception of the medieval blood-libel (see Dundes, and note 25 above).
- 28 Raymond, who begins his history by revealing that he has undertaken the task of documentation in response to negative criticism of the crusade (Hill and Hill, *Liber* 35) expresses the hope, toward the chronicle's end, that God would punish pagans on His own initiative even if the Christians' cause was weak ("si etiam causa nostra invalida fuisset" [Hill and Hill, *Liber* 157])—a wishfulness we might read, perhaps, as Raymond's acute consciousness of the worst of crusader sins, and an oblique gloss on the anxious silence that troubles what cannot be discussed at length in the chronicles.
- 29 Porges also emphasizes the dependence of the clergy on the military leaders of the Crusade (Raymond and Fulcher were, of course, clerics): "both the higher and lower clergy tended to group themselves around the leaders whom they had followed on crusade. They often espoused their masters' quarrels, and looked to them in turn for preferment" (8). Observing that "the power of the clergy was small" (9)—a limitation he links to the unresolved investiture struggles in Europe—Porges points to the preeminent power of the military leaders in deciding religious appointees in the East: "Raymond of Toulouse presided over the election of Peter of Narbonne as bishop of Albara. . . . the leaders chose Robert, a priest of Rouen, as bishop of Ramlah. . . . These elections reflected the investiture strife raging in Europe, and would not have met the approval of a Cluniac reformer" (20). Fulcher of Chartres, who negotiates a delicate balance between conscience and diplomacy in his chronicle, illustrates, by example, the predicament of the chroniclers in their relationship to powerful patrons. Though reporting on the cannibalism at Ma'arra (where his patron was absent), Fulcher is tactfully silent on the unsavory conduct of his patron, Baldwin, in Edessa. After accompanying Baldwin to Jerusalem, as Baldwin's chaplain, on the Count's accession to the kingship, Fulcher may have later been promoted to Prior of the Mount of Olives (Munro, "Crusader" 327); he wrote "an eloquent tribute" to Baldwin on the King's death (Fink 25).
- 30 In a symposium in 1984, "The Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem—The First European Colonial Society?", Prawer argues powerfully for the usefulness of analyzing the crusader states as overseas colonies of Latin

- Europe, and the historical existence of a medieval version of the European colonial experience, based on territorial and political domination, economic exploitation, ideological reproduction, and the evidence of a “colonial mentality” and colonial relations in the records of the occupied territories of the medieval Levant. A critical strain of scholarship on the crusades has since had little difficulty in continuing Praver’s analysis. Dissenting voices in the symposium are represented by Jonathan Riley-Smith and John H. Pryor.
- 31 In the symposium, Praver remarks of the crusader colonies: “here was made the first step of teaching Europe how to colonize” (“Crusading” 566). Duncalf observes that “[t]he pope seems to have intended to have the crusaders make conquests in the Holy Land. . . . Raymond took an oath to spend the rest of his life in the East, and Godfrey disposed of his western holdings. Bohemond, we may be sure, expected to find a better principality than he could hope to acquire in Italy. . . . [I]t is reasonable to believe that Urban did intend the westerners to keep the Holy Land” (55). Calling the crusades “partly pilgrimage and partly migrations,” Russell suggests that “At their peak, the crusading states controlled about three fifths of the land and population of Syria” (56). In a study of medieval sugar production and trade, Phillips emphasizes the economic consequences of the colonial experiment of Outremer, in the long term, despite the eventual loss of all the colonies: “The Crusades may have failed in . . . physical control of colonial lands in the Mediterranean—yet in economic terms they were successful, as the West wrested
- economic ascendancy from the East” (403). The translation from Robert the Monk is by Munro (“Speech” 6–7), from Fulcher, Krey (*First Crusade* 280–81).
- 32 Krey (“Neglected Passage”) dates Guibert’s history early, in 1106, for purposes of establishing his argument on the ideological use of the *Gesta* by Bohemond. John Benton dates Guibert’s history to 1108 (503), and Runciman to 1109 (1:330). The secondary and tertiary historians who treat the Crusade are many, and include Baldric of Dol, Robert the Monk, Ralph of Caen, Ekkehard of Aura, Orderic Vitalis, Albert of Aix, and William of Tyre; even William of Malmesbury has a chapter on the Crusade (*De Gestis Regum Anglorum* Book 4 Chapter 2). In general, most accede to the occurrence of cannibalism (William of Tyre is an exception), and variously express horror, defensive compassion at the extreme afflictions of famine, or a range between the two responses. These later histories, because of their dependence on uncertain or polyglot sources—some original and some not, with the authenticity of some sources being controversial—are substantially less authoritative than the eyewitness chronicles, and I do not treat them. Guibert’s account is unusual, however, for its materialization of the “Tafurs”—a group whose facticity is taken for granted by some modern historians—and thus deserves special attention.
- 33 I follow Cook, Foulet, Trotter, Duggan, and others in reading the oldest epic in the crusade cycles of *chansons de geste*—the *Chanson d’Antioche*—as deriving from the late twelfth century. Earlier scholarship had tended to emphasize an internal textual

claim by Grandor de Douai that he had revised the *Antioche* from a very early original text, now presumably lost, by “Richard le Pelèrin,” supposedly an eyewitness participant of the First Crusade. Although some still subscribe to the view that the *Antioche* was written on crusade or immediately after, and its contents depict factual history, Robert Cook has persuasively argued for the *Antioche*’s status as epic literature, demonstrating the *Antioche*’s relations to other *chansons de geste*, and concluding that it is worthwhile discussing the *Antioche* only as it exists: “les gens du douzième siècle ne nous parlent pas clairement d’une ‘Chanson d’Antioche’ ancienne, et leurs écrits ne semblent pas en suggérer non plus l’existence. . . . Le texte connu d’*Antioche* est tardif; nous n’en avons pas d’autre, nous n’avons même pas de preuve qu’un autre a existé. . . . Nous n’avons vu jusqu’ici nulle raison de ne pas compter d’Antioche, avec le cycle dont il participe, comme un poème épique, comme une chanson de geste” (*Le Cycle* 38–39; see also “Crusade Propaganda”). Cook’s emphasis is persuasive for several reasons. *Chansons de geste* do not as a rule concern themselves with the subject of the poor, yet the *Antioche* presents the fiction of the cannibalistic Tafurs and their “king” in more developed form than Guibert’s chronicle—a development that, as the most recent editor of the *Antioche* notes, represents a radical departure from the usual *chanson* concern with problems of the feudal relationship of monarch and magnates (“Quant à ‘la gent menue,’” observes Duparc-Quoc, “peu de poèmes épiques s’en occupent autant” [II:259]). The dramatizations of the Tafurs and their king in the *Antioche* thus

seem to follow Guibert, suggesting Guibert’s influence, rather than precede him. A late-twelfth-century origin would also account for the *Antioche*’s presentation of a fully developed legend of Peter the Hermit, a historically vague figure. Furthermore, there is a strange reference in the *Antioche* to “the Old Man of the Mountain”—“Li Viels de la Montaigne” (*Chanson d’Antioche* 138, 140)—whom the *Antioche* presents as the lord of “Rohais” (i.e., Edessa), a reference contemporary only with the late twelfth century. The “Old Man of the Mountain” was the sobriquet applied by the Franks of the Levant to Sinan Rashid ed-Din, leader of a breakaway group of Shi’ite Muslims called the Batini, or, more popularly, the Assassins, a group famed for the sensational assassinations they conducted. Sinan’s legend grew in the last decades of the twelfth century, perhaps in part because the Assassins were considering a conversion to Christianity in the 1170s (Runciman II:397). A late-twelfth-century origin would make the *Antioche* contemporaneous with the rise of romance as a genre, so that the *Antioche*’s fictionalized development of the Tafurs might be seen as romance-inflected.

34 There is still no agreement as to what race of people is meant by “Tafurs” or “Trudennes,” which strongly suggests Guibert’s invention of the name, but a consensus exists that a non-Western European race is signaled by the foreign-sounding name. Sumberg offers the fullest discussion of the etymological origin of “Tafur,” citing Hatem’s detection of an Armenian root, in “tahavor,” meaning “king;” Cahen’s suggestion of an Arabic derivation, from “tâfoûr,” mean-

ing “miserable;” Sauvaget’s derivation from the Arabic “tafrân;” Duparc-Quioç’s suggestion of a Turkish origin, and Porges’s belief that the term indicated “Saracens . . . gypsies and Truands of any nationality” (226 and n.11, n.12). Sumberg himself believes however that the Tafurs are probably Flemish. If Guibert had meant to indicate, by the name, a non-European ethnic group—as perhaps intimated by his invocation of a “barbarian tongue”—his association of a foreign race with monstrous behavior would only have been merely conventional. Friedman emphasizes the almost reflexive equation, in medieval culture, between foreign and monstrous races, for which Biblical justification is often found. Thus it is that the monstrous races of Asia are descended from the line of Ham, as are Moors and Saracens; churls—human beasts by virtue of poverty and unfree status—are descended from Cain, while “gentle” folk are descended from Seth (102–05). The *Cursor Mundi* economically has both serfs and Africans descend from the line of Ham, the accursed (“pe maledight” [*Cursor Mundi* No. 57: 128, 130]). Guibert’s identification of the poorest class of folk, who may also be of foreign ethnicity, with cannibals, is thus consonant with the ideological practices of medieval culture. For Guibert, heretics are also homosexuals and cannibals (Benton, ed., *Self* 212–13).

- 35 Fulcher: Hagenmeyer, *Historia Hierosolymitana* 301–02; Guibert: *RHC*, Occ. IV:140; *Gesta* 80. Munro (“Speech”) compares the extant versions of Urban’s address. Sumberg cites P. Paris’s skepticism at the cannibalism of Guibert’s Tafurs at Ma’arrâh: “would the Tafurs not have already done likewise at the

siege of Antioch, where the famine was infinitely worse and of longer duration?” (242). Benton, discussing Guibert’s invention of a detailed story about relics brought back to Nogent from Palestine by a “King Quilius of England,” concludes that Guibert “was willing to distort history when it suited his purposes” (*Self* 310).

- 36 Much has been said about the medieval historian’s inability or refusal to distinguish between fact and fiction, the indifference of the period to distinctions of this nature, and the liberties taken in historical writing with matters of facticity. What is usually meant by such indifference is the medieval historian’s assumption of the right to select, arrange, or rewrite his materials in accordance with an ideal of usefulness or truth, rather than hewing slavishly to models of factual adherence. A medieval historian would not be reluctant to put an invented speech into the mouth of a historical personage, make up additional material to support an argument, or excise what he believed to be irrelevancies in his sources—forms of tampering unacceptable to historiography today. Guibert’s “Tafurs” and “King Quilius of England” are examples of such tampering, the former representing an effort at repairing the reputation of the First Crusade, and the latter designed to increase the reputation of Nogent. The adherence to “higher usefulness” did not mean, however, that medieval historians were naïvely unable to tell fact from spectacular fables, or to value the distinction between such categories, as the varied response to Geoffrey’s *Historia* demonstrates. William of Malmesbury’s distinction between the historical

- Arthur and the “nonsense” of spurious Arthurian fables is a case in point (see note 49 below); William’s statement on writing that hews to the authentic “laws of history” and relies on trustworthy sources (see note 3 above) responds eloquently to the modern scholarly fiction of medieval cultural indifference to distinctions of truth and fabulousness. Southern offers Geoffrey’s *Historia* as the point of clearest departure between the fabulous and the historical: “Romance became separated from History” (“Classical Tradition” 196).
- 37 “Michael” recalls the East in yet another way: the standard gold coins of the Orient, in the twelfth century, were Byzantine “micheles,” so-called after the last coinage by an emperor, Michael Ducas, that had undebased value. Alexius I, emperor at the time of the First Crusade, had debased the coinage, rendering “micheles” of especial value as a reliable medium of currency. Byzantines commonly referred to their coinage by the name of the emperor issuing the coins; the term “bezants,” derived from the name of the empire’s capitol, is used principally by Latins to refer to the coins. The First Crusade is also cunningly recalled by the name “Helena,” memorialized here in “Helena’s Tomb,” since the empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, originally discovered the relics of the Passion, two of which—the True Cross and Holy Lance—were recovered again in the Crusade. The church that the grieving Hoel builds for his Helena, over her sepulchre, oddly recalls the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, built by Constantine to commemorate his Helena’s discovery of the relics. In a final round of suggestiveness that unites another Helen, Michael, and Constantine, Helena, Bohemond’s sister, was betrothed to Constantine, the infant son of Michael Ducas (Runciman I:68). Arthur, of course, is the royal descendant of another Constantine in the *Historia*.
- 38 The literature of Britain, including the *Historia*, is no exception: in the *Historia*, Albion is inhabited by giants—with whom one of Brutus’s men, Corineus, derives particular pleasure in fighting—before Brutus’s conquest and settlement of the island (Wright I:16). From Herodotus in the fifth century B.C., literatures of discovery, anthropology, or conquest—including Renaissance literature, literature on the Indies and the Tropics, literatures of empire, early American literature, etc.—have depicted foreign races or tribes as giants, cannibals, or other monstrous exotica. In the Middle Ages, the idea that giants are monsters is implicitly derived from Isidore of Seville, whose definition of “monstrum” as something outside nature, enormously large or enormously small, is influential (*Liber Differentiarum* [c.612], in *Patrologia Latina* 83, 56, bk 1, item 457). Isidore facilitates the medieval narrative of othering by intimating that there are whole races of monsters: “Just as among individual races there are certain members who are monsters, so also among mankind as a whole, certain races are monsters, like the giants . . .” (*Etymologiae* 3.12, p.52). For anthropological narratives of cannibalism, see especially Arens and Sanday.
- 39 The eyewitness chronicles’ naming of Levantine territories as “Hispania” is coterminous with the cultural *mentalité* of the *chansons de geste*, in which

- Muslim Spain often teatured. Though disagreement continues over the dating of its earliest manuscript, the *Chanson de Roland* is sometimes thought to be contemporary with the First Crusade, even if the Pseudo-Turpin's *chanson*-like Charlemagne legend is now dated from the mid-twelfth century (1140–1152). William of Malmesbury's account of Hastings records that a version of the *Roland* was sung to urge on the Normans before the battle began (*De Gestis Regum* II:302). Duggan wittily sums up Raymond d'Aguiliers's naming of Syria as "Hispania" as a reversal of the axiom, "if this is Spain, there must be Arabs here," into "if there are Arabs here, this must be Spain" (308)—which is not to say, of course, that the crusaders believed themselves to be anywhere but in the Levant.
- 40 Eleventh- and twelfth-century medievals were familiar with the fact that Muslims did not eat pork, so that the eating of pork becomes a key marker to distinguish medieval Christian identity from its Muslim opposite: Orderic Vitalis, for example, tells us that "Turks and many other Saracen peoples" abhorred the flesh of pigs, while Christians ate the very best pork (V:372). Bohemond and Tancred antedate the *Historia's* pork-eating giant: the *Gesta* presents them as huge pork-eaters with gigantic appetites, believed to consume "four thousand pigs at a single meal" (*Gesta* 56). The insulting association of Muslims with pigs occurs as early as the ninth century, when an apocryphal life of the prophet Mohammad, attributed to Alvaro of Córdoba, relates that the prophet, after dying as a drunkard, was eaten by pigs or dogs on a dungheap.
- 41 Though Arabia and Syria are obviously separate territories, medieval European presentation of Levantine geography is as notoriously inexact as, say, its presentation of statistical figures in literature and history. A typical example is the ubiquitous use of "Chorosan" (Khurrahan) in the *chansons de geste* and crusade histories to designate, vaguely, all Persia, or regions to the east of Syria. William of Malmesbury, who ranks with Bede as a historian, confuses Egypt with Arabia, and has Baldwin I of Jerusalem die in "Arabia" when Baldwin was stricken with fever in Egypt, and died in Jerusalem (*De Gestis Regum* II:451). A century later, Oliver of Paderborn's eyewitness narrative of the Fifth Crusade, equates Syria with Arabia: it calls the territory in which the crusader castles of Kerak and Montréal are located "Arabia," instead of southern Syria or Transjordan (Peters, *Christian Society* 86). Arabia gained attention late in the twelfth century, when the notorious Reynald de Châtillon turned pirate against Muslim pilgrim caravans in the Arabian peninsula, and Muslim ships in the Red Sea, earning Saladin's wrath, but it is uncertain even then if territorial specifications in the Orient meant much to medievals exclusively resident in Europe. That Geoffrey displaces the "b" in "Arabius" with "v" (to produce "Aravius") suggests a hispanicization of the Arabic name in its Latin form, and the strong cultural influence of medieval Spain. On other Oriental place-names in the *Historia*, some of which are also discussed by Faral, see Tatlock, *Legendary History* 112. Examples of Mediterranean place-names that find their way into romance, to become commonplaces in medieval and postmedieval

- Arthurian literature, are Cilicia (“Siesia”) and Ascalon (“Astolat” or “Shallott”).
- 42 Anna says of Bohemond: “Whether his beard was red or of any other colour I cannot say, for the razor had attacked it, leaving his chin smoother than any marble” (*Alexiad* 422). As late as the thirteenth century, Oriental authors continue to marvel at the beardlessness of Europeans. Al-Qazwini, in his *Athar al-bilad*, reports with disgust of the Franks: “They shave their beards, and after shaving they sprout only a revolting stubble. One of them was asked as to the shaving of the beard, and he said, ‘Hair is a superfluity. You remove it from your private parts, so why should we leave it on our faces?’” (Bernard Lewis II:123).
- 43 Norman figures in the Bayeux tapestry, including Duke William and Odo of Bayeux, are conspicuously clean-shaven. That beardedness among Norman élites constituted a deviation from the norm in Norman court culture in Western Europe is witnessed by the strenuous clerical censure echoing in contemporary chronicles in which the wearing of a beard or long hair is typically offered as a sign of degeneracy in court circles. Though I suggest the association of beardedness with Orientals, note 60 below also offers the possibility that the threat figured in Ritho’s cloak of beards represents the *Historia*’s understanding that the threat of cannibalistic monstrosity would redound back, eventually, to injure the ethnic and class companions of those originally marked by a share of responsibility in crusader monstrosity, since some Anglo-Norman aristocrats did in fact sport beards, for which they were much castigated
- 44 The link between the economic duress of a historical king and the literary fantasy of a romance king is not as provocative as it may seem. Because economic crisis is a subject that surfaces with difficulty in aristocratic cultural discourse, romance is a medium well suited to the articulation of economic anxiety, as my discussion of the inheritance struggle in Chrétien de Troyes’s *Yvain* suggests (see n. 50 below). We may compare the humor in the anecdote of Baldwin’s beard with the “Welsh” humor that Tatlock (*Legendary History* 589) finds in the *Historia*’s anecdote of the cloak of beards. Tatlock does his best to find parallels for the story of a cloak of beards (*Legendary History* 588–89 n. 35), though none of his parallels in fact bears much resemblance to the details of Geoffrey’s story, or is earlier than the *Historia*, which strongly urges that Geoffrey invented his episode, perhaps from anecdotal details of Baldwin’s story in popular circulation.
- 45 While I have read the giants of St Michael’s Mount and “Mons Aravius” as hallucinated figurations of European culture personified at its demonic extreme after the trauma of crusader cannibalism, it is possible to read the giants more simply and intuitively as merely rude figurations of Saracens. After all, it is unarguable that “throughout medieval literature there is a tendency to represent Saracens and Saxons as ‘giants’” (Pallister 304). To perform this more direct reading, we would have to understand the romance episode of the two giants as merely repeating a familiar move: scapegoating the cultural other for one’s own atrocities by projecting blame upon the enemy, who is then resoundingly

- defeated by a hero from one's own whitewashed culture. This reading would suggest that European culture, as represented by Geoffrey's text, enacts here both denial ("not we who have committed cannibalism, but they") and suppression—moves that exact a price, in the case of cultural trauma. My reading assigns to cultural performance a greater capacity for complexity and nuance: a capacity to acknowledge atrocity and guilt, and to negotiate, cunningly, a medium of acknowledgment and response that would rescue culture from its demons, without the consequences that attend denial and suppression. That Saracens and cultural enemies are often rendered as giants in medieval literature—just as powerful women are rendered as enchantresses—does not disturb my preferred reading. The permeability of such figures as giants—their capacity to figure diverse, contradictory meanings, and to tip over from one extreme referent to another (what Pallister calls "the floating nature of such symbols" [321])—is hinted at by medieval literature itself, in the person of that complex, multivalent giant-knight in the Middle English romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: a giant at once familiar and foreign, friend and foe, domestically grown and reluctantly alien.
- 46 The *Historia's* dedications to opposing camps speak volumes for the volatile political climate of its day, and are less extraordinary when situated in the context of contemporary behavior: Fulk of Anjou and Jerusalem, for example, married a daughter each to the sons of both Henry I and Robert of Normandy, the warring royal offspring of the Conqueror. Though earlier scholarship on the *Historia* tended to focus on the apparent contradictions of the dedications, more recent work has noticed shared denominators of class and ethnicity among the dedicatees. For the distribution of manuscript dedications, see Crick, *Dissemination and Reception* 115–20; on the relationship of the *Historia* to the politics of royal succession, issues of patronage, and manuscript dedications, see, particularly, Gerould 38–40; Tatlock 288, 426–30; Shichtman and Finke 15–28; Gransden I: 204, Noble 162.
- 47 Indeed, Waleran of Meulan, one of the dedicatees of the *Historia*, would soon be a baronial leader in the calamitous Second Crusade. See Tyerman's excellent *England and the Crusades*, on Anglo-Normans and Anglo-Saxons in the different crusades.
- 48 Although I once agreed with textual editors of the *Historia Brittonum* who felt that it would have been an absurd impossibility for Arthur to have carried an image of the Virgin "super humeros suos" into his eighth battle and emerged victorious thus encumbered, and that therefore the phrase had to be a scribal error requiring emendation to "on his shield" (Heng 511 n. 15), I have since come round to the opinion that it is not at all impossible for a victorious Arthur to have carried into battle an image of the Virgin Mary on his shoulders—if, that is, the image had been *sewn* on a mantle or tunic, like the cross of the crusaders.
- 49 Written material in which Arthur features that can be proven to antedate the *Historia* is scarce; I have discussed the uncontested sources here. Tatlock also considers five Welsh and two Breton saints' lives in which Arthur minimally features, some of

which preexist the *Historia*: he concludes, however, that even where the texts antedate the *Historia*, the Arthur that appears in them—an “uncontrolled and tyrannous” Arthur (“Dates” 345), a “silly and unstable Arthur” (352), “an unstable potentate submissive to the church” (351)—is ignored by Geoffrey, whose history, Tatlock decides, owes nothing to the influence of such figuration. Nonetheless, stories of Arthur must have circulated in culture beyond the sketchy annalistic and chronicle record: William of Malmesbury, in his *De Gestis Regum Anglorum* of 1125, distinguishes between an Arthur of false fables (“fallaces . . . fabulae”) or nonsense (“nugae”), and the Arthur of authentic history (I:11). While rejecting the supposition that *developed* stories of Arthur antedated Geoffrey’s text, Tatlock finally accepts that the *name* of Arthur, at least, was culturally meaningful in some way: “The plain fact is . . . there is no evidence for a largely developed Arthur-saga anywhere whatever before Geoffrey. . . . Outside [the *Historia Brittonum*], the *Annales Cambriae*, and the saint’s lives, nearly all the evidence for the vogue of Arthur before Geoffrey relates merely to the Briton hope in Wales and Brittany for his messianic return; which no more proves an active cycle of stories about him than American popular observances about Santa Claus prove the familiarity of stories about him” (357–58).

- 50 Key examples occur in Chrétien’s *Yvain*. In one episode, a younger and an elder sister quarrel acrimoniously over property inheritance, the elder insisting on a strict application of primogeniture, and the younger seeming to plead for a modified system of

parage, in which a younger sibling might hold a fief of an elder, to whom the younger would perform vassal homage. Though primogeniture concerns male élites of the twelfth century, *Yvain* ostentatiously constructs inheritance rights as a *women’s* problem: a problem, moreover, that is chivalrously resolved when the sisters’ champions, Yvain and Gauvain, outdo one another in generosity, courtesy, and affection, when each knight insists that the other is the victor of the judicial duel in which both participate on the sisters’ behalf. A problem assailing male élites is presented in romance as an occasion of feminine vulnerability, necessitating male intervention and rescue: the resolution of which then splendidly vindicates the ideological values and institution of chivalry, uniting knights. A similar dynamic operates in the episode of the sweatshop maidens at *Pesme Avanture*: gentlewomen are exploited by an entrepreneurial class figured as sons of the devil, who expropriate the surplus labor of the female aristocratic silkworkers whom they underpay and confine. If, as Eugene Vance suggests, the threat to *nobiles* in the twelfth century issues from the “power of capital” (129), and the exploited silkworkers in *Yvain* figure the “nascent textile industry lying just to the west of Champagne in Flanders” (146), it is pointedly noblewomen here who represent the seigneurial interests imagined as under threat by the aggressive entrepreneurialism of an emergent mercantile class (figured, of course, as demonic spawn). The symbolic manumission that Yvain’s rescue of the noblewomen enacts then confirms the supremacy, humanity, and *efficacy* of the chivalric system, the episode allowing not only the

anxiety of male élites to be expressed in safely distanced fashion, but also exorcised and banished by the proven supremacy of the male élite system functioning in perfect form.

- 51 Thorpe shows Geoffrey's unfamiliarity with the real Mont Saint-Michel—a place chosen, I have suggested, for its association with pilgrimage and St. Michael, patron saint of warriors. Thorpe argues that Geoffrey's onomastic explanation for "Helena's Tomb" was invented, since "tumba" in the region referred not to a "sepulchre," as Geoffrey would have it, but to a hill ("tumba veut dire «hauteur, éminence» dans le pays, non pas «sépulcre»" ("Le Mont Saint-Michel" 381), and "Tumba Helene"—Geoffrey's formulation (Wright I:119)—was a corruption of "tumbellana," referring not to the tumulus of a maiden called Helena, but to the topography of Mont Saint-Michel: "*Tumbellana* est un diminutif de *tumba*, disons *tumbella* (cp. *tumbella* dans le *De Laudibus Virginilatus* d'Aldhelmus, évêque de Salisbury, écrit au commencement du VIII^e siècle), mot auquel on avait ajouté un suffixe *-ana*, avec le sens de: petite colline qui appartient à une colline plus grande" (382). "Il y a dans la baie du Mont Saint-Michel deux collines, que l'on appelait *Duae Tumbae*. . . . Geoffroi de Monmouth ne les a jamais visitées; mais il en a entendu parler, car elles étaient des centres de pèlerinage et, comme on sait, en 1155–1156, l'abbé Bernard était sur le point de construire une nouvelle église sur le rocher de Tombelaine et il érigeait un prieuré dépendant à St. Michael's Mount en Cornouaille" (382); "l'étymologie populaire *Tumba Helenae*, souvent attestée après 1156, ne semble pas antérieure à cette date" (380). "Helena" of course, is a name that Geoffrey might choose to memorialize for several reasons, as I suggest in n. 36. In Arthurian romance, "Helen" evolves into "Elaine," and becomes attached to Lancelot, whose displacement of Arthur, in prominence, is signaled by the presence of three Elaines in Lancelot's life, by the time of Malory, at the close of the Middle Ages.
- 52 I borrow extensively here from Foucault—though Foucault was not, of course, speaking of romance in his theorization of "genealogy" and "genesis." Equally plain is that a Foucauldian perspective of history underpins my argument.
- 53 In Orderic's history, Fatima, the daughter of Ali, king of the Medes, is one of the wives of the captor of Baldwin II, King of Jerusalem; she plays a large role during Baldwin's captivity, and is assigned key speeches by Orderic (V, 116–20).
- 54 Scholars have noticed key features of Arthurian romance in the *Historia*. Uther and Ygerne clearly have a courtly-love relationship: Uther *courts* Ygerne—rather than simply taking possession of her, as preceding kings in the *Historia* had done with women they desired—sending food and drink to her (by contrast, it is Renwein, Hengist's daughter, who had earlier courted Vortigern [Wright I:67]); Ygerne is married, and the triangulation of desire so typical of courtly romance comes into focus; Uther suffers the "lover's malady," with stereotypical symptoms; and their eventual union is touted as a relationship of equals, as well as a love relationship. (For discussions of courtly love, see Andreas Capellanus, Benton,

Boase, Kristeva, Lacan, C.S. Lewis, Newman, de Rougemont, and Wack.) Other romance elements include Arthur's coronation at the age of fifteen, tournament-like single combat between champions such as Arthur and Frolo, and the opulence culture of the plenary court at Caerleon, convoked by Arthur at Pentecost, the iconic festive season of Arthurian romance. This plenary court is an ostentatiously international affair: there is no prince of any note "on this side of Hispania" (Wright I:111) who does not come when invited, and its religious, ceremonial, gustatory, and recreational events are staged with lavish romance magnificence, in an ecstatic display of the puissance of the monarch. The opulence and glory of the massed companions becomes reflexive in later romances, as does the behavior between the sexes. Men perform in tournament-like mock combats, and women incite and inflame them with flirtatious attention. The ethicizing fiction of the courtly romance relationship also appears—we are told that women in Britain give their love only to those thrice-proved in battle, and in setting these standards become chaste and finer creatures, as knights, for their love, correspondently increase in excellence.

The gilded wonders of this emblematic occasion, moreover—an occasion at which Arthur and his queen ceremonially wear their crowns in state, signifying dominion of the Western world—arrive in romance as a species of magical theater borrowed from the East. Tatlock shows how the *Historia's* so-called ancient "Trojan" custom of separate coronations for the king and queen, with separate church services and feasts for the men

and women in attendance—a "tradition" paraded here as a treasured pedigree of ancient blood-lineage—is a simulacrum of the segregational customs observed and practiced in twelfth-century Constantinople (*Legendary History* 273–74). Sex-segregated feasting was also the Mediterranean-influenced Norman custom in southern Italy and Sicily, and indeed, was a custom in the Near East in general from Biblical times onward. William of Malmsbury records Constantinople's influence on meals in the Anglo-Norman court of Henry I: Robert, Count of Meulan—father of Waleran of Meulan, one of the *Historia's* dedicatees—introduced Alexius I's custom of only one meal a day into Anglo-Norman England (*De Gestis Regum* II:485). Gransden (I:206) and Gillingham (*Richard* 135) remark that sex-segregated meals occurred in Anglo-Saxon courts (though in literature itself, we see Queen Wealtheow feasting with Hrothgar and his thanes in *Beowulf*). The *Historia* itself says that Caerleon, with its gilt-plastered pediments, imitated "Rome" (Wright I:110)—a name, I have suggested, that retrieves a vision of Constantinople, "the most brilliant and civilized society" of Geoffrey's era (Tatlock, *Legendary History* 273).

55 Merlin's prophecies frequently refer to the Orient, so that their exotic context adds weight to a reading of his "montem Aravium" as "the Arabian mountain." It is also Merlin who tells Vortigern that Stonehenge comes from Africa (Wright I: 91), brought by giants. Merlin's ability to relocate the rocks then presents him as a latter-day giant of sorts, like the original movers of the "Giants' Ring," and may suggest an Oriental patina for Merlin's arts.

- Shichtman and Finke identify the Saxon invasions and entrance of Merlin as textual moments that “signal the shift in Geoffrey’s narrative from a conventional medieval chronicle history to history encoded as romance” (15).
- 56 Merlin and his author might have been pleased to learn of Arthurian romance’s vigorous popularity with a changing variety of audiences for nine hundred years and—with electronic media—the likelihood of Arthur’s survival well into the twenty-first century. In 1998 alone, when NBC broadcast its two-part Arthurian romance named for the magus, on April 26–27, the astonishing results were recorded in the *New York Times*: “With an audience that NBC estimated at a total of 70 million for Sunday and Monday nights, ‘Merlin’ took a broadsword to the competition. . . . It was especially strong with the younger viewers—those between the ages of 18 and 49—that NBC values most. It was also the first program in several years to put a dent in the almost unshakable audience for Fox’s ‘X-Files’ on Sunday night, sending that show to its lowest rating in almost three years. It dwarfed the ratings for the big box office theatrical movie ‘Apollo 13’” (Carter B8). For a list of Arthurian films, see Harty (205–47); on the popularity, genres, and audiences of Arthurian romance in the Renaissance, eighteenth century, and Victorian England, see Dean, Johnston, and Girouard respectively.
- 57 The triangulated relations between Queen Melisende of Jerusalem, the dashing Hugh Le Puiset, lord of Jaffa, and Fulk of Anjou, King of Jerusalem, has uncanny echoes for the Guenevere-Mordred Arthur and Guenevere-Lancelot-Arthur triangles. Hugh’s dalliance and reputed adultery with his kinswoman Melisende became a scandal that divided the court of Jerusalem into the King’s party and the Count of Jaffa’s; Hugh was charged with treason, challenged to judicial combat, and exiled. The gossip and sensation brought the Kingdom of Jerusalem to the brink of civil war (see, e.g., Runciman II: 187–93). Key elements resemble those of later Arthurian romance: a king of mature years and doting attachment to his queen; an atmosphere of courtly intrigue, scandal, and division; a handsome and noble retainer who is a younger rival; enmity between the king’s faction and the retainer’s; and the Queen’s domination of her doting older husband. The time frame—the early 1130s—coincides with the period of the *Historia*’s composition, and it is possible that the scandalous and sensational features of the story influenced Chrétien and subsequent Arthurian romancers, since there are close ties between the courts of Champagne and Jerusalem.
- 58 The words in the vocative, “you, who need to submit far-distant kingdoms to your own authority” also echo Urban’s crusading address. For the *Historia*’s invention of an African invasion from a phrase in *De Excidio*, see Wright, “Gildas” 11. Tatlock discusses the relationship between this episode in the *Historia* and the *chanson Gormont et Isembart* (*Legendary History* 135–39). The behavior of the Africans in Britain not only recalls the Saxon invasions but also the behavior of the crusaders in the Orient. Interestingly, the Africans convert the nephew of the king of the Franks away from Christianity. Hugh of Vermandois,

younger brother of the French king, and Stephen of Blois, brother-in-law of the English king, were among those who turned back, away from the Christian crusading mission, before Jerusalem. European documents (e.g., Joinville's *Histoire de Saint Louis* 215–17) sometimes record the conversion of captive children and others to Islam, as do, of course, the Arab chronicles.

- 59 The symbolic reenactment of the saving gestures of Eucharistic sacrifice fulfills other useful ends. The comforting invocation of Eucharistic ritual also helps to dispel any anxiety residually attaching to sacred cannibalism (see n. 23 above), since the glowing affirmation of the life-giving and health-giving nature of the generous sacrifice enacted here serves as a blanket reassurance and vindication of Eucharistic function. Furthermore, Brian's sacrifice—his production of himself as food—eerily fulfills Merlin's earlier prophecy that King Arthur would also be food (“cibus”) “in the mouths of peoples” (Wright I:74), thus linking together the two romances featuring cannibalism in the *Historia*. Both these good cannibalisms constitute positive literary examples reinforcing the valorization of sacred (Eucharistic) cannibalism.
- 60 Historians have argued vigorously over the reputed homosexuality of William Rufus and Robert Curthose, evidence for which turns upon chronicle material, and especially Orderic Vitalis, who refers in passing to sodomy, and to a Venus of Sodom—though unfortunately “it seems that Ordericus did not attach very specific connotations to ‘sodomiticus’” (Boswell 229–30, n. 71). A scholarly consensus is nonetheless emerging that these sons of the Conqueror were likely to have been, at the very least, bisexual, and had courts notorious for a spectrum of profligate sexual transgressions, courts that the chroniclers, including Orderic, also castigate for effeminacy and excesses of fashion and appearance. Among the horrors listed by the chroniclers was the keeping of *beards*, by courtiers, as an affectation: though presumably not contributing to the problem of effeminacy, this wearing of beards was sufficiently countercultural to warrant Bishop Serlo's barbed association, at Carentan, of bearded courtiers with goats or Saracens, as Orderic reports (see above). Since clean-shaven faces seemed to function as signifiers of normalcy, psychosexual discipline, and good social order for Norman culture, the cloak of beards collected by the giant Ritho might have a second layer of reference. Crusader monstrosity can thus be read as injuring both the bearded Saracen enemy and a set of local Anglo-Norman court élites identifiable in contemporary contexts by their hirsute affectations. Boswell suggests that the trope of hunting, perhaps by association with Ganymede, was a medieval figure for homosexuality (253), which adds another dimension to Brian's hunt for flesh with which to satisfy the king. I am indebted to Martha Newman for calling my attention to a photograph in Boswell (plate 15) of a stature of John lying tenderly in the bosom of Christ that strangely echoes Geoffrey's tableau of Brian/Cadwallo, since Brian pointedly functions as a Christ figure in the homoerotic romance that follows.
- 61 If, in a twelfth-century family romance, cannibalism is the trope that enables homosexuality to find analogical expression—in a form of “symbolic thinking,

where one . . . [stands in] for another” (Crain 26)—Caleb Crain’s discussion of homosexuality and cannibalism in Melville suggests that the tropological substitution operates just as effectively in nineteenth-century America, whose dominant culture had a name and a discourse for cannibalism, but not for homosexuality. I am indebted to Sam Otter for drawing Crain’s article to my attention.

- 62 In the mid-eleventh century, Peter Damian’s *Liber Gomorrhianus*, addressed to Pope Leo IX, had inveighed against sodomitical practices among the clergy, and in 1049, “a local synod excommunicated certain unnamed Gallican heretics along with ‘sodomites’” (Goodich 7). Even before the Council of Nablus’s passage of the death penalty into law, “scriptural glossators grouped around Anselm of Laon linked heresy and sodomy as forms of sacrilege punishable by death” (Goodich 7). Boswell argues for a vigorous, short-lived homosexual subculture among select Norman clerics of the early twelfth century, whose poetry included a strain of homoerotic verse. It seems likely that a subculture of this kind would have needed to negotiate the currents of dominant culture, resorting perhaps to literary ruses like Geoffrey’s, on occasion. We do not know what relationship Geoffrey had, if any, to the subculture or its literature: though Baldric of Dol (Baudri of Bourgeuil, later Archbishop of Dol), wrote a history of the First Crusade (which Geoffrey may or may not have read), as well as homoerotic verse Baldric, who was closely attached to the Anglo-Norman royal court—Adela of Blois, sister of Robert Curthose and supporter of Bohemond of Antioch, also supported Baldric’s candidacy for the archbishopric of Orléans (Goodich 6)—was “twice driven from office by mysterious scandals” (Boswell 246), and eventually disclaimed his poetry, insisting that no “evil love” had ever touched him (246), and even created literary personae attacking sodomitical practices (246 n. 14). Many have noticed that despite the *Historia*’s immense popularity and cultural usefulness to Norman aristocracy, Geoffrey was only rewarded with the minor bishopric of St. Asaph. For discussions of medieval homosexuality, including shifting definitions of “sodomy,” see Goodich, Boswell, Bullough, Stehling, Jordan.
- 63 Hutson offers support for my reading: “there is some evidence that Geoffrey knew a man named Brian. This was Brian Fitz-Count, whom William of Malmesbury calls the son of Robert of Gloucester. He was more probably the son of Alan, count of Brittany. Brianus (Brient, Brienius, Brientius) *filii comitis* appears often with Robert of Gloucester, Waleran, Count of Mellant, and Alexander, bishop of Lincoln (all of whom were friends or patrons of Geoffrey), as a witness to various charters in the years from 1130 to 1141. Together with Robert he supported the claims of Matilda against Stephen from 1138 until Geoffrey’s death in 1147. All this evidence goes to show that Geoffrey was probably flattering a friend by including his name in the *Historia* as the name of a very brave and gallant young knight (87).”
- 64 In the *Vita Mahumeti*, composed perhaps as early as 1040 by Hildebert, Bishop of Mayence (1057–1134), the Prophet Mohammad is also rendered as a “magus” who introduces a corrupting and threatening culture (Melitzki 201–02). Indeed, the image of Mohammad as an

enchanter was so popular, Melitzki notes, that more than three hundred years later it would dominate “one of the most rational discussions of Islam in medieval literature [ie Langland’s]” (202), and might well shadow the literary representation of other magi, like Pellitus and Merlin.

- 65 Provocatively, Brian’s public assassination of Pellitus resembles the assassinations for which the Batini, or Assassins—a breakaway Shi’ite Muslim group of Ismailites—were famed in Syria in the early twelfth century. Batini enmity toward Sunni Islam, and their execution of Sunni princes often furthered the Christian cause by eliminating political and military enemies of the Latins: an accident that earned the Batinis the suspicion of the Sunni Muslims dominating Syria, who felt the Assassins might be secretly pro-Christian or even covert Christians. Interestingly, Arnold of Luebeck has the Assassins “eat swine’s flesh against the law of the Saracens” (Melitzki 225). The first Assassin leader who appeared in Syrian Aleppo in the twelfth century, the Persian al-Hakim al-Munajjim, was, like Pellitus, an astrologer (and a physician). Curiously, a number of assassinations in the *Historia*, including Brian’s, have at least some of the hallmarks of Batini-style killings: the assassinations are conducted in public, at great personal risk (sometimes certain death) to the perpetrator; involve disguise, including assuming the costume of the enemy; require time spent in the company of the intended victim, to allay suspicion; and even, in one episode of the *Historia*, the shaving of beards, in order that the would-be assassins might pass for Britons. Melitzki points out that “[t]he Western public got

its first knowledge of the Assassins from the Crusaders” (223).

- 66 Chapter two of my book-in-progress, *Empire of Magic*, considers medieval nation formation, and medieval England as an imagined political community of the nation (“The Romance of England: *Richard Coerdelyon* and the Politics of Race, Religion, Sexuality, and Nation”).
- 67 Matheson, Fletcher, Ernest Jones, and Keeler provide exemplary accounts of the afterlife and later influence of the *Historia*. In a tribute to Geoffrey, Rabelais in the sixteenth century winks knowingly at the Oriental origins of Arthurian romance by having the giant parents of his benevolent giant, Gargantua, created not “in France, but on the highest mountain of the Orient” (Stephens 52)—a nod in the direction of “Mons Aravius.” Stephens notices that “Gargantua’s feats in the service of Arthur very closely mimic those of Corneus for Brutus in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s chronicle (which was printed twice at Paris during the first two decades of the sixteenth century)” (Stephens 54). With consummate humour, Rabelais has Grant-Gosier, Gargantua’s father, create Mont Saint-Michel, and Galemelle, Gargantua’s mother, create Tombelaine, so that Rabelais’s two giants produce the Arthurian romance site and monument that the *Historia* produces for its own two giants, who are Grant-Gosier’s and Galemelle’s literary predecessors. Rabelais’s understanding of Geoffrey’s subtle wiles extends to his making Gargantua a “harmless or at least inadvertent” cannibal, in a humorous incident where “205 ‘Irish/Dutch’ soldiers fall into Gargantua’s mouth while he is asleep, and he unwittingly drowns them when he awakes

- and drains a river to slake his thirst" (Stephens 55). Gargantua economically reenacts both Cadwallo and Arthur, since he is an involuntary cannibal and a giant-killer, whose feasting is celebrated in the *Chroniques* by "joyous description" (Stephens 56).
- 68 Most scholars believe the First Variant was written immediately after the *Historia's* appearance, and before the *Roman de Brut*, and that Wace used both the vulgate and variant versions for the *Brut*, although the First Variant's author might have followed and used Wace's text, rather than the other way around (see, e.g., Dumville II:xii–xv).
- 69 Chapter three of my book-in-progress, *Empire of Magic*, considers the *Morte Arthure* and crusading history in the context of late-medieval social and economic transformations ("A Virtual History of the Crusades: the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and the Anatomy of War, Men, and Empire in the Late Middle Ages").

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