

Combat, Crusade, and Conversion: Prose Romance
and the English Printing Press, 1473–1534

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how English prose romances printed by William Caxton (1473–1492) and Wynkyn de Worde (1492–1534) replicate and refashion romance memes and traditions in ways that resonate with contemporary crusading concerns. Often selectively translated and adapted from French sources, these printed romances reached a broader audience than earlier English romances and spoke to anxieties shared by the English aristocracy, gentry, and growing middle classes.

Critics have examined these romances' concerns about social discord in conjunction with the Wars of the Roses. However, Malory's *Morte Darthur* has dominated critical attention; until recently, other contemporary prose romances which resonate with the same issues had received little attention, and these understudied prose romances have not yet been considered (either on their own or alongside Malory's *Morte*) in terms of their engagement with crusading desires, rather than civil strife. This thesis offers the first full study of how the first two generations of English printed prose romances respond to growing anxieties regarding fractures in Christian and English identities, and the perceived threat of the Ottoman Empire, by modelling how crusade might reunite the Christian world (and English society).

The first chapter establishes the historical and cultural contexts in which the prose romances were produced and received. Chapter Two argues that the prose romances give a new twist to the familiar motif of the knightly encounter with enemy Saracens, foregrounding how crusade can strengthen Christian chivalric communities through conversion. Chapter Three follows by addressing the ways in which the prose romances deploy architectural structures to show how the (ideological) control of space shapes a successful crusading campaign. The fourth and final chapter addresses the nature of the supernatural in the prose romances, to argue that these texts also

reconfigure wider conventions of the genre in ways that resonate with contemporary crusading impulses.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EETS ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series

INTRODUCTION

For oftymes I haue been excyted of the venerable man messire henry bolomyer, chanonne of lausanne, for to reduce for his playsyr somme hystories as wel in latyn & in romaunce as in other facion wryton, that is to say of the ryght puyssaunt, vertuous, and noble charles the grete, kyng of fraunce and emperour of Rome, Sone of the grete Pepyn: And of his prynces & barons, As Rolland, Olyuer, and other, touchyng somme werkes haultayne doon & commysed by their grete strength & ryght ardaunt courage, to the exaltacyon of the crysten fayth and to the confusyon of the hethen sarazyns and myscreaunts, whiche is a werk wel contemplatyf for to lyue wel.¹

When William Caxton printed his translation of Jean Bagnyon's 1478 *Roman de Fierabras le Géant* in 1485, he also translated this prologue, in which Bagnyon argues that the crusading deeds of great heroes should be recorded so they might be emulated for the good of Christendom. Caxton wrote new prologues and epilogues for his other prose romances, and his translation of this existing prologue suggests that its focus on crusade would have resonated with his audience, whose own reading habits were informed by ethical and didactic approaches. His own comments, appended to the *Charles* prologue, situate this text within a developing subgenre and a growing readership:

Thenne for as moche I late had fynysshed in enprynte the book of the noble and vycторыous kyng Arthur [...] Somme persones of noble estate and degree haue desyred me to reduce thystorye and lyf of the noble and crysten prynce Charles the grete [...] to thende that thystories, actes & lyues may be had in our maternal tongue, lyke as they be in latyn or in frensshe.

(*Charles*, 2.25–36)

¹ William Caxton, *The Lyf of the Noble and Crysten Prynce Charles the Grete*, ed. by Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS ES 36 & 37 (London: Oxford University Press, 1880–81), pp. 1.15–2.3. Henceforth referenced as *Charles the Grete* or *Charles*.

By not acknowledging his translation and by shifting seamlessly from the translated ‘I’ to his own, Caxton deviates from a medieval textual culture which privileged citing authorities over the creation of new material. Here, as throughout his process of translating and printing prose romances, Caxton, like Wynkyn de Worde after him, constructs an authoritative voice that was informed by the contexts of his sources but that also engaged with contemporary English concerns.²

Charles the Grete was one of a group of English printed prose romances produced during the printing lifespans of Caxton and Worde, between 1473 and 1534. This sixty-year period of English history is one in which concerns over civil strife and community discord were paramount, and in which growing geopolitical threats like that of the Ottoman Empire threatened the borders of Christendom and Western Europe. It is also a time in which some scholars have situated the ‘end’ of the Middle Ages.³ However, like other recent scholars, I see this period as transitional between ‘medieval’ and ‘early modern’. Paying more attention to it can help nuance understandings of continuity as well as change between historical eras.⁴ The prose romances that Caxton

² On the construction of the subject ‘I’ in late medieval translation, see Liz Oakley-Brown, ‘Translating the Subject: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in England, 1560–7’, in *Translation and Nation: Towards a Cultural Politics of Englishness*, ed. by Roger Ellis and Liz Oakley-Brown (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001), pp. 48–84 (pp. 48–50).

³ Literary historians have suggested a range of historical and cultural events throughout the period that might mark a specific date as the ‘end’ of the Middle Ages. These include 1485, where the Battle of Bosworth and the resulting dynastic changes signalled a transition based on England’s social and political status; 1492, which bases the transition upon the expanded global reach offered by Columbus’ voyage to the Americas; 1517, where the beginning of the Reformation offers a religious marker of transition; 1547, where the point at which the Reformation affected the Church of England further situates this religious transition within England; and 1500, which uses the transition between centuries to mark the distinction between periods which have no clear start and end. See Greg Walker, ‘Epilogue: When did “the Medieval” End?: Retrospection, Foresight, and the End(s) of the English Middle Ages’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker, and William Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 725–38 (p. 736); Lee Patterson, ‘On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies’, *Speculum*, 65.1 (1990), 87–108; Megan G. Leitch, *Romancing Treason: The Literature of the Wars of the Roses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 175–86.

⁴ On periodisation, see Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 188; Kathleen Tonry, *Agency and Intention in English Print, 1476–1526* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), p. 12. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ‘On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Late Medieval France and England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 113–46.

and de Worde print from 1473–1534 constitute a distinctive sub-genre and reshape common romance memes to engage with English concerns during the Wars of the Roses and the early Tudor period. As a form of ‘recovery literature’, the prose romances respond to a time of great political upheaval and internal conflict in England and Christendom, and to the looming threat of the Ottoman Empire. They posit crusade as an appropriate means of reaffirming communal and chivalric group identities.⁵

In this dissertation, I examine how the first two generations of printed prose romances responded to growing anxieties regarding fractures in Christian and English identities, and concerning the perceived threat of the Ottoman Empire, by modelling the ways in which crusade might reunite the Christian world against present-day ‘Saracens’. I focus on the printed prose romances with central crusading narratives that reflect late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century concerns: especially, Caxton’s translations of *Godeffroy of Boloyne* (1481), *Charles the Grete* (1485), *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1488), and *Paris and Vienne* (c. 1490), and his print of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* (1485); alongside *Valentine and Orson* (c. 1510) and *Huon of Burdeux* (c. 1515), which de Worde printed but did not personally translate.⁶ The earlier English prose romances of the *Siege of Thebes* and the *Siege of Troy* also touch upon similar interests regarding the

⁵ Christopher Tyerman, *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades* (London: Penguin, 2007); Cohen, ‘On Saracen Enjoyment’; Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁶ Also considered, at various points, are three other categories of printed text. First, a number of printed prose romances in which crusade does not feature centrally offer pertinent points of comparison with the central corpus on matters of Saracen individuals, architecture, and magic, including *Blanchardine and Eglatine* (1488) and *Robert deuyll* (1500). Second, a range of Caxton’s other prints contextualise the prose romances in terms of audience interest in chivalric and crusading identities, including *Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry* (1484) and *Book of Fayttes of Armes* (1489). Finally, a range of earlier English romances in verse inform my discussion of the ways in which the prose romances might be distinguished from their English predecessors by the way they treat common romance motifs. These romances include *Guy of Warwick*, *Bevis of Hampton*, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, *The Sowdone of Babylon*, *Firumbras*, *Fierabras*, and *Sir Isumbras*.

East,⁷ but this thesis focuses solely on those that were printed in order to explore how the printing press helped to expand audiences and made it possible to produce texts that addressed widespread cultural concerns. These core texts fall within a narrower date range than that suggested by the dates of this study which, as I have noted, encompass the years Caxton and de Worde were printing. Chapter One, in particular, expands upon how these texts exemplify socio-political contexts and cultural concerns that stretch across this wider period, and beyond it.

The English printed prose romances are distinct within a genre known for its adaptability. Helen Cooper notes the genre's enduring cultural appeal and engagement through a 'family resemblance' model, where a romance is recognisable by the memes it shares with other examples of the genre.⁸ The prose romances redeploy common memes—including encounters with Saracen opponents, exotic and otherworldly settings, and supernatural phenomena—in a manner distinct from that of earlier English romance, in order to engage with contemporary anxieties about the potential of crusade.⁹ They stress the value of assimilation over destruction, emphasising a facet of

⁷ Both of these texts take place in locations distant from England but have been read, primarily, in terms of how they look inwards to reflect social climates in fifteenth-century England. See Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 64–84.

⁸ On the 'family resemblance model, see Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1–15; Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert, 'Introduction', in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), pp. 1–39 (pp. 1–2). On the enduring nature of medieval romance, and its adaptability towards contemporary concerns, see Raluca Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), p. 32; Megan Leitch, 'Introduction – Middle English Romance: The Motifs and Critics', in *Romance Rewritten*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald, Megan G. Leitch, and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 1–24 (pp. 1–4); Marcel Elias, 'Rewriting Chivalric Encounters: Cultural Anxieties and Social Critique in the Fourteenth Century', in *Romance Rewritten*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald, Megan G. Leitch, and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 49–65 (pp. 64–65).

⁹ The prose romances, like the pious romances Radulescu considers in chapter two of *Romance and Its Contexts*, are 'part spiritual journey, part instruction, entertainment and political interpretation'. The popularity of these stories endures not only because of their contemporary relevance but their ability to be re-read and re-interpreted as appropriate to new cultural contexts and audiences. See Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*, pp. 41–86; Helen Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances', in *A Companion to Romance from Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 104–20 (p. 114); Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 361–63; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 184–88; Raluca Radulescu, *The Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003).

English identity defined by the united strength of chivalric community for whom productive external war might prevent or mend internal strife. The final push into the Holy Land at the end of the *Morte Darthur* belongs in this literary tradition: in an attempt to solidify and unite what little of the Arthurian community identity remains after the destructive civil war, the surviving knights engage in ‘many bataylles upon the myscreantes or Turkes’ on crusade.¹⁰ Like the other printed prose romances, the *Morte* engages readily with the most pressing historical and cultural contexts of England and the fifteenth century, notably the Wars of the Roses.¹¹ However, the final crusading lines of the *Morte*, and the prominence of the Roman War in establishing Arthur’s legitimacy, indicate that it also deserves to be read alongside other contemporary prose romances which likewise show unified Christian communities standing against external foes. This study argues that the *Morte*’s social and cultural resonance for English audiences stems from its crusading elements as well as from its focus on the chivalric community at home.

THE PROSE ROMANCES AS A DISTINCT SUB-GENRE

Although most of the crusading printed prose romances are translations of French sources, they nevertheless engage with and respond to late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century *English* concerns. Caxton acted as translator as well as printer for his works, frequently working to a high degree of accuracy, but his successor, Wynkyn de

¹⁰ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P. J. C. Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), Vol. I, p. 940, l. 15. Henceforth *Morte* or *Morte Darthur*.

¹¹ The parallels between the Wars of the Roses and the Arthurian civil war are so striking that the text’s concerns over chivalry, homosociality and community dominate critical response, just as the *Morte* dominates critical examination of the prose romances. See Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*; Catherine Nall, *Reading and War in Fifteenth-Century England, From Lydgate to Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012); Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 6; Jennifer Goodman, ‘Caxton’s Continent’, in *Caxton’s Trace*, ed. by William Kuskin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2006), pp. 101–23 (p. 109).

Worde, employed the translation skills of several others, including Henry Watson (*Valentine and Orson*) and Lord Berners (*Huon of Burdeux*).¹² Many of the prose romances are, therefore, Caxton's own interpretations of his sources – acts of cultural exchange between French and English literary cultures.¹³ Paul Zumthor's concept of *mouvance* is useful here: each text within late medieval work should not be treated as merely the product of alterations to the sources but as a new creation – a strand of a broader work, which is 'dynamic by definition' and 'fundamentally unstable'.¹⁴ Considering late medieval English translation from French, Sif Rikhardsdottir further suggests we can interpret a culture *through* a translated text, because the text is a 'product as well as witness of the culture that created it'.¹⁵ Scholars have also drawn upon Bernard Cerquiglini's similar concept of *variance* to suggest that medieval romance actually invites authors and translators to rework and recreate a text, even across cultures.¹⁶ The prose romances are recreations, with roots and analogues across a range of contexts from eleventh-century stories of crusade, Anglo-Norman *chanson de geste*, and fourteenth-century English verse romances.¹⁷ However, they resonate with

¹² On the literal nature of Caxton's translation, and on his accuracy, see the numerous critical introductions to Early English Texts Society editions of his works, notably: MacEdward Leach, 'Introduction', in *Paris and Vienne*, ed. by MacEdward Leach, EETS OS 234 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957 [1970]), pp. ix–xxxii (p. xxvi); W. T. Culley, 'Preface', in *Caxton's Eneydos*, ed. by M. T. Culley and F. J. Furnivall, EETS ES 57 (London: Trübner, 1980 [1913]), pp. v–xx (p. vi).

¹³ On cultural exchange, see Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: The Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 5–6.

¹⁴ Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), trans. by Philip Bennett as *Toward a Medieval Poetics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 43–48.

¹⁵ As Rikhardsdottir further notes, it can be counterproductive to speak of a translation purely in terms of its accuracy or errors, rather than considering the whole work as part of a broader cultural exchange. See Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, pp. 5–13 (p. 7).

¹⁶ See Marcel Elias, *Questioning the Crusades: Romance and History in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming), pp. 8–9; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 12–13; Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante: histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), trans. by Betsy Wing as *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes note that many Anglo-Norman crusading romances follow their Old French models in foregrounding the need for crusade. The *Fierabras* tradition, for example, depicts Saracens as a genuine threat on the borders of Christendom in its Anglo-Norman versions because the thirteenth century was a time of genuine crusading concerns. Caxton's *Godeffroy* is, similarly, a translation of a thirteenth-century French text with twelfth-century sources that demonstrate similar crusading concerns. Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes, 'Crusading, Chivalry and the Saracen World

fifteenth-century English audiences because their narratives prompt exploration of how chivalric, Christian and English identities might be renegotiated after Anglo-French conflict and the Wars of the Roses. They are texts of their time and of their culture, where even the French heroes central to many of the prose romances are positively re-cultured and re-framed to emphasise their Christian and chivalric nature in ways that can make them central to constructions of identity for English audiences.¹⁸

This study examines *printed* prose romances, to understand how crusading and communal identity concerns spoke to the broad audience made possible by the printing press. Caxton is central to this study because he established the first printing press in England in 1476, had considerably more success than his early competitors, and produced a corpus of romance that engaged with contemporary English mentalities.¹⁹ The printing press enabled the large-scale production of texts that could reach a wide range of people by responding to England's social, domestic, political and global concerns: English, Christian and chivalric identities were threatened by internal strife, and the Ottoman Empire had made incursions into Eastern Europe. Beyond England, printed literature already responded to such concerns; Guillaume Caoursin's *Description of the Siege of Rhodes*, for example, found immense popularity across

in *Insular Romance*', in *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Rosalind Field, Phillipa Hardman and Michelle Sweeney (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), pp. 45–65 (pp. 47–49).

¹⁸ See Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman, 'How English are the Charlemagne Romances?', in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 43–56; Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England: The Matter of France in Middle English and Anglo-Norman Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017); Robert Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation: defining a context for the Middle English Charlemagne Romances', in *Transformation and Tradition in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 87–100; Thomas H. Crofts and Robert Allen Rouse, 'Middle English Popular Romance and National Identity', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 79–95; Heng, *Empire of Magic*.

¹⁹ As Atkin and Edwards note, the vernacular dominated early printing in England to a far greater extent than in other European countries. Tamara Atkin and A. S. G. Edwards, 'Printers, Publishers and Promoters to 1558', in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain, 1476–1558*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 27–44 (pp. 28–39).

Western Europe because of its anti-Turk, pro-crusading sentiments.²⁰ The printing press did not instigate the changes that distinguish the prose romances from their predecessors, but it gave space for printers like Caxton and de Worde to market to a rapidly-growing audience, many of whom were already familiar with this type of printed material. Printers' roles in producing the prose romances also involved selecting and marketing the texts, and while I refer to Caxton as England's first printer he might also be considered its first *publisher*.²¹ The printing process was speculative by nature, producing many more copies at once than a single patron or sponsor might desire; it was not a matter of satisfying demand but *creating* it, and cultivating an audience large enough to match printing capacity.²² Caxton's introduction of print to England inaugurated a period of rapid expansion in the book trade, where printed books became a commodity that more people could access than ever before.²³ This meant that vernacular romance—a genre that invites debate and response and which regularly responds to the culture in which it is produced—had the potential to reach through the

²⁰ Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095–1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 305; Theresa M. Vann and Donald J. Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda: Guillaume Caoursin's Description of the Ottoman Siege of Rhodes, 1480* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

²¹ On printers and publishers, Lotte Hellinga notes that in 'the early days the two terms were often interchangeable' but they have more distinct definitions today. Throughout this study, I refer to *printing* and *printer* as inclusive of the broader selection and marketing processes usually encompassed by the *publishing* and *publisher*. This conflation recognises the extent to which the prose romances are distinct from earlier English verse romance, in part through their production and distribution via the printing press. See Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London: British Library, 2010), pp. 4–5.

²² As Hellinga suggests, some of Caxton's earliest translations were likely produced speculatively, based only on their potential appeal to an English audience. Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 23–24. See also David Carlson, 'A Theory of the Early English Printing Firm: Jobbing, Book Publishing, and the Problem of Productive Capacity in Caxton's Work', in *Caxton's Trace: Studies in the History of English Printing*, ed. by William Kuskin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 35–68 (pp. 48–52); Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances', p. 108.

²³ On early book ownership beyond courtly circles, see Mary C. Erler, 'The Laity', in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain 1476–1558*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 134–49; Margaret Lane Ford, 'Private Ownership of Printed Books', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain Volume III 1400–1557*, ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 205–228; Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 12–13.

printing press a greater readership than was possible through manuscript production alone.²⁴

Caxton printed the prose romances with prologues and epilogues, locating their narratives in the context of contemporary social and political anxieties and suggesting a didactic mode of reading. These prologues and epilogues can be considered as ‘paratexts’, as Gérard Genette defines the word: as a *threshold* for entry into the text, rather than a hard border that distinguishes it.²⁵ Caxton’s paratexts invited readers to consider how the texts respond to present-day issues, calling upon them to internalise and emulate the crusaders’ deeds. The destruction of Saracens is ‘a werk wel contemplatyf for to lyue wel’ (*Charles*, 2.2–3), and the great deeds of crusaders should encourage ‘the Redars and hierers, for teschewe and flee werkes vycious, dishonnest and vytuperable / And for tempryse and accomplysshe enterpryses honnestes’ (*Godeffroy*, 1.5–8).²⁶ These paratexts also created links between texts, binding the prose romances together as a coherent subgenre that spoke to a literary culture already interested in crusade. In this sense, we must also read Caxton’s prologues and epilogues as textual entries in their own right, with textual value and with developing traditions of their own.²⁷ Elizabeth Dearnley argues that the writers of late Middle English prologues were moving towards new models of vernacular prologue creation, rather than

²⁴ Julia Boffey, ‘From Manuscript to Print: Continuity and Change’, in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain 1476–1558*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 13–26 (p. 14).

²⁵ Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), trans. by Jane E. Lewin as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1–2.

²⁶ William Caxton, *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, ed. by Mary Noyes Colvin, EETS ES 64 (London: Trübner, 1893), 1.5–8. Henceforth *Godeffroy*.

²⁷ As Ruth Evans suggests, prologues are ‘sites where foundations are laid [...] which mark out a sphere of operations for the text that follows them’. Evans draws upon Derrida to suggest that his notion of prologues as ‘frames’ requires re-examination through the understanding that prologues and prefaces can be considered as texts in their own right, rather than a means of presenting something else. Ruth Evans, ‘An Afterword on the Prologue’, in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1999), pp. 371–78 (pp. 372–76).

following Latin or Anglo-Norman traditions; Caxton was, she suggests, ‘a refiner of a template which had been formulating for the past 300 years’.²⁸ Caxton’s prologues address reader concerns through rhetorical appeals and carefully-crafted references to England’s political reality. They were produced at a moment where Christian identity, which was fractured and redefined after decades of conflict between England and France, was being tested against the new threat of the Ottoman Empire expanding into Christian European lands.²⁹ Their response gestured towards the crusading past as a clear solution to an unclear present.

Although Caxton directly addresses many of his paratexts to courtly audiences, his true readership was far broader. Caxton operated outside traditional processes of manuscript patronage, but he frequently addresses members of the Burgundian and English courts as ideal readerships or pseudo-patrons who inspired his translation. As the editors of *The Idea of the Vernacular* note, even when prologues call upon their audiences directly, these ‘audiences’ are not clearly distinguished or defined; rather, they are a creation formed of authorial desire, of the potential cultural accessibility of a text, and of the text’s historical readership.³⁰ Rikhardsdottir’s work on translation and prologues is also useful here, drawing upon Anne Middleton’s distinction between ‘audience’, as the actual historical readership of a work, and ‘public’, as the imagined,

²⁸ Elizabeth Dearnley, *Translators and their Prologues in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016), pp. 5–6 and pp. 94–96 (p. 95). For the argument for Caxton’s Burgundian influences, notably see Diane Bornstein, ‘William Caxton’s Chivalric Romances and the Burgundian Renaissance in England’, *English Studies*, 57 (1976), 1–10.

²⁹ As Marco Nievergelt notes, the Hundred Years War had proved influential in earlier English romances such as the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Marco Nievergelt, ‘Conquest, Crusade and Pilgrimage: The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* in its Late Ricardian Crusading Context’, *Arthuriana*, 20.2 (2010), 89–116. See also A. J. Pollard, ‘English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood in the Later Fifteenth Century’, in *Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society*, ed. by Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel P. Franke (Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 140–58; Paul Strohm, *Politique: Languages of Statecraft between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

³⁰ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (eds.), *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1999), pp. 110–11.

aspirational readership for whom the translator imagines they are translating.³¹ For Caxton, the distinction is even less clear. The royal patrons Caxton frequently mentions in prologues and epilogues had little overlap with his actual audience of the mercantile, administrative, and landed gentry classes; these mentions were a form of authorial desire and a marketing strategy to attract the attention of readers aspiring to rise above their station.³² Therefore, as Chapter One explores, the prose romances attracted a broader readership than they initially appear to be marketed towards, engaging with socio-political concerns common across many levels of their readership.

Scholarship on the prose romances has generally focused on their response to the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War, with particular emphasis on Malory's *Morte Darthur*.³³ However, their concerns are not limited to England's domestic sphere. They also reflect outward-facing, geo-political anxieties about the real 'Eastern threat' of the Ottoman Empire and its expansion into Christian lands. English interests in crusade stemmed in part from two broad and interconnected anxieties. The first was that the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War had put strain on the extent to which England and Christendom, respectively, could present unified chivalric identities.³⁴ In her study of *Le Morte Darthur*, Felicity Riddy speaks of Malory's

³¹ Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, pp. 11–12; Anne Middleton, 'The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*', in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background*, ed. by David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), pp. 101–23.

³² Yu-Chiao Wang, 'Caxton's Romances and their Early Tudor Readers', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67.2 (2004), 173–88. On patronage and Caxton's non-romance printing, see Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 60–63.

³³ On the prose romances in light of the Wars of the Roses, see Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 193–214; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*. On reframing Charlemagne and Godfrey as Christian, rather than French, heroes, see Ailes and Hardman, 'How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?', pp. 43–56.

³⁴ On the extent to which the Wars of the Roses and Hundred Years War were significant parts of English textual identity during this period, see Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 55–91; Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*, pp. 4–21; Helen Castor, *Blood and Roses: The Paston Family and the Wars of the Roses* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005); Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 48–74; Richard Beadle and Lotte Hellinga, 'William Paston II and Pynson's *Statutes of War* (1492)', *The Library*, 2 (2001), 107–19; Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 102–05. On romance and English identity during this period, see Crofts and Rose, 'Middle English Popular Romance and National Identity', p. 83; Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005); Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation'.

intended audience as too young to have experienced England's triumphs in France but of a generation that witnessed the 'increasing slow demoralization of defeat' as England's French territories slipped away and the country drifted into civil war.³⁵ Catherine Nall likewise sees the deteriorating situation in England's French territories, and the domestic issues and internal strife in England, mirrored in texts such as the *Morte Darthur*.³⁶ Malory's audience could therefore find in romance a reflection of their own nostalgic visions for an imagined past when England and Christendom were united communities, in stark contrast to their reality of defeat in France and civil war. The second anxiety derives from the advance of the Ottoman Empire into Eastern and Central Europe throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, which threatened specific Christian strongholds such as Constantinople, and with that the belief in a strong and united Christendom.³⁷ In responding to this, the printed crusading narratives appealed to a readership interested in reclaiming land for the greater good of Christendom and remedying a perceived decline in active English chivalry.³⁸ As Christopher Tyerman suggests, 'the crusade continued to address some of the most prominent and contentious political issues of the day', both within and beyond England.³⁹ When Caxton selected and printed the prose romances, he produced a set of

³⁵ Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (New York: Brill, 1987), p. 3.

³⁶ Catherine Nall, 'Malory in Historical Context', in *A New Companion to Malory*, ed. by Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019), pp. 15–31 (p. 16); Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 20.

³⁷ As Chapter One explores, the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire in 1453 was a major blow that resonated across Western Christian Europe. Even though the city had not been under the jurisdiction of the Church of Rome since the East-West schism of 1054, its conversion into a Muslim city under Suleiman's conquests was viewed as a great loss to the faith as a whole. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 306–10; Norman Housley, *Crusading & the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 21–4; Norman Housley, *The Later Crusades From Lyons to Alcazar, 1274–1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 95–103 and 118–50; Andrei Pipidi, *Visions of the Ottoman World in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 18.

³⁸ On late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English concerns over chivalric identity and the Ottoman Empire, see A. J. Pollard, 'English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood'; Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (Croydon: Yale University Press, 1984, repr. 2005), p. 219; Hardman and Ailes, 'Crusading, Chivalry and the Saracen World'.

³⁹ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, p. 323. See also Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, pp. 120–21.

texts that responded to internal and external issues alike, highlighting through his prologues and epilogues how crusade might help to alleviate such concerns. In these statements, he draws upon a thought already prominent in late medieval English literary culture – Vegetius’ notion that external war leads to internal peace.⁴⁰

The crusading journeys of the prose romances are distinct from those of earlier English romance, in part because they explore how crusade might unify Christendom, stressing the potential for conversion and assimilation. The crusaders in these texts march into the East to convert fearsome Saracen warriors to Christianity, repurpose Saracen fortifications for their own benefit, and turn Saracen nigromancy and black magic against those that wield them. In considering conversion of both bodies and spaces, I draw upon spatial theory to distinguish between ‘place’, as a physical location, and ‘space’, which may be understood as a broader, non-physical concept reflecting how places can be ideologically charged by the people who occupy them and ideologically malleable in a way that allows conversion without damage to the surrounding structure.⁴¹ In the prose romances, the Saracen body itself becomes the site of conversion. In earlier romances, Saracens are killed rather than converted, but in the prose romances the conversion of valorous Saracen knights becomes a possibility, and is advanced as evidence of the productive potential of crusading. Even Saracen magic, which is often presented as black magic or nigromancy, is shown to be morally-complex and ‘convertible’ to the service of Christ. Saracen knights, who can be

⁴⁰ As Nall notes, Vegetius’ *De Re Militari* found popularity in late fifteenth-century England following the loss of English territories in France. Contemporary landed English readers understood and emphasised the importance of external war even when they were reluctant to pay the monetary and manpower costs required. Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 48–74; Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 143–44.

⁴¹ This view of space as having a reality that depends upon the ideology deployed within it stems from Henri Lefebvre’s work, *La production de l’espace*, which has been explored with reference to medieval literature through scholars such as Megan Cassidy-Welch. Megan Cassidy-Welch, ‘Space and Place in Medieval Contexts’, *Parergon*, 27.2 (2010), 1–12 (pp. 1–2). See also Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, repr. 1996); Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

productively reclaimed for Christendom, are also presented with more specificity than in earlier English romance. Although some thirteenth- and fourteenth-century representations of ‘Saracens’ encompass a broad spectrum of cultural groups, linked only by their non-Christian beliefs, the term had more specific connotations of Islamic enemies by the fifteenth century. In the prose romances, Saracens shift from being barbarous and ‘non-Christian’ and become specifically Islamic opponents on the fringes of Western European Christendom.⁴² The perceived danger of the Ottoman Turks influenced the ways in which Middle English romance constructed alterity, in no small part through religious and geopolitical difference.⁴³

This thesis historicises the prose romances, examining them as influenced by and contributing to perceptions of religious and racial ‘otherness’ in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* remains foundational here, in the suggestion that Western Europe defined itself against a constructed perception of the East, although critics have commented on Said’s notable omission of the Middle Ages.⁴⁴ From how the prose romances define Saracens by what they are not, as the

⁴² Jacqueline de Weever notes that, by the time of Malory’s writing, ‘Saracen’ had a popular culture association that was as ethnic as it was religious. Peter Goodrich further considers Malory’s Saracens in cultural terms by noting that the giant of Mont St. Michel is notably *not* Saracen, where monstrous giants of earlier English romance (such as those discussed in Chapter One) are afforded this identity. See Beatrice White, ‘Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory’, in *Medieval Literature and Civilization*, ed. by D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London: Athlone, 1969), pp. 170–91; Jacqueline de Weever, ‘The Saracen as Narrative Knot’, *Arthuriana*, 16.4 (2006), 4–9; Peter Goodrich, ‘Saracens and Islamic Alterity in Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*’, *Arthuriana*, 16.4 (2006), 10–28; Marianne Ailes, ‘Chivalry and Conversion: The Chivalrous Saracen in Old French Epics’, *Al-Masaq*, 9.1 (1996), 1–21.

⁴³ On defining ‘Saracens’ specifically through religious difference, see Amy Burge, *Representing Difference in Medieval and Modern Orientalist Romance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), p. 2; Siobhain Bly Calkin, ‘Saracens’, in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 185–200; Meg Roland, ‘From “Saracens” to “Infydeles”’: The Recontextualization of the East in Caxton’s Edition of *Le Morte Darthur*’, in *Re-Viewing Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by K. S. Whettler and Raluca L. Radulescu (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 65–78; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 13–60; John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (London: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 29–32; White, ‘Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory’, pp. 170–74.

⁴⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge, 1978, repr. London: Penguin, 2003). On medievalist critiques of Said’s work, see Burge, *Representing Difference*, pp. 2–4; Suzanne Conklin Akbari, ‘From Due East to True North: Orientalism and Orientation’, in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000, repr. 2001), pp. 19–34.

pejorative half of an imagined binary, one might come away with the impression that the medieval world was neatly divided into Christian and Islamic, white and black. Yet of course, it was not.⁴⁵ With the exception of some Saracen individuals who are converted (as discussed in Chapter Two), the prose romances' societies are white, monocultural, and monotheistic – a far cry from the cultural, racial, and religious diversity of late medieval Western Europe.⁴⁶ By contrast, romance often offers a world of seemingly-clear divisions between right and wrong.⁴⁷ It is true that in turning towards conversion rather than destruction, the prose romances *do* often complicate the binaries of good and evil that operate in the spheres of religion, culture, and race in medieval romance. However, any escape from these binaries is an exception based on an acceptance of their existence as the rule of life.

⁴⁵ Close contact between Christian and Islamic peoples was common across large parts of Western Europe, and depictions of productive, as well as militaristic, contact, were common too. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes that while racially-charged depictions of Saracens are prevalent in crusading propaganda, they 'continue to inhabit the fantasies of times and places no longer passionately invested in the destruction of Islam'. Scholars such as R. W. Southern and John V. Tolan have examined the diversity of Western European regions on cultural and religious borders, noting the religious diversity of cities such as Toledo in terms of geographical and racial divides. In 'The Invention of Race', Geraldine Heng examines the emergence of a Western European identity based on religion, suggesting late medieval racial thinking and radicalized behaviours predated our modern vocabulary of race. See Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment', pp. 113–46; Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*; Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*; Geraldine Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages', *Literature Compass*, 8.5 (2011), 315–331; Geraldine Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race', *Literature Compass*, 8.5 (2011), 332–350; Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); John Dagenais and Margaret Rich Greer, 'Decolonizing the Middle Ages: Introduction', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30.3 (2000), 431–448; Paul B. Sturtevant, 'Race, Racism, and the Middle Ages: Tearing down the "Whites Only" Medieval World', *The Public Medievalist*, Feb 2017 [Accessed 26/09/2019] <<https://www.publicmedievalist.com/race-racism-middle-ages-tearing-whites-medieval-world/>>.

⁴⁶ Close contact between Christian and Islamic peoples was entirely possible in England, although few records exist for study. As Mark Ormrod, Bart Lambert, and Jonathan Mackman have noted, a 'significant proportion [...] of the indigenous population of later medieval England must have had some direct contact, if only fleeting, with first-generation immigrants', and a Muslim presence in late medieval England – whilst impossible to ascertain with any great specificity – was not a new phenomenon in the sixteenth century. Mark Ormrod, Bart Lambert, and Jonathan Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300–1550* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 187–92 and p. 257 (quotation from p. 257).

⁴⁷ As Neil Cartlidge explores, however, these divisions are not always clear; some editors have attempted to rationalise romance moments that 'seem distinctly disproportionate, ambivalent or unexpected' to fit a predictable idea of reading. See Neil Cartlidge, 'Medieval Romance Mischief', in *Romance Rewritten: The Evolution of Middle English Romance*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald, Megan G. Leitch and Corinne Saunders (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), pp. 27–47 (pp. 30–31).

Religion was one of the primary indicators of Saracen otherness in late medieval thinking. Much literary scholarship already posits that other indicators of difference—such as skin colour, ethnicity, and monstrous appearance—can be read as stemming from the perceived religious alterity of Islam.⁴⁸ The romance meme in which baptism confers white skin serves as an example of the dependence of race upon religion; as Geraldine Heng notes of art and literature, ‘[e]lite human beings of the 14th century have a hue, and it is white’.⁴⁹ Heng’s statement is useful here as she highlights the constructed artifice of works like the prose romances which appeal to an ‘elite’ audience—here defined not by noble or courtly status but by their book-purchasing ability, their Christianity, and their whiteness—without dismissing the possibility of people of colour within this readership.⁵⁰ The printing press broadened the available audience for the prose romances, but these texts still primarily addressed the hegemonic ‘elite’ of white, Christian England; as Heng concludes, race—a term which here is inclusive of religion, ethnicity and class politics—is unspoken but ubiquitous at the centre of medieval cultural discourse: ‘the white Christian European in medieval time’.⁵¹ My focus on how the texts present crusade in terms we now perceive as a

⁴⁸ For key discussions of race, skin colour, monstrosity, and religious alterity in medieval romance, see Burge, *Representing Difference*; J. J. Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Cohen, ‘On Saracen Enjoyment’; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*; Sharon Kinoshita, ‘“Pagans are wrong and Christians are right”: Alterity, Gender, and Nation in the *Chanson de Roland*’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 79–112 (pp. 82–85); Robert Bartlett, ‘Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 39–56; William Chester Jordan, ‘Why “Race”?’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31.1 (2001), 165–74; Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, ‘Monsters and the Exotic in Medieval England’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, Greg Walker, and William Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 677–706 (pp. 679–80); See also the work of Dorothy Kim, including: Dorothy Kim, ‘Reframing Race and Jewish/Christian Relations in the Middle Ages’, *Transversal*, 13.1 (2015), 52–64.

⁴⁹ Quotation from Heng, ‘The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I’, p. 318. For further examples of this meme in the anonymous *cursor mundi* and Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale*, see discussion in Heng, ‘The Invention of Race II’, p. 344; Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 232–33; Heng, *The Invention of Race*, Burge, *Representing Difference*, pp. 6 and 103–104.

⁵⁰ Geraldine Heng further notes that one of racial theory’s core principles—that race has no singular or stable referent—means that racial logic can ‘stalk and merge with other hierarchical systems’, including ethnicity, class, and religion. We are thus able to read the ‘elite’ audience of the prose romances being hegemonic in all of these areas at once. See Geraldine Heng, ‘The Invention of Race I’, pp. 318–19.

⁵¹ Heng, ‘The Invention of Race II’, p. 344.

racially- and religiously-charged way should *not* be read as assuming a wholly white, Christian England or Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Instead, examining how this culture represents alterity in crusading romance reveals the imaginary binaries on which it attempted to construct itself, and which unfortunately have again become attractive to some people in the modern world.⁵²

DEFINITIONS: ‘CHRISTENDOM’, ‘THE EAST’, AND ‘CRUSADE’

The prose romances present Saracen individuals, spaces, and supernatural powers as ‘other’, and understanding this unfamiliarity requires an understanding of the religious binary around which the prose romances are constructed and the extent to which the romance Saracen is a fictional creation defined by what he is not. The texts distinguish between protagonist and antagonist through religious alignment and geographical location, and I define both ‘Christendom’ and ‘the East’ along these same lines.

Saracens are othered primarily through their physical and ideological distance from the Christian readership, whose own beliefs and ideologies are reflected in the chivalric protagonists. For the contemporary readership, Eastern Saracen lands were ‘other’ in every sense of the word: the average English individual’s worldview was limited by their inability to travel great distance or regularly interact with other religions and cultures. As Helen Cooper suggests, Europe ‘effectively constituted the known world’ to its writers and their audiences.⁵³ Anything west of Wales and Ireland was

⁵² The rise of the “alt-right” is a recent international political issue, bringing with it a rebranded form of white supremacy fuelled, in part, by false narratives about the white “purity” of medieval Europe (and, most frequently, Viking Scandinavia). The issue has prompted an outpouring of response from scholars of medieval history and literature. Notably, The Public Medievalist’s special series, *Race, Racism, and the Middle Ages* offers a valuable overview of, and rebuttal to, this ideology. See The Public Medievalist, *TPM Special Series: Race, Racism and the Middle Ages*, [Accessed 26/09/2019] < <https://www.publicmedievalist.com/race-racism-middle-ages-toc/> >; Dorothy Kim, ‘White Supremacists have Weaponized an Imaginary Viking Past. It’s Time to Reclaim the Real History’, *Time*, 12 April, 2019, [Accessed 26/09/19] < <https://time.com/5569399/viking-history-white-nationalists/> >.

⁵³ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 74.

almost-entirely inaccessible to English audiences prior to Columbus's voyage of 1492, and even those places east of Europe that were significant to Christianity, such as Constantinople or the Holy Land, were accessible only to the most intrepid English merchants or pilgrims. For most of England, knowledge of the wider world was gained not through personal experience but through reading material, including travel writing and popular romance.⁵⁴ In this fictional world, the Saracens could easily become 'twisted stereotypes'.⁵⁵ In examining these stereotypes, Paul Freedman suggests an important distinction between exoticising and othering the unknown, depending on whether a text presents difference as alluring or threatening.⁵⁶ However, Saracens in the prose romances cannot be so easily classified by Freedman's distinctions. Even when late medieval romance ventures beyond the Saracens threatening the borders of Christendom, distant places such as Babylon or India are tantalising in their inaccessibility, exotic in their potential for commercial opportunity, and still dangerous on account of their Saracen occupiers.⁵⁷ Saracen bodies in the prose romances are likewise both threatening and alluring to the reader; when Huon, in *Huon of Burdeux*, is tasked with slaying a prominent Saracen he is asked to return with his riches and a

⁵⁴ As Robert Rouse has argued, the close attention to detail that some late medieval romances afford geographical location means they can actually be read as guides, through which English readers or listeners could travel vicariously. See Robert Rouse, 'Walking (between) the Lines: Romance as Itinerary/Map', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 135–45 (pp. 135–38). On listeners, and the means by which audiences engaged with romance, see Karl Reichl, 'Orality and Performance', in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 132–49; Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*.

⁵⁵ Daniel J. Viktus, 'Early Modern Orientalism: Representations of Islam in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe', in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, ed. by David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 207–30 (pp. 207–209).

⁵⁶ Paul Freedman, 'Locating the Exotic', in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture*, ed. by Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2012), pp. 23–37 (p. 23).

⁵⁷ Mittman & Kim, 'Monsters and the Exotic in Medieval England', pp. 677–81; Freedman, 'Locating the Exotic'. For further discussion of exoticisation in popular romance, and in present day popular works drawing upon similar ideas, see Carolyne Larrington, *Winter is Coming: The Medieval World of Game of Thrones* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016), p. 7.

‘handfull of the here of hys herde / and .iiii. of hys grettest teth’.⁵⁸ Huon also captures the city of Babylon and procures the services of a faerie magician, demonstrating that Saracen cities and magics, like Saracen bodies, are sites of intrigue and interest in their alterity.

The prose romances refer to ‘Christendom’ to represent the known world of Christian, Western Europe as well as places further beyond that are deemed rightfully Christian land. The boundaries of this term are therefore amorphous: ‘Christendom’ is both a geographical area and an idealised, unified identity that transcends national boundaries and connects Christian readers by an imagined sense of belonging. It is the ideological and physical space against which Saracen alterity is defined. In geographical terms, the core of ‘Christendom’ is Christian Western Europe, notably including England, France, the Holy Roman Empire, the Italian Peninsula, and the Iberian Peninsula, despite the latter’s geographical and cultural links to Islamic North Africa. This area sometimes extends as far as the Orthodox Christian capital of Constantinople, or further still to the contested Holy Land, suggesting an aspirational reading of ‘Christendom’ as inclusive of places not aligned with the Church of Rome but upon which the Church maintained spiritual claims. In non-physical terms, then, ‘Christendom’ in the prose romances is an imagined space of unity where all Christians are united in the supremacy of their faith, without internal conflict, and bound in their unity through crusade. This imagined space is likewise aspirational.⁵⁹ Across the narratives, it sees Constantinople brought back under the control of the Church of Rome, sees Islam removed from the Iberian Peninsula in favour of Christianity, and

⁵⁸ John Bouchier (Lord Berners), *Duke Huon of Burdeux*, ed. by S. L. Lee, EETS ES 40 and 41 (London: Trübner, 1883), 50.20–21. Henceforth, *Huon*.

⁵⁹ On this space as imagined and aspirational, Kinoshita suggests that the crusaders’ failures are part of the reason why Christendom failed to secure a strong common identity. See Kinoshita, “‘Pagans are wrong and Christians are right’”, pp. 86–87.

sees the Holy Land reclaimed as a wholly Christian space. Caxton's references to 'Christendom' in the prologues and epilogues emphasise the extent to which this aspirational unity is a necessary response to 'the mescreauntes and turkes emprysed / ayenst Cristendom' (*Godeffroy*, 3.19–20). This warning, alongside the plea for Christian kings to 'make peas / amyte and allyaunce eche with other' (4.13–14), encourages readers to imagine 'Christendom' as a definite and contemporary place that is threatened by the Ottoman Turks, and as an idea of unity that can only be achieved by mending the current internal schisms in the faith. Caxton's English readers understood what Thorlac Turville-Petre refers to as the Church's 'supra-national' identity: a form of overarching community that, while not quite what we would define as 'international', existed alongside and transcended any growing feelings of national identity.⁶⁰ I use 'Christendom' throughout this thesis with the same aspirational duality as is found in the prose romances: 'Christendom' is both an imagined geographical space, where Christian control is found across Europe and in the Middle East, and a nostalgic idea of the religion as a united community rallied against a single cause, here in the form of the 'Saracen' Ottoman Turks.

Whilst 'Christendom' succinctly expresses a geographical area and aspirational form of unity across the faith, the prose romances offer no equivalent term that encompasses Saracen spaces and ideologies, no 'Saracendom'. Saracens in romance are defined by their alterity, and whilst Christian perspectives are grounded in the creator's known experience, those of Saracens and the Islamic East are largely constructed from

⁶⁰ Here, see Thorlac Turville-Petre's analysis of the *Cursor Mundi*, in which he suggests that trans-national identities such as that of the Christian church did not overrule developing national identities but existed alongside them. Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 40–46. Geraldine Heng also notes the rise of an English nationalistic identity in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, though one which does not resemble a modern state in any way. She suggests that crusade became a productive channel for nationalistic feelings, which were separate from but concurrent with the creation of broader Western European identities (such as 'Christendom') due to internal schisms within Christianity. Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 68–73.

misinformation.⁶¹ The prose romances locate the Saracen East differently from text to text, never clearly delineated by geographic or political borders but always distinguished by political and spiritual distance from Christendom. Saracen spaces are therefore imagined, stemming from the images of Islam that spread from those formed by the first crusaders in the twelfth century.⁶² Imagined Saracen spaces often overlap with the aspirational geography of Christendom, creating an impetus for reconquest through crusade: the Saracens of *Charles the Grete* occupy the Iberian peninsula until Charlemagne recaptures it and builds churches, and the Saracens of *Godeffroy* hold Jerusalem until the city is taken in crusade. In other prose romances, Saracen spaces are orientalist and exoticised versions of distant places, such as Ynde in *Valentine and Orson* or Babylon in *Huon of Burdeux*. While these locations have real-world counterparts, even they are imagined spaces in the sense that neither reader nor writer possessed verifiable knowledge of them or were ever likely to visit them. Each of these Saracen spaces is ripe for capture on crusade, marked by otherness but familiar and close enough to fit within an aspirational ‘Christendom’. In the absence of a ‘Saracendom’, I refer to these spaces as ‘the East’ throughout this thesis.⁶³ While not perfect, the term emphasises the distance between Western European ‘Christendom’ and

⁶¹ Viktus, ‘Early Modern Orientalism’, pp. 207–09; White, ‘Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory’, pp. 170–71.

⁶² These images came about at a time of ‘great imaginative development in Western Europe’, and many of them formed the very foundations of Arthurian and Carolingian romance, such as the *Chanson de Roland* or the works of Chrétien de Troyes, which were subsequently recreated throughout the Middle Ages. See Southern, *Western Views of Islam*, pp. 28–31.

⁶³ This term is partially informed by two critical viewpoints. The first is Mittman and Kim’s use of the term ‘Near East’, through which they productively distinguish what we might know as the ‘Far East’ of India and the Orient or the modern-day ‘Middle East’. The second is Burge’s discussion of how we might distinguish the East in fantasy and in reality. Burge uses the term ‘romance east’ to refer to the created Saracen world and ‘east’ to refer to the cultural realities of the twenty-first century contexts which inform her research. These different means of defining a constructed space and culture reflect the different thematic and contextual approaches taken in these two studies. This thesis adopts similar, but not identical, terminology. See Mittman and Kim, ‘Monsters and the Exotic in Medieval England’. On imagined liminal spaces, see Sharon Kinoshita, ‘Locating the Medieval Mediterranean’, in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture*, ed. by Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2012), pp. 39–52 (p. 48); Burge, *Representing Difference*, pp. 13–15.

the othered Saracen lands in a way that reflects the real-world geographical and ideological concerns to which the prose romances speak.

The prose romances sometimes feature formal crusades against targets like Jerusalem, but many feature instead what I refer to as ‘crusading journeys’: individuals or small groups of knights adventuring into Saracen lands for the purpose of bolstering Christendom or their own place within it. Even though these journeys are not formal crusades, they tend to accomplish similar crusading aims. In *Huon of Burdeux*, Huon restores his family’s honour in Charlemagne’s eyes but also recaptures Babylon for Christendom, almost unintentionally, along the way; in *Charles the Grete*, after Charlemagne ends his campaign to rescue his peers from Saracen clutches, he conquers Iberia and constructs churches throughout the land. This trend is in part a continuation of what scholars have identified in fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century crusading romances: a tendency, as Lee Manion notes, ‘not to concentrate on the Holy Land directly, instead representing and reflecting on the locations that most concerned English crusaders and crusading thought – Iberia, Italy, and Eastern Europe’.⁶⁴ As Marcel Elias has more recently noted, fourteenth-century crusading romance illustrated contemporary concerns about the loss of the Holy Land while also reframing traditional crusade rationale in light of more localised threats to Christendom, like the Turkish conquests in the Balkans.⁶⁵ The late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century century

⁶⁴ Lee Manion, *Narrating the Crusades: Loss and Recovery in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 109. Also, on the extent to which crusading romance can be read as a distinct subgenre of late medieval literature, see Heng, *Empire of Magic*, Cohen, ‘On Saracen Enjoyment’, p. 133.

⁶⁵ Here, see also Leila K. Norako’s and Tyerman’s arguments on ‘recovery romance’ as a distinct subgenre of crusading romance, of texts that advocate for recovery of the Holy Land. Whilst Norako focuses on those texts specifically interested in the Holy Land, other scholars such as Elias have noted the importance of recovery as crusading impetus in other, more localised conflicts. Leila K. Norako, ‘*Sir Isumbras* and the Fantasy of Crusade’, *The Chaucer Review*, 48.2 (2013), 166–89 (pp. 167–68); Tyerman, *God’s War*, pp. 827–29; Elias, *Questioning the Crusades*, pp. 1–2; Elias, ‘Rewriting Chivalric Encounters’, pp. 51–52; Manion, *Narrating the Crusades*; Lee Manion, ‘The Loss of the Holy Land and “*Sir Isumbras*”: Literary Contributions to Fourteenth-Century Crusade Discourse’, *Speculum*, 85.1 (2010), 65–90; Housley, *The Later Crusades*; Leila K. Norako, ‘William Caxton’s Godeffroy of

English prose romances continued to advocate for reclaiming the Holy Land but also reframed the idea of crusade to include a broader range of personal and penitential journeys to secure the borders of Christendom from Saracen threats.

The definition of ‘crusade’ in this context is therefore broader than a church-sanctioned campaign aimed at recovering the Holy Land. Romance journeys into the East and against Saracen forces, for pilgrimage, penance, or sheer adventure, can also be understood as crusades. Prose romance protagonists are *crucesignati*, or ‘cross-bearers’, in the sense that their journeys are undertaken for the benefit of Christendom and to encourage the same commitment in their readership.⁶⁶ The definition of *crucesignati* alters across the late Middle Ages, but it generally conflates crusade and pilgrimage as journeys of faith that often contain physically-demanding, martial elements, performed for the benefit of Christians against Saracen ‘Others’. As Tyerman suggests:

A crusader, a *crucesignatus* or man signed with the cross, was someone who, with the approval of his local priest or other authoritative cleric, swore a vow to go to fight the enemies of the church, in the Holy Land or elsewhere. [...] Once the cross had been received, the crusader became, like the pilgrim, immune from various secular liabilities and enjoyed the spiritual privilege of full remission of confessed sins. Such, at least, was in crude outline the standard practice as it had developed by 1200.⁶⁷

During the fifteenth century, the ceremony for becoming a *crucesignatus* was still available and in use in England; as Chapter One explores, its continued popularity may have been connected to a persistent interest in crusading in the wake of the Ottoman Empire’s expansion.⁶⁸ Though there was no further united action against the Holy Land

Boloyne’, *The Crusades Project*, [Accessed 26/09/2019]
<<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/crusades/text/william-caxtons-godeffroy-of-boloyne>>.

⁶⁶ Michael Markowski, ‘Crucesignatus: Its Origins and Early Usage’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 10 (1984), 157–65.

⁶⁷ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

after 1291, crusades were still regularly called throughout the Middle Ages to address threats on the borders of Christendom, in places like the Iberian Peninsula.⁶⁹ The *crucesignati* of the prose romances offer this readership a model by which contemporary anxieties over political issues, like the Ottoman Empire's expansion, might be martially resolved by and for Christendom. While these protagonists do not always engage in formal crusades, the journeys they undertake demonstrate a martial, active form of Christendom that takes them into the borderlands of Christendom that concerned their late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century readership.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The main research contexts for my own work are Malory studies, romance studies, studies on William Caxton and the development of English print, and those studies that explore textual reception in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.

Scholarly research on late Middle English printed romance, whilst recently beginning to broaden in outlook, has principally confined itself to a single work: *Le Morte Darthur*.⁷⁰ Studies that contextualise the history or style of the work have most frequently looked towards earlier Arthurian traditions and English verse romances for comparison, focusing on its sources and early analogues rather than its contemporary connections to other prose romances.⁷¹ Many of these studies focus on Malory's role as

⁶⁹ Manion, *Narrating the Crusades*; Manion, 'The Loss of the Holy Land', pp. 65–90; Housley, *The Later Crusades*.

⁷⁰ As Leitch suggests, *Le Morte Darthur* has 'often been perceived as a solitary landmark in a desolate literary landscape'. See Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 6; Goodman, 'Caxton's Continent', p. 109.

⁷¹ Leitch overviews some of the ways in which Malory has been conventionally read in terms of his literary inheritance and his contemporary politics, whilst acknowledging reading the *Morte* alongside contemporary *texts* is a productive approach when considering what is conventional and what is not about Malory's work. See Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019), pp. 79–95 (pp. 80–81). For scholarship on Malory's literary influences, see P. J. C. Field, *Romance and Chronicle: A Study of Malory's Prose Style* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1971); P. J. C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993); P. J. C. Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998); Ralph Norris, *Malory's Library: The Sources of the Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.

creator of the *Morte*, navigating the tricky issue of the *Morte*'s posthumous printing in 1485 by only briefly discussing the differences between this edition and the surviving Winchester Manuscript before returning to comparison with French sources where distinctions can be more clearly attributed to Malory. However, as Rikhardsdottir suggests, attempting to produce an original or 'authentic' version of any translated text discounts the cultural mobility of the work and its cross-cultural discourse.⁷² As Field notes of *Le Morte Darthur*, 'the work is prior to the author' – most scholarly interest in Malory stems from interest in the *Morte*.⁷³ Other studies have productively read the various characters, themes, motifs, and episodes of *Le Morte Darthur* in terms of English domestic and cultural issues including, prominently, changing perceptions of chivalric ideals and the civil instability of the Wars of the Roses reflected in the *Morte*'s ending.⁷⁴ However, the range of prose romances alongside which *Le Morte Darthur* is printed offer similar and underexplored insight into these same cultural issues, and more beside. These prose romances remain understudied, but an expanding field of research has begun to treat the *Morte*'s engagement with fifteenth-century social contexts as part of a pattern across the genre.⁷⁵ This thesis builds upon such recent critical work,

S. Brewer, 2008); Larry Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976, repr. 1977); Felicity Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Miriam Edlich-Muth, *Malory and his European Contemporaries: Adapting Late Arthurian Romance Collections* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014); Ralph Norris, 'Malory and His Sources', in *A New Companion to Malory*, ed. by Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019), pp. 32–52.

⁷² Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, pp. 6–9 (n. 13).

⁷³ Field, *Romance and Chronicle*, p. 3. See also Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton, 'Introduction', in *A New Companion to Malory*, ed. by Megan G. Leitch and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019), pp. 1–10 (pp. 2–3).

⁷⁴ Notably, on *Le Morte Darthur* and its fifteenth-century reception on matters of war and chivalry, see Nall, *Reading and War*; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*; Jennifer Goodman, 'Malory and Caxton's Chivalric Series, 1481–85', in *Studies in Malory*, ed. by James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), pp. 257–74; Thomas H. Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience: The Social Reading of Romance in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006); Dorsey Armstrong, 'Postcolonial Palomides: Malory's Saracen Knight and the Unmaking of the Arthurian Community', *Exemplaria*, 18.1 (2006), 175–203; Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*, pp. 83–112.

⁷⁵ On those studies that examine *Le Morte Darthur* in the context of these prose romances, see Helen Cooper, 'Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-Killing in the Prose Romances', in *The Long Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 141–62; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*; Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*. See also Raluca Radulescu, who reads

considering *Le Morte Darthur* amidst other contemporary printed romances, not as a solitary pillar but part of a wider foundation of texts reflecting upon societal views and values.

With regard to Caxton's prose romances, criticism has recently moved away from seeing them as primarily Burgundian products. There are certainly some cross-European trends in Caxton's romances, such as the motif of the Nine Worthies, which some critics have considered to be the main impetus behind Caxton's printing programme.⁷⁶ Caxton established the worthies grouping in some of his prologues, referencing a motif already popular in medieval literature and art and focusing on the Christian members: Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon.⁷⁷ However, as Chapter One argues, considering only the Worthies as the link between these texts is limiting, because it excludes other, non-Worthies romances, like de Worde's *Huon of Burdeux* and *Valentine and Orson*, and other printed materials that speak to the same cultural concerns, such as *Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*. More recent work, such as that of Kuskin and Leitch, has shifted the focal point of analysis towards England, reading the prose romances as influenced by and influencers of English culture rather than as defined solely by their Burgundian heritage.⁷⁸ Kuskin's and Leitch's

Malory's work alongside a broad range of English romance: Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*; Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*.

⁷⁶ On earlier work, see N. F. Blake, *Caxton and His World* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), pp. 67–72; Bornstein, 'William Caxton's Chivalric Romances'; Goodman, 'Malory and Caxton's Chivalric Series'; Cooper, 'Counter-Romance'; William Kuskin, 'Caxton's Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture', *ELH*, 66.3 (1999), 511–51. More recent critical work refocuses the discussion on how Caxton's use of the 'Worthies' device allowed him to market to a broad audience concerned with royalty, authority, and spectacle. Notably, Goodman's 'Caxton's Continent' actively calls for a move away from Burgundy-centric scholarship, including that of her prior work. See Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 194–99; Goodman, 'Caxton's Continent', p. 119; Roland, 'From "Saracens" to "Infydeles"', p. 74.

⁷⁷ On the Worthies more broadly, see Bruce Dickens, 'The Nine Unworthies', in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. by D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London: Athlone, 1969), pp. 228–32; Israel Gollancz, 'Appendix: Texts Illustrative of "The Nine Worthies" etc.', in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. by Israel Gollancz (London: Oxford University Press, 1915); Blake, *Caxton and His World*, p. 110; Fichte, 'Caxton's Concept of "Historical Romance"', pp. 101–13.

⁷⁸ Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 234–35; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 140–43. See also Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances'.

examinations of how the prose romances respond to domestic concerns provide sturdy foundations in this field. However, this thesis considers aspects that these two seminal works leave largely unaddressed: the extent to which the prose romances' response to geopolitical English anxieties over crusade and supra-national identity is relevant to English readers in the same way as their interaction with England's internal social concerns.

This thesis also builds upon discussions of print history and the roles of Caxton and de Worde as content creators and curators. Studies focusing on Caxton and his work, like George Painter's biography and the works of N. F. Blake, offer important insights into the textual and socio-political influences upon his printing output.⁷⁹ Other significant studies, such as those of Kuskin, Wang, and Hellinga, offer detailed analyses of the social and cultural impact of Caxton's printing upon English audiences.⁸⁰ These discussions are informed by, but not reliant upon, Caxton's time spent in continental Europe. There has been some initial study into how much Caxton's literary agenda included crusading concerns, primarily concentrating on Caxton's textual choices rather than the potential appeal to English audiences.⁸¹ Some recent Caxton scholarship also questions the extent of his work as publisher by considering the editorial and authorial influence he may have had over *Le Morte Darthur*.⁸² Caxton's contributions to print

⁷⁹ George Painter, *William Caxton: A Quincentenary Biography of England's First Printer* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976); N. F. Blake, *Caxton: England's First Publisher* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1976); N. F. Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973); Blake, *Caxton and His World*.

⁸⁰ Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*; Hellinga, *William Caxton*; Wang, 'Caxton's Romances and Their Early Tudor Readers'; Russell Rutter, 'William Caxton and Literary Patronage', *Studies in Philology*, 84.4 (1987), 440–70.

⁸¹ Warm, 'Identity, Narrative and Participation', p. 87; Joerg Fichte, 'Caxton's Concept of "Historical Romance" within the Context of the Crusades: Conviction, Rhetoric, and Sales Strategy', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 105–15 (pp. 105–11).

⁸² John Withrington, 'Caxton, Malory, and the Roman War in the "Morte Darthur"', *Studies in Philology*, 89.3 (1992), 350–66; Meg Roland, 'Arthur and the Turks', *Arthuriana*, 16.4 (2006), 29–42; Charles Wuest, 'Closure and Caxton's Malory', *Arthuriana*, 27.4 (2017), 60–78; Thomas Hanks Jr., 'William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde, and the Editing of Malory's *Morte Darthur*', in *Arthurian Literature XXII*, ed. by Keith Busby and Roger Dalrymple (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 46–67.

culture resonated beyond his death in 1491, and the temporal scope of this thesis also encompasses the working lifespan of his successor, Wynkyn de Worde, who has received a recent surge of scholarly attention arguing that his output should not be oversimplified as a greedy extension of Caxton's idealistic printing.⁸³ The dates I specify—from 1473 to 1534—also find overlap in several current and overarching studies of English print; these include Kathleen Tonry's discussion of agency and intention and Julia Boffey's consideration of literary media, indicating the importance of these years to English literary identity.⁸⁴

Recent monographs by Helen Cooper and Raluca Radulescu have addressed the extent to which romance found real contemporary relevance in late medieval England, examining its form, style, and subject matter. Cooper suggests the genre was undergoing a shift from verse into prose during the period in which Caxton began printing, noting that the printed prose romances diverged from the prior model of following the adventures of a single hero to offer instead an overarching societal focus.⁸⁵ Radulescu explores the political reception of fifteenth-century Middle English romances, as compared to earlier English romances, by considering how the texts treat political and monarchical concerns. She highlights how physical and spiritual journeys in romance provide 'opportunity to engage with the political realities of the day'.⁸⁶ This thesis likewise examines how the spiritual and secular journeys of the prose romances foreground religious warfare as a solution for real internal and external political issues,

⁸³ Carol M. Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance in Late Medieval England', *The Library*, 14.4 (1992), 283–98; Hanks, 'William Caxton, Wynykn de Worde, and the Editing of Malory's *Morte Darthur*'; A. S. G. Edwards and Carol Meale, 'The Marketing of Printed Books in Late Medieval England', *The Library*, 15.2 (1993), 95–124; William N. West, 'Old News: Caxton, de Worde, and the Invention of the Edition', in *Caxton's Trace*, ed. by William Kuskin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 241–74.

⁸⁴ Tonry, *Agency and Intention in English Print, 1476–1526*; Julia Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London, c. 1475–1530* (London: The British Library, 2012); Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (eds.), *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain, 1476–1558* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014).

⁸⁵ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 33–40. See also Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 184–88.

⁸⁶ Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*, p. 38.

and how the motivations and actions of romance heroes were presented as models for the English readership. How romances were received within this political landscape has also proved a productive area of interest for many scholars; studies such as those of Miriam Edlich-Muth and Thomas Crofts explore how Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* was received by a readership that had been expanding rapidly throughout the fifteenth century.⁸⁷ This thesis builds upon these discussions to examine how the largely non-English crusading heroes in the prose romances offer in their exploits a vision of England and Christendom united against an external 'other'.

Caxton and de Worde selected and printed the prose romances in response to contemporary concerns, and central to these concerns was the persistent chivalric ideology that underpinned the construction of late medieval English identity.⁸⁸ As A. J. Pollard demonstrates, chivalric ideology formed the core of political policy for Edward IV even though the fifteenth century had seen a decline in numbers of those who would actively perform the martial, physical expectations of a *chevalier*.⁸⁹ Caxton laments the loss of this performance when asking, in the prologue to *Ordre of Chyualry*, 'where is the custome and vsage of noble chyualry that was vsed in tho days?'⁹⁰ The late fifteenth-century English political landscape at the point Caxton began printing was tumultuous, following England's losses in the Hundred Years War and amidst the final years of the Wars of the Roses. The themes and ideas to which the prose romances speak reflect this social instability.⁹¹ However, as the first chapter of this thesis shows, historical events such as the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453 and the Wars of

⁸⁷ Nall, *Reading and War*; Edlich-Muth, *Malory and His European Contemporaries*; Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience*.

⁸⁸ Keen, *Chivalry*, pp. 238–41; Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2011).

⁸⁹ Pollard, 'The Decline of Strenuous Knighthood'.

⁹⁰ Ramon Llull, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry translated by William Caxton*, ed. by Alfred T. P. Byles, EETS OS 168 (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 122.7–8. Henceforth, *Ordre*.

⁹¹ See Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 44–46.

the Roses throughout the late fifteenth century created an environment in which older chivalric crusading narratives found new relevance. These narratives considered the form of ‘English’ and ‘Christian’ identities which had become fractured through recent conflicts.⁹² The prose romances explore these ideas of group identity and respond to the changing nature of chivalry in an optimistic sense, in that they foreground how crusade might help to re-forge these identities.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

This thesis has four major chapters. The first begins by examining the printed prose romances and the English cultural context in which they are produced. It considers two major historical contexts to which the prose romances respond: English concerns over crusade as prompted by the Ottoman Empire’s expansion, and nostalgia for an imagined romance past in which English, Christian, and chivalric identities had not suffered the fractures of the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War. In this chapter I argue that Caxton’s prologues and epilogues linked these texts and their contexts with the broader crusading interests of a rapidly-expanding reading audience. By reading Caxton’s prologues in the context of other contemporary printed material such as siege propaganda and printed indulgences, I examine how his crusading appeals would have been received by an audience concerned with the growth of the Ottoman Empire.⁹³ This chapter also compares the crusading themes of *Le Morte Darthur* and the other prose romances to suggest that Malory’s work must be read for its concerns beyond England as well as within it. It argues that Caxton selected his crusading prose romances in part

⁹² Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*; Paul Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422* (London: Yale University Press, 1998); Strohm, *Politique*; Daniel Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature 1430–1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹³ Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda*; Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*; Housley, *Crusading & the Ottoman Threat*.

because their central narratives spoke to late medieval English crusading desires, a focus that is also reflected in his editorial influence upon the *Morte Darthur*.⁹⁴

Chapter Two explores how the prose romances represent individual Saracens in a manner distinct from earlier English romances, by focusing on how they can be assimilated into Christendom. The texts redefine the romance ‘Saracen’ as explicitly Islamic and closely associated with the threat posed by the Ottoman Turks. They encourage a reading of Saracen bodies as potential sites for conversion in a way that highlights both the connection and opposition of the Christian/Saracen binary. By focusing on the Saracen warriors and princesses whom the Christian knights commonly find, fight, or fall in love with on their journeys into the Saracen world, this chapter demonstrates how the prose romances rearticulate the component parts of the ‘worthy Saracen’ meme to show how a strong Christian, chivalric community can be expanded through conversion. Saracen princesses are exoticised in their abnormality, even when their appearance is whitewashed to avoid insinuating interracial or interfaith relations when they eventually marry Christian knights.⁹⁵ Gigantic Saracen warriors, honourable in their martial prowess but otherwise monstrous, are chivalric equals to the Christian knights, who defeat and convert them in single combat. This chapter argues that the conversion sequences of Saracen knights are particular to the prose romances, and they speak to contemporary hopes that crusade might expand and unite the Christian, chivalric community.

⁹⁴ The word ‘publishing’ here refers to all of a printer’s interactions with a text, including textual selection, setting and printing, editorial choices, and marketing. As Alexandra Gillespie suggests, Caxton’s editions are ‘not a static or stable basis for enquiry’, but paradoxical creations that have been complicated by transmission and translation and will be complicated again by editing and reprinting. See Alexandra Gillespie, “‘Folowyng the Trace of Mayster Caxton’: Some Histories of Fifteenth-Century Printed Books”, in *Caxton’s Trace*, ed. by William Kuskin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 167–95; Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate and Their Books, 1473–1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹⁵ Jacqueline de Weever, *Sheba’s Daughters: Whitening and Demonizing the Saracen Woman in Medieval French Epic* (London: Garland Publishing, 1998).

Chapter Three further considers how the prose romances represent the East differently from earlier English romances by concentrating on the geography and setting of these constructed locations. This chapter considers Saracen spaces and architecture in the prose romances, where bridges, towers, cities, and gateways each play integral roles as conduits into the Saracen East and manifestations of its alterity. Symbolic of broader Saracen ideology, these are spaces invested with meaning and power – markers on the page of a book that demonstrate Christendom’s continued success on crusade. They are crusading targets for their value to Christendom, as bastions of war or as holy cities such as Jerusalem and Constantinople, and the texts emphasise the need to convert and capture space to expand and fortify Christendom. I draw upon spatial theory here to examine the ways in which crusaders are depicted as invading, occupying, and defending space, suggesting that these spaces are ideologically permeable and that their religious significance is defined by their present occupiers. These spaces, which include Saracen bodies, provide a model of how late medieval Ottoman foes might be defeated in a way that strengthens Christendom. Taken together, the two central chapters of this thesis show how the prose romances realign core romance memes in dialogue with late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century crusading concerns.

Chapter Four considers how the prose romances rearticulate central romance motifs of magic and the supernatural in ways that speaks to contemporary crusading concerns. The prose romances reframe common supernatural memes, such as magical swords and precious stones or characters who wield dark power, along the lines of their religious binaries, accentuating the links between the Saracens of romance and the Ottoman Turks. Supernatural elements here emphasise the alterity of the Saracen East as a place—and a system of beliefs—so wholly, culturally ‘other’ that it poses a genuine threat to English and Christian identities. The texts also frequently attach supernatural

powers or objects to Saracen antagonists in ways that emphasise alterity: characters of the East, like Eastern places, are not only physically dangerous to crusaders but morally dangerous to Christendom itself in their paganistic spiritualism. However, the prose romances just as frequently show Christian interaction with magic and the supernatural in a manner that demonstrates, similarly to their interaction with Saracen people and places, how Saracen magic and the supernatural can be assimilated to help the crusading journey and strengthen Christendom as a whole. In concentrating on the reception and reworking of core romance memes in this final chapter, this study draws towards a conclusion synthesising the ways in which the prose romances, while drawing heavily on romance traditions, are distinguished from their predecessors through their adaptation of familiar romance memes to suit a specific context: late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England and its concerns regarding crusade and community identity.

CHAPTER ONE: PRINT CULTURE AND CRUSADING

DESIRES

This chapter explores the crusading interests of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English printed prose romances, and argues that the prose romances offer crusade as an imagined solution to contemporary anxieties about a lack of social cohesion and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. In this period, crusade is a ‘live issue’, as Ailes and Hardman put it,¹ and one that the texts indicate has the potential to unite England and Christendom in light of the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War. The notion that such unity could be achieved, and internal fractures mended, by external war against an obvious ‘other’ was already present in English literary culture from translations of Vegetius’ *de re Militari*.² Caxton’s prologues and epilogues elaborate on these ideas by making explicit textual comparisons between the Saracens of prose romances and the Ottoman Turks that threatened Christendom at his time of printing. Both Caxton and de Worde present the prose romances as didactically suitable for a broad audience, printed ‘tenflawme the hertes of the Redars and hierers’ (*Godeffroy*, 1.5–6) towards crusade.

This chapter begins with an overview of how the prose romances are interested in crusade as a way to restore social unity in England and Christendom. It then follows the production process of the prose romances to examine how translators selected them, how printers framed and presented them, and how late medieval audiences might have engaged with them amongst other printed material that spoke to their cultural anxieties.

¹ Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England*, pp. 120–21.

² On Vegetius, and the perceived correlation between external war and internal peace, see Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 11–47 and pp. 143–44; Nall, ‘Malory in Historical Context’, pp. 28–30; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 143–54; Pollard, ‘English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood’, pp. 140–58. On English and Christian identities, see the introduction to this thesis, and: Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, p. vi.

It ends by considering how *Le Morte Darthur* addresses these same anxieties, and how the external campaigns of this text respond to calls for crusade and the threat of the Ottoman Turks.

THE PRINTED PROSE ROMANCES

Concerns about crusade and social cohesion had already found expression in mid-fifteenth-century English prose romances, such as the *Siege of Thebes* and *Siege of Troy*.³ However, the advent of the printing press allowed Caxton's and de Worde's books to reach a far wider audience, resulting in a distinct subgenre of romance that responded to current crusading concerns, particularly the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. The printed crusading prose romances on which this thesis focuses are Caxton's *Godeffroy of Boloyne* (1481), *Charles the Grete* (1485), *Le Morte Darthur* (1485), *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (1488); and de Worde's *Valentine and Orson* (c. 1510) and *Huon of Burdeux* (c. 1515). Caxton also printed the similarly-focused chivalric handbooks *Book of the Fayttes of Arms* (1481) and *Ordre of Chyualry* (1484) alongside these romances. This section reviews how these texts engage with the crusading ideology of the period, beginning with the *Morte Darthur*.

Malory's *Morte Darthur* is an outlier amongst the crusading prose romances because it is the only one of the group that includes English sources.⁴ The *Morte*'s focus on social and chivalric cohesion is characteristic of other romances, and the extent to which the Arthurian civil war speaks to contemporary issues of social cohesion and civil

³ Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 92–136.

⁴ Malory's sources for the *Morte* include the French Vulgate cycle, alongside the English Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* but Caxton's print can itself be seen as an adaptation of Malory's completed English work, rather than a translation of any French sources. See Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, and, more recently, Norris, *Malory's Library*.

war has been well established.⁵ However, the parts of the *Morte* that turn outward to examine external threats to Christendom have received less attention.⁶ As we shall see, the Roman War episode is more closely associated with crusading impulses in Malory's *Morte* than in his source, and it is even more closely associated still in Caxton's 1485 print. The *Morte*'s ending also emphasises that social unity can only be restored after disaster by reverting to a martial, crusade-focused form of chivalry.

The earliest of the English printed prose romances considered in this chapter is *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, which Caxton printed in 1481. It is a translation of the first nine books of William of Tyre's *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, a retelling of the First Crusade and the capture of Jerusalem originally written in the twelfth century. Caxton printed *Godeffroy* as the first of three texts on the Christian three of the Nine Worthies, a grouping which he established in his prologues.⁷ Caxton's translation focuses on Godfrey's actions in the first crusade, cutting off after the crusade is won where the *Historia* continues to tell the history of Jerusalem after Godfrey's death.⁸ *Godeffroy* is the prose romance most explicitly focused on crusade, and the only one to claim it is based on an actual crusade, despite being a fictional retelling. It details the entirety of the crusade, including the crusaders' journeys to the Holy Land, via Eastern Europe and the great city of Constantinople, locations which are all significant

⁵ Cooper, 'Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-Killing'; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*; Felicity Riddy, 'Contextualizing *Le Morte Darthur*: Empire and Civil War', in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 55–73; Nall, 'Malory in Historical Context', pp. 29–31; Derek Pearsall, 'The Idea of Englishness in the Fifteenth Century', in *Nation, Court and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth Century English Poetry*, ed. by Helen Cooney (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), pp. 15–27.

⁶ Nievergelt, 'Conquest, Crusade and Pilgrimage', pp. 89–116; Marcel Elias, 'Rewriting Chivalric Encounters', pp. 49–65. As Chapter Two of this thesis explores, Malory's Palomides has received considerable critical attention, although his story is not the most prominently outward-looking part of the *Morte*.

⁷ See the earlier discussion of the Nine Worthies in the thesis introduction. See also Goodman, 'Malory and Caxton's Chivalric Series'; Kuskin, 'Caxton's Worthies Series', pp. 511–51; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*.

⁸ Caxton does not acknowledge that his source contains considerably more material when he cuts it off. See Mary Noyles Colvin, 'Introduction', in *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, ed. by Mary Noyes Colvin, EETS ES 64 (London: Trübner, 1893), pp. vii–xli (p. xli).

to the contemporary political climate in Western Europe. The text is explicit in its condemnation of the ‘Turks’, a term which stands in for the expected ‘Saracens’ of romance throughout the narrative. In the prologue too, Caxton conflates ‘Turks’ and ‘Saracens’, drawing direct parallels between the First Crusade and the fifteenth-century European political landscape.

In 1485, Caxton printed *Charles the Grete*, a translation of Jean Bagnyon’s prose compilation of *Fierabras* and the *Mirreux historial*. Whilst Bagnyon’s original is now believed to be lost, there are at least three continental European prints of the text that precede Caxton’s, any one of which may have been his source.⁹ Caxton also translated Bagnyon’s extensive prologue, which highlights the work’s crusading focus and moral exemplarism.¹⁰ The ‘Fierabras’ story was already known in English prior to Caxton’s print from earlier Charlemagne romances including *Fierabras*, *Ferumbras*, and the *Sowdone of Babylon*. Each of these verse romances can be traced back to an earlier Old French *chason de geste*, which was the source for Jean Bagnyon’s compilation, though they almost certainly had intermediary Anglo-Norman sources, which authors have treated with a degree of ‘creative freedom’.¹¹ The major campaign in this text also takes place in the ‘near east’ of Saracen Iberia, which may have been accessible to some of Caxton’s readership, and in which cultural and religious encounters between Christianity and Islam were not uncommon in the fifteenth

⁹ George Painter identifies a 1478 edition from Geneva (ISTC no. if00167700), a 1481 or earlier edition from Geneva (ISTC no. if00167750), and a 1484 edition from Lyons (ISTC no. if00167850). See Painter, *William Caxton*, p. 148, n. 1.

¹⁰ The 1478 print opens with ‘Saint pol docteur deuerite nous dit q[ui]n]toutes choses reduites par escript sont a nre[m] doctrine escriptes’ (‘Saint Paul, venerable doctor, says everything reduced to writing exists for our doctrine’), before continuing with ‘car les ourages des anciens sont pour [nour] render a viure en operacion digne de salut en suyuant les bons et en euitant les mauuais’ (‘because the works of the ancients are rendered for us to live in worthy operations of good health, following the good and evading the evil.’). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), MS 12148. Available at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8600180x> [Accessed 30/08/2018], translation mine. See also Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, p. 208.

¹¹ Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England*, p. 266; Hardman and Ailes, ‘Crusading, Chivalry and the Saracen World in Insular Romance’.

century.¹² The plot is driven by the fear that Saracens have encroached on the very borders of Western European Christendom, and Charlemagne ultimately reclaims Iberia for Christendom by constructing churches across the land.

In 1489, Caxton printed *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, a translation of the Old French prose *Les Quatre Filz Aymon*, which was itself sourced from a twelfth-century *chanson de geste*. *Aymon* is a story of chivalric and social disorder for much of the narrative, but one that is resolved by the community pulling together in a crusade for Jerusalem. This crusade narrative is similar to the retelling of the first crusade in *Godeffroy*, in that both texts foreground the importance of both Jerusalem and Constantinople. Caxton also printed *Book of the Fayttes of Armes* in the same year as *Aymon*, a handbook of chivalric warfare that responds to the same cultural anxieties about social disorder as the prose romances. Caxton's *Fayttes* is a translation of Christine de Pisan's *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*, which draws heavily upon Vegetius' *De Re Militari*.¹³ As the popularity of this text and others like it demonstrates, Vegetius' arguments that group conflict against an identifiable other can unify a realm, and that extended peacetime fosters civil war, were commonplace in fifteenth-century England.¹⁴ Whereas Caxton's fictional prose romances exemplify the positive outcomes of crusade, *Book of the Fayttes of Armes* offers philosophical justification for the same solution: crusade against an 'other' can stabilise a realm, and many in late fifteenth-century England sought such stability.

¹² Mittman and Kim, 'Monsters and the Exotic in Medieval England', p. 681; Julian Weiss, 'Remembering Spain in the Medieval European Epic: A Prospect', in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture*, ed. by Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2012), pp. 67–83 (pp. 72–73).

¹³ Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 166–67; Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 11–47.

¹⁴ As Nall highlights, many of those who had been involved in Anglo-French relations throughout the fifteenth century would have also been familiar with *de re Militari*. See Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 29–34 pp. 140–44; Pollard, 'English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood', pp. 26–27 and 166.

When Wynkyn de Worde took over Caxton's press, he printed new prose romances as well as reprinting some of Caxton's most popular texts.¹⁵ *Valentine and Orson*, first printed c.1510, is a translation of the French prose *Valentin et Orson*, which was created between 1475 and 1489 from a story originally composed in French verse in the fourteenth century.¹⁶ De Worde did not translate as Caxton did; his printed *Valentine* is Henry Watson's translation.¹⁷ Watson followed his French source closely, and when he abbreviated he did not sacrifice significant events.¹⁸ The action in this text is focused on a series of skirmishes as Valentine, Orson, and the Green Knight move back and forth between the Christian West and Saracen East – an East with inhabitants that this text updates to suggest resonances with the Turks of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe.¹⁹ These extended interactions explore relationships between religions and between individuals, taken from a source that merged many conventions and motifs already familiar from earlier French and English romances.²⁰

In 1515, Wynkyn de Worde printed *Huon of Burdeux*, which was translated by Sir John Bouchier, Lord Berners. His fifteenth-century French prose source was itself sourced from a thirteenth-century French verse romance, indicating that de Worde was seeking out romances from similar backgrounds as Caxton.²¹ Whilst there has been some scholarly debate over the earliest reliable date for *Huon*'s printing, Joyce Boro's overview of the textual evidence leads her to posit 1515, rather than the previously-

¹⁵ Notably, de Worde reprinted some of Caxton's earliest prints, such as *Troy*, and some of his most popular, including *Le Morte Darthur*. See West, 'Old News', pp. 242–43; Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance'; Hanks, 'William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde', pp. 46–48.

¹⁶ Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances', pp. 113–16.

¹⁷ Arthur Dickson, 'Introduction', in *Valentine and Orson*, EETS OS 104 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. ix–lxiii (p. x, n. 1). Other translations into other European vernaculars were created around the same time.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xix.

¹⁹ Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances', p. 114.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.

presumed 1534.²² This earlier date would indicate that *Valentine and Orson* and *Huon of Burdeux* may have been presented in a series, if more loosely than Caxton's 'Worthies' texts. The text follows Huon's journey to Babylon and the Holy Land in an act of penance that requires him to return with the teeth and beard of the Saracen Admiral of Babylon. As well as claiming a literal part of the Saracen Admiral as a trophy for Charlemagne, Huon here uses his journey to the East to bolster his own Christian identity through crusade. The text offers no means of acquiring these items other than violence against Saracens, often on a large scale. Huon gains command of a large Christian army, engaging in several battles against Saracen opponents in his journey to Babylon and becoming a crusade commander like the barons of *Godeffroy* or the peers of *Charles the Grete*. Lord Berners also translated several continuations of the story, following Huon's adventures after Babylon and chronicling the adventures of his daughter and grandson. My examination of this text concentrates primarily on the first story, translated from the original *Chanson de Geste of Huon*, because the continuations do not share the same focus on crusade and the Saracen East (with the exception of Huon's grandson, Croissant, who briefly crusades against Saracen forces).²³

SELECTING PROSE ROMANCES FOR THE ENGLISH PRINTING PRESS

The process by which a prose romance became available in English print began with the work of translators and printers, although Caxton filled both of these roles when selecting the first texts of this subgenre. This section considers how Caxton's mercantile

²² Joyce Boro, 'The Textual History of *Huon of Burdeux*: A Reassessment of the Facts', *Notes and Queries*, 48 (2001), 233–37; S. L. Lee, 'Introduction', in *The Boke of Huon of Burdeux*, EETS ES 40 and 41 (London: Trübner, 1883), p. liv.

²³ On the continuations and their sources, see Lee, 'Introduction', p. xxxix.

and political connections in continental Europe first acquainted him with the prose romances he would go on to print in English, and how de Worde sought the translations of others like Henry Watson and Lord Berners, selecting texts with common and contemporary themes. It considers how the advent of print technology impacted upon traditional forms of patronage, resulting in the use of patrons as marketing tools rather than commissioners for whom a sole copy was produced.

TRANSLATORS AND TRANSLATION

Translating the prose romances into English for the printing press was an act of cultural exchange, in which the texts were both witness and participant.²⁴ This exchange was moderated and facilitated by the translator – often Caxton himself. Caxton translated romances that he first encountered during his travels through continental Europe, where he acted as a diplomatic and mercantile link between the courts of England and Burgundy. However, as Goodman has noted, to consider Caxton as a ‘purveyor of Burgundian bestsellers’ disregards the extent to which the texts he translated reflect a much wider set of continental European influences.²⁵ Goodman is one of a number of recent scholars who have shifted away from focusing on Burgundian contexts to consider the wider European influences upon Caxton’s work; more recently, other scholars have further considered the influences of the English market for which he was translating.²⁶ Wynkyn de Worde was also influenced by the desires of his English

²⁴ See Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations*, pp. 5–13; Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale*, pp. 43–48.

²⁵ Goodman, ‘Caxton’s Continent’. Quotation from p. 119, but see throughout Goodman’s article for the variety of continental influences demonstrated in Caxton’s prose romances.

²⁶ Early scholarship foregrounded the Burgundian influences upon Caxton, with biographers such as Painter and Blake arguing that Caxton followed a policy of translating Burgundian best-sellers to appeal to the presumably-similar interests of the English court. Carol Meale also foregrounds the Burgundian influences but acknowledges that this method ‘obscures the extent to which England was already an international culture’. Later critical work broadened the focus to include wider European influences upon Caxton’s textual selection, with more recent work from Leitch and Kuskin foregrounding the extent to

market, though the prose romances he printed were translated by others such as Henry Watson and Lord Berners.

Though a broad range of continental European influences on Caxton's printing choices can be identified, his time in Burgundy is of course significant. Caxton's extensive residence in continental Europe began in Burgundy, where he would go on to become a mercantile and diplomatic mediator between the English and Burgundian courts. Few documentary records of Caxton's time have survived, but the Mercers' guild records show that he held an apprenticeship from 1438 until at least 1441 and that he had guild business in Bruges in 1450.²⁷ Other evidence places Caxton in Brussels, Ghent, and Cologne throughout the 1450s to 1470s.²⁸ With the exception of Cologne, each of these cities fell within the domain of Burgundy, ruled first by Duke Philip III 'The Good' from 1419 to 1467, and then by his son, Charles 'the Bold', who ruled until 1477. Caxton's political position came after a successful cloth-trading career, culminating in his appointment as Governor of the English Nation in Bruges during the height of Philip's reign. The precise date of his tenure is unrecorded but may have been immediately after the dismissal of his predecessor in 1462.²⁹ This diplomatic position was an important one; English authorities sought to maintain friendly contact with

which English textual and cultural interests intersect with Caxton's textual selection. On early criticism, see Painter, *William Caxton*; Blake, *Caxton and His World*, pp. 67–70; Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance', p. 294; Bornstein, 'William Caxton's Chivalric Romances', pp. 1–2; Goodman, 'Malory and Caxton's Chivalric Series', pp. 257–74. On the focal shift from Burgundy to Europe, see Goodman, 'Caxton's Continent', p. 105; Hellinga, *William Caxton*; Wang, 'Caxton's Romances and their Early Tudor Readers'. For recent studies privileging English textual and cultural influences upon Caxton's textual selection, see Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 142–43; Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, p. 193; Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*, pp. 38–39; Cooper, 'Counter-Romance' p. 144.

²⁷ Painter, *William Caxton*, p. 8.

²⁸ Prior critical thought has used such evidence to trace influences upon Caxton's style and textual interests that would go on to shape his later printing work in England. See Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 12–32; Gillespie, "'Folowyng the trace of mayster Caxton'", pp. 167–95.

²⁹ Records from Middelburg town archives have prompted some to make this suggestion. However, as Painter identifies, minutes of the London Court of Adventurers first allude to Caxton's Governorship in 1463 and are only explicit of it in 1465. Painter, *William Caxton*, pp. 28–29.

Burgundy to protect English trade links to the wider continent.³⁰ It also brought Caxton into close contact with high-ranking agents of both the English and Burgundian courts and with Duke Philip himself, a renowned patron of the arts with a library to prove it.³¹

Caxton's contact with the Duke likely introduced him to many of the prose romances he went on to translate and print. Additionally, much of the Duke's library was informed by his interest in chivalric ideals and crusade, further influencing Caxton's later output. Philip's collection of approximately 250 books listed in a 1420 catalogue grew to nearly one thousand volumes by the time of his death in 1467 – large illuminated volumes that included chronicles, epic poems, and historical romances, of which the Duke was particularly fond for their chivalric ideals.³² Duke Philip linked England and Burgundy through his mercantile and chivalric interests as well as close familial ties to Edward IV, resulting in the two courts sharing common ideological goals.³³ He founded the Order of the Golden Fleece, a chivalric order committed to the defence of Christendom, in 1430.³⁴ Edward IV was amongst its members, all of whom took solemn crusading vows in 1454 following the capture of Constantinople.³⁵ Duke Philip also commissioned Raoul Lefèvre to create literary works that indulged his interests in chivalry and crusade. Lefèvre's story of Jason, who was the natural patron of the Order of the Golden Fleece, omits Jason's treasonous acts in favour of presenting

³⁰ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 14–15.

³¹ Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good: The Apogee of Burgundy* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1970), pp. 151–58; Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 14–15.

³² Vaughan examines the 1420 inventory of Philip's collections, highlighting catalogued books, tapestries, and artwork focused on chivalric subjects and group identities like the Nine Worthies and the Twelve Peers of France. Many of Philip's family and court shared his interest in patronage and commission, producing similarly grand collections. Most notable, after Philip's, is that of Anthony, the Grand Bastard of Burgundy. See Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, pp. 151–58; Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 14–15; Elizabeth Johnson Moodey, *Illuminated Crusader Histories for Philip the Good of Burgundy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

³³ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 66–67.

³⁴ Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, pp. 160–62.

³⁵ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 19–22; Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, pp. 160–62; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)* (Independence Square, PA: The American Philosophical Society, 1978), Vol. II, p. 143.

the “Burgundian” hero as a moral one.³⁶ As Goodman notes, the study of Caxton’s prose romances has been ‘distorted’ by an undue focus on Caxton’s earliest translations of Lefèvre’s work; whilst sources for romances like Caxton’s *Charles the Grete* and *Paris and Vienne* may have been found in the Duke’s library, they were not necessarily representative of the Burgundian vogue.³⁷ Even so, Caxton’s time spent in Burgundy was significant for the connections he made between the Burgundian and English courts, many of which he refers to in prologues and epilogues.

PATRONAGE AND PRINTING IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE

Following his diplomatic career, Caxton began translating texts and learning the printing trade. He produced texts without a patron by speculating as to what might appeal to the broad audience that a multiple-copy print run would require.³⁸ This change in focus happened after he lost the Governorship of Bruges during the period in which the Wars of the Roses renewed in c.1470 and he moved to other parts of continental Europe. He was present in Cologne from 1471–1472, during which time he was granted a pardon from the newly-restored Edward IV for unknown crimes.³⁹ In 1468, he purportedly began by translating Lefèvre’s *Recueil des histoires de Troies* into English as *Recuyell of the histories of Troy*, at the request of ‘hys redoubtyd lady, Margarete by the grace of God Duchesse of Bourgoyne’, wife of Charles the Bold of Burgundy.⁴⁰ In the epilogue, he states that the text was ‘begonne in Brugis and contynued in Gaunt and

³⁶ Leitch explores this topic in detail, suggesting that this exceptional move, amongst Caxton’s prose romances, of writing treason out of the narrative, warns against viewing his printing as primarily influenced by Burgundy. Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 162–63.

³⁷ Goodman, ‘Caxton’s Continent’, pp. 109 and 113–14.

³⁸ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 19–24.

³⁹ Painter, *William Caxton*, p. 43; Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 25–26.

⁴⁰ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 19–24; William Caxton, Preface to *Recuyell of the histories of Troy*, in *Caxton’s Own Prose*, ed. by N. F. Blake (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), p. 97.

finysshid in Coleyn'.⁴¹ It was probably during his stay in Cologne that Caxton was introduced to the mechanics of the printing trade, as the industry had spread to the city from Mainz and Strasbourg several years prior to his arrival,⁴² although the *Recuyell* was most likely printed in Ghent in 1473.⁴³ As Lotte Hellinga argues, Caxton is unlikely to have printed the book on commission by Margaret here, because the dates do not align; instead, he was more likely 'acting in the mould of the Burgundian authors' by beginning speculatively, without a patron.⁴⁴ The printing of prose romances operated outside of the traditional patronage systems of manuscript production, and printing produced many more copies than any one person would require. Manuscript patronage was an individual and personal process between commissioner and creator, reliant on who knew whom across patronage networks or circles and resulting in a single text made to order.⁴⁵ Printed book 'patronage', insofar as it existed, is better conceived of as an individual providing a lump sum to ensure that a text in which they had an interest would be made available in print.⁴⁶

The *Recuyell of the histories of Troy* was one of seven texts that Caxton printed before he reached England, only two of which were printed in English – both translations of Lefèvre's work.⁴⁷ The other, *The History of Jason* (1477), also referred to Margaret as patron. He begins the text with a prologue that addresses courtly figures of both England and Burgundy:

⁴¹ William Caxton, Epilogue to Book II of *The Recuyell of the histories of Troy*, in *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. by N. F. Blake, p. 99.

⁴² Painter, *William Caxton*, p. 53.

⁴³ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, p. 51.

⁴⁴ As Hellinga notes, Caxton states that he begins translation on the first day of March in 1468, which is some four months before Margaret was Duchess of Burgundy by marriage. Hellinga; *William Caxton*, pp. 23–24.

⁴⁵ Rutter, 'William Caxton and Literary Patronage', pp. 445–49.

⁴⁶ See Rutter, 'William Caxton and Literary Patronage', pp. 468–69; Edwards and Meale, 'The Marketing of Printed Books', pp. 97–98.

⁴⁷ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, p. 51 (table 1).

But well wote I that the noble Duc Philippe, firste foundeur of this sayd ordre/ dyd doo maken a chambre in the Castell of Hesdyn/ where in was craftyly and curiously depeynted the conqeste of the Golden Flese by the sayd Iason/ in whiche chambre I haue ben and seen the sayde historie so depeynted.

[...]

Thenne for the honour & worship of our sayd moost redoubted liege lorde whiche hath taken the sayde ordre / I haue vnder the shadowe of his noble proteccion enterprised taccomplish this sayd lital boke.

(Caxton, Prologue to *Jason*)⁴⁸

This prologue draws attention to Caxton's own influential position and access to the Burgundian court, reinforcing the diplomatic, mercantile, and chivalric links that tie together Edward, Margaret, Philip and Charles. Associating the text with Margaret specifically links it to the marriage that binds together these individuals. This prologue is also an acknowledgement that the crusading and chivalric values of Duke Philip's order, the Golden Fleece, and Philip's vision of Christendom united against a Heathen foe, were not far removed from the purview of the English nobility.

Notably, while Caxton's early prints cite Margaret as patron, many of his later prints foreground English royalty instead, highlighting the extent to which English literary culture also influenced his textual selection once back in England. Even the above prologue to *Jason* is addressed to Prince Edward of Wales despite citing Margaret as patron.⁴⁹ Caxton mentions Edward IV in his prologue to *Of Old Age* (1481), who he 'moste humbly byseche to recyve the said book of me';⁵⁰ in *Ordre of Chyualry* (1484) he expresses hope that Richard III might 'commaunde this book to be

⁴⁸ William Caxton, *The History of Jason: Translated from the French of Raoul Le Fevre (c.1477)*, ed. by John Munro, EETS ES 111 (London: Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1913), 2.3–16.

⁴⁹ Margaret is given as patron to both of these texts, though the prologue to *Jason* is addressed to Edward, Prince of Wales. William Caxton, Preface to *Recuyell of the histories of Troy*, in *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. by N. F. Blake (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), p. 97.

⁵⁰ William Caxton, Prologue to *Tully of Old Age, Of Friendship and Declamation of Noblesse*, in *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. by N. F. Blake (London: André Deutsch, 1973), pp. 120–125 (ll. 114–15).

had and redde unto other yong lords, knyghtes and gentylnen' (*Ordre*, 125.4–6).⁵¹ His prologue to *Godeffroy of Boloyne* (1481) even directly calls upon 'my lord Prynce / and my lord Rychard, duc of yorke and norfolke' (*Godeffroy*, 5.21) to take up arms against the Turkish advance. This move from addressing Burgundian nobility to addressing English nobility suggests that patronage for printed texts was significant for its ability to align a work with political causes or individual reputations, rather than its capacity to actually finance production. It also indicates the importance of English literary culture on Caxton's textual selection and production, particularly when he was producing texts in England.

PRINT AND PRINTERS IN ENGLAND

Caxton returned to England, setting up his own press in 1476 from which he could mass-produce texts for an English audience. He rented a shop in the precincts of Westminster from 1476 until his death in 1492, and the shop's close proximity to the Abbey was advantageous in capturing the nearby foot traffic of abbey members and visitors, courtiers, and members of parliament. The location of the shop is mentioned in the *Advertisement*, one of the earliest surviving of Caxton's English printed materials:

If it plese ony man spirituel or temporel to bye ony pyes of two and thre comemoracions of Salisburi Use enpryntid after the forme of this present lettre, whiche ben wel and truly correct, late hym com to Westmonester into the Almonesrye at the Reed Pale and he shal have them good chepe.

(Caxton, *Advertisement*)⁵²

⁵¹ William Caxton, *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, ed. by Alfred T. P. Byles, EETS OS 168 (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 125.4–6. Henceforth *Ordre*.

⁵² William Caxton, *Advertisement*, in *Caxton's Own Prose*, ed. by N. F. Blake (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), p. 55.

The Abbey's landmark status must have been advantageous to Caxton, allowing him to draw in an audience of interested buyers from further afield. As Kuskin argues, the *Advertisement* also serves the dual purpose of advertising a product and introducing the reader to the format in which it is available.⁵³ However, Caxton's audience would have already been somewhat familiar with printed book ownership.⁵⁴ Printed books were not uncommon, and early English trade in them was dominated by continental imports both before and after Caxton had set up the first printing press in England.⁵⁵ When Caxton printed prose romances, he not only selected texts most suited to his audience's interests but also used a form that held some prestige. Furthermore, the advent of print did not diminish the manuscript production trade that had grown throughout the fifteenth century to the extent that some scribes had feared.⁵⁶ Rather, the two media often coexisted. Caxton sourced material from both manuscripts and printed works for his press—a practice which de Worde continued—and there are some surviving examples of hybrid books in which manuscript and print material were merged to create a custom product.⁵⁷

⁵³ Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 104–106.

⁵⁴ Susanna Fein, 'The Fillers of the Auchinleck Manuscript and the Literary Culture of the West Midlands', in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books: Essays in Honour of A.S.G. Edwards*, ed. by Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 60–77 (p. 60).

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Armstrong notes that the earliest European printers exported books to England from 1457, and she argues that when Caxton printed *The Game of Chess* whilst abroad, he would certainly have intended copies to reach England via established trade channels. Margaret Lane Ford builds upon this analysis to demonstrate that demand for printed books in England and Scotland in the 1450s, 60s and 70s was considerable, and that this demand was met through import from major European cities such as Venice, Paris, and Cologne. See Elizabeth Armstrong, 'English Purchases of Printed Books from the Continent 1465–1526', *The English Historical Review*, 94 (1979), 268–90 (p. 272); Margaret Lane Ford, 'Importation of Printed Books into England and Scotland', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume III 1400–1557*, ed. by Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 179–202.

⁵⁶ Boffey, 'From Manuscript to Print' p. 14.

⁵⁷ Boffey identifies one example of a composite printed book that appears to have originated in Caxton's own premises, bound personally for a single reader: the 'Rosenwald Sammelband'. This composite book includes 'The Mirror of the World', 'Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers', Cicero's 'Of Old Age', and the 'Cordiale of the Four Last Things', alongside an indulgence in the binding as printer's waste. The names of these four texts have been added to the inside cover of the bound volume. See Washington, Library of Congress (LoC), Rosenwald 559; Washington, LoC, Rosenwald 560; Washington, LoC, Rosenwald 562; Washington, LoC, Rosenwald 563; Boffey, 'From Manuscript to Print', p. 16; Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London c.1475–1530*, pp. 76–79; Paul Needham, *The Printer and the Pardoner*:

When Wynkyn de Worde took control of Caxton's press in 1492, he continued printing prose romances that responded to contemporary cultural concerns regarding the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and how crusade against it might unite England. Even so, he innovated in textual choice and style, producing an extensive catalogue totalling almost 750 editions that ranged from an early focus on devotional and literary works to a later string of reprinted educational volumes.⁵⁸ De Worde's catalogue included reprints of Caxton's popular romances, which gave de Worde the unfortunate reputation amongst some scholars as Caxton's 'foil': the greedy businessman capitalising on Caxton's idealistic printing and continuing his work 'only half-heartedly'.⁵⁹ However, more recent scholarship has challenged this notion, highlighting the innovativeness of de Worde's reprinting style alongside his selection of his new prose romances.⁶⁰ These texts included *Valentine and Orson* (c.1510), and *Huon of Burdeux* (c.1515), works that he did not personally translate.⁶¹

De Worde's printing of *Valentine and Orson* and *Huon of Burdeux* indicate that he continued Caxton's selection process as well as his cultural interests, sourcing texts from the same wide variety of places and likely relying on some of his predecessor's mercantile contacts.⁶² *Valentine and Orson* (c. 1510) was translated by Henry Watson and is a smorgasbord of romance motifs including a dragon, a dwarf, and the use of dark magic.⁶³ The work shows an idealised Christendom, in which both Catholic

An Unrecorded Indulgence Printed by William Caxton for the Hospital of St. Mary Rounceval, Charing Cross (Washington: Library of Congress, 1986), pp. 17–21 and pp. 71–72.

⁵⁸ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 131–39.

⁵⁹ As Meale argues, such assumptions 'impose an essentially restrictive framework upon the material' and are not conducive to analysis. Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance', p. 284.

⁶⁰ West overviews many of those who have played pivotal roles in challenging this scholarship. See West, 'Old News', pp. 243–45, and n. 9; Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance', p. 289.

⁶¹ Hanks, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Editing of Malory's *Morte Darthur*', p. 50; Lotte Hellinga, 'Index of the Production of Each Printing House', in *Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century: E. Gordon Duff's Bibliography with Supplementary Descriptions, Chronologies, and a Census of Copies*, ed. by Edward Gordon Duff and Lotte Hellinga (London: British Library, 2009), p. 209.

⁶² Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, pp. 50–52.

⁶³ Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances', p. 114.

Western Europe and Orthodox Central and Eastern Europe are united in crusade against the Saracens. The text's first crusade is 'for to fyghte and expell the paynymys and sarazyns oute of the cyte of Rome' (*Valentine*, 57.11–12), and the second is when the Pope 'made to crye the croysee' (128.37) to recover Constantinople.⁶⁴ The focus on these two major cities foregrounds the text's eventual unification of all of Christendom under a single dominion, as well as mirroring fifteenth-century Western European fears over the Ottoman Empire's Christian targets. Five years later, c.1515, de Worde also printed *Huon of Burdeux*, which was translated by Lord Berners.⁶⁵ The central journey in this text is Huon's crusading journey to Babylon, performed as an act of penance and in an attempt to restore the social and chivalric unity of Charlemagne's court. The journey sees Huon transform himself from penitent pilgrim to grand crusader, able to call forth Christian armies at his will in an attempt to assert religious dominance.

De Worde's new prose romances, like his reprints of Caxton's popular texts, indicate continued interest in the same ideological concerns as Caxton's, regarding civil war, social bonds, and England's place in the world. However, while the sixteenth century was still a time of political turmoil in England, many of these contexts lost their immediacy as the sixteenth century progressed. The Wars of the Roses, the capture of Constantinople, and the Hundred Years War, in particular, were events of the past with waning cultural relevance. Interest in the prose romances waned in response, and many of these texts received few or no further reprints after de Worde's death. Other cultural movements rose in their place, and much of de Worde's and Pynson's printing included the devotional texts that Caxton had largely ignored.⁶⁶ Whilst printed texts continued to

⁶⁴ Henry Watson, *Valentine and Orson*, ed. by Arthur Dickson, EETS OS 204 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937). Henceforth *Valentine*.

⁶⁵ Boro, 'The Textual History of *Huon of Burdeux*'.

⁶⁶ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, pp. 156–57.

respond to social and religious anxieties, the precise nature of these contexts had moved on.

FRAMING AND PRESENTATION OF THE PROSE ROMANCES

The prose romances responded to contemporary English anxieties, including those about social disorder and crusade against the Ottoman empire, through their subject matter and the way they were presented to audiences. The most notable aspects of this presentation are the prologues and epilogues Caxton wrote for his prose romances.

Following Genette, we can consider these prologues and epilogues as paratexts: thresholds for entry into a text that guide the reader to approach the work in a specific way.⁶⁷ As I hope to show, Caxton's paratexts spoke to a need for unity in England and Christendom, and to the possibility of achieving it through crusade against the Ottoman Empire. De Worde reprinted some of Caxton's prose romances, altering his paratexts to ensure their continued relevance to a sixteenth-century audience. He also linked texts together – not, as Caxton did, with prologues and epilogues, but rather, through woodcuts, which he re-used in texts with common themes and motifs.

CAXTON'S PARATEXTUAL MATERIAL

Caxton's prologues and epilogues situate his crusading prose romances within their cultural context by making explicit comparisons between the Saracens of romance and the Ottoman Turks of fifteenth-century Europe. His paratextual comments demonstrate a process of textual selection that consciously engaged with contemporary anxieties by

⁶⁷ Genette, *Seuils*, pp. 1–2.

establishing connections between the real world and the printed fiction. Some existing critical work should be mentioned in this context. Robert Warm suggests that Caxton may have published romances that specifically promote unification at a religious level;⁶⁸ Atkin and Edwards note that Caxton's literary agenda gave form to his catalogue of outputs;⁶⁹ and both Fichte and Kuskin highlight that Caxton was engaged in a form of moral didacticism that was specifically committed to war against the Turks.⁷⁰ However, many of these prologues are explicit in their advocacy for crusade, not only for religious supremacy but also as a solution to the fractures that had emerged in England through the Wars of the Roses, and in Christendom through the Hundred Years War.

Caxton opens the prologue to *Godeffroy of Boloyne* by expressing concern over the state of English social cohesion and the need to unify in the face of an external threat. He begins with a call to action directed at his audience, explaining that chivalric deeds—such as those of Godfrey— should be recorded for the benefit of readers:

valyaunt actes of noble, Illustrous and vertuous personnes, ben digne
to be recounted / put in memorye / and wreton, to thende that ther
may be gyuen to them name Inmortal, by souerayn laude and
preysyng, And also for to moeue and tenflawme the hertes of the
Redars and hierers, for teschewe and flee werkes vycious, dishonnest
and vytuperable.

(*Godeffroy*, 1.1–7)

Caxton returns to this notion at the end of the prologue, defining his readership broadly and asking ‘alle noble men of hye courage to see this booke, and here it redde’ (*Godeffroy*, 5.11), so that this story might be emulated. The ‘noble men’ to whom Caxton refers could have been landed gentry who would be inspired by the dukes of

⁶⁸ Warm, ‘Identity, Narrative and Participation’, p. 87; Ailes and Hardman, ‘How English are the English Charlemagne Romances’, pp. 51–52.

⁶⁹ Atkin and Edwards, ‘Printers, Publishers and Promoters to 1558’, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Fichte, ‘Caxton’s Concept of “Historical Romance”’, pp. 105–11; Kuskin, ‘Caxton’s Worthies Series’, p. 518.

Godeffroy forming a tenuous alliance for a common cause. Such actions may have offered some respite from the ongoing infighting of the Wars of the Roses. The ‘noble men’ may also have been his fellow merchants, with trade access to Ottoman lands, or laypeople who might be persuaded to play their part in a war effort by purchasing the indulgences he had printed in 1476 and 1480.

As Kuskin has demonstrated, *Godeffroy* itself has at its core a concern with secular and civil matters of ‘earthly politics’: the barons join together in crusade, but they fight amongst themselves and perform acts of treason.⁷¹ This commentary is a reflection on the political discourse of the Wars of the Roses, alongside other romances which, as Leitch argues, foreground the themes of treason and homosocial conflict ‘to an unprecedented extent’.⁷² Caxton emphasises in this prologue the divide between successful chivalric communities and those fractured by treason; he foregrounds Arthur’s status as the greatest of the Christian worthies by highlighting the cohesion and nobility of the whole community:

Kyng Arthur, kyng of the brytons, that tyme regnyng in this
Royamme / of whos retenue were many noble Kynges, Prynces / lords
and knyghtes, of which the noblest were knyghtes of the round table,
of whos actes and historyes there be large volumes and books grete
plente.

(*Godeffroy*, 2.28–33)

Charlemagne is likewise lauded in this prologue in light of ‘the noble faytes and actes of his douze pieres’ (3.2–3). This passage suggests that a successful model of society rests upon how members interact with each other and how their deeds are recorded.

Successful communities are defined by their cohesion, and Caxton suggests that such

⁷¹ Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 218–19.

⁷² Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 60.

cohesion can be regained in England and Christendom through a crusade against the Ottoman Empire.

The prologue to *Godeffroy* is also one of the most explicitly zealous of Caxton's writings, warning how 'the mescreauntes and turkes' (3.19–20) are a threat to England and Christendom. Mirroring the content of *Godeffroy*, Caxton calls for war against 'the grete puyssaunce of the Turke, grete enemye of oure Cristen fayth, destroyar of Cristen blood, and vsurpar of certayn Empyres, and many Cristen Royammes' (*Godeffroy*, 4.3–5). He justifies his call for unity amongst Christian men with the need to recapture the Holy Land and push back against Turkish advances:

Prynces and hye men of noble and vertuouse courage, shold take
ensample tempryse werkys leeful and honnest / Fyrst, for goddes
quarell / in mayntenynge oure faythe and the libertees of holy chirche,
For the recuperacion of the holy land, whiche our blessyd lord Ihesu
Criste hath halowed by his blessyd presence humayne / and by
shedyng therin for oure redempcion his precious blood ; ffor the releef
of suche cristen men as there dwelle in grete myserye and thraldomm,
And also for the defence of theyr Royammes, Londes, Enherytages /
and subgettes.

(*Godeffroy*, 1.14–22)

Caxton repeatedly asks his audience to become actively involved in the defence of their faith and participate in an offensive push to recapture the Holy Land: a crusade. When he asks his readership to emulate the great deeds of *Godeffroy*, he refers to nobility and commoners alike, highlighting how 'prynces / lordes and comyn peple' worked to 'recouere the holy Cyte of Iherusalem' (3.31–33). Caxton's chosen text, along with his call for crusade, seeks to encourage zealotry within the 'comyn peple' who might encounter it. His writing in the prologue betrays the assumption that this readership is not only interested in crusade but willing to participate.⁷³ In this sense, *Godeffroy* is

⁷³ Other evidence supports the notion that there was a general willingness to help with crusading causes. As Tyerman notes, the ceremony for becoming a *crucesignatus* (cross-bearer, or crusader) was still in use in the late fifteenth century, and Jerusalem remained a popular site for pilgrimages and travel narratives.

similar to the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman Charlemagne romances that Hardman and Ailes suggest retain the crusading focus of their Old French models when they are repopularised during a period of widespread crusading interest.⁷⁴ Like those Charlemagne romances, the direct source for Caxton's *Godeffroy* was produced in response to thirteenth-century French crusading interest. Caxton's text was selected and produced in response to fifteenth-century English crusading interests, translating and transplanting the contents to address anxieties regarding the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵

In the prologue to *Godeffroy*, Caxton specifies the Turks as the enemy of Christendom and indicates a clear link between the text's story and its contemporary relevance:⁷⁶

I fynde very causes, as me semeth, moche semblable and lyke vnto suche as we haue nowe dayly tofore vs, By the mescreauntes and turkes emprysed / ayenst Christendom. And yet moche more nowe than were in his dayes / ffor in his dayes the turkes had conqerred vpon Christendom but vnto the braas of seynt George by Constantynople, And had no foote on this syde the sayd Braas. But at this daye it is so that they haue comen ouer and goten that Imperial Cyte, Constantynople aforsayd / and many Royamme and countre / to the grete dommage and hurte of alle Cristendom.

(*Godeffroy*, 3.18–27)

In a prologue that otherwise focuses on the historical deeds of great men, this passage about the state of Christendom comes across as an urgent and personally-felt appeal. Caxton emphasises the 1453 fall of Constantinople as comparably worse than the events prompting the First Crusade of 1095 because of its proximity to Western Europe. More troubling than the loss of the city is the fact that it proves the Turks have made ground within Eastern and Central Europe. Recent Ottoman conquests have granted the Empire

As already mentioned, there were also eyewitness accounts and indulgences that encouraged crusading interest. See Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 307–15; Markowski, 'Crucesignatus', pp. 157–65.

⁷⁴ Hardman and Ailes, 'Crusading, Chivalry and the Saracen World', pp. 46–49.

⁷⁵ Colvin, 'Introduction', p. xvi.

⁷⁶ See Bornstein, 'William Caxton's Chivalric Romances', pp. 7–8; Fichte, 'Caxton's Concept of "Historical Romance"', p. 105.

a way ‘to entre in to the Royamme of Naples [...] vnto Rome & ytalye’ (4.9–11), Caxton continues, referencing in all but name the Ottoman capture of Otranto in 1480.⁷⁷ He concludes by reiterating his earlier plea that ‘me semeth it necessary and expedyent for alle cristen prynces to make peas / amyte and allyaunce eche with other [...] for the recuperacion of the holy londe & holy Cyte of Iherusalem’ (4.12–17). Caxton argues that crusade is a necessary response, given the Ottoman incursions into Eastern and Central Europe. The endeavour is so essential, he continues, that the sovereign who launches such a crusade would ‘deserue the tenth place’ (5.18–19) among the Nine Worthies. However, though this address appears to speak to the power of Christian kings to actualise the idea of crusade, it appeals to a much broader audience:

for thehortacion of alle Cristen prynces / Lordes / Barons / Knyghtes
/ Gentilmen / Marchantes / and all the comyn peple of this noble
Royamme, walys & yrlond, I haue emprysed to translate this book.
(*Godeffroy*, 4.20–23)

Referring to an audience comprised of many social strata, Caxton encourages common people to contribute to the crusading cause in any way possible, whilst also emphasising the benefits of Christian leaders putting their differences aside.

Caxton’s calls for crusade in the prologues and epilogues can also be read as a response to a perceived decline of English chivalric values. Caxton printed *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* in 1484, three years after *Godeffroy*, and ended it with a blistering attack on the state of chivalry and social cohesion. Chivalric customs, he says, have been ‘forgeten / and thexersytees of chyualry / not vsed / honoured / ne excercysed / as hit hath ben in aunycent tyme’ (*Ordre*, 121.11–13). Neither the text nor Caxton’s epilogue mention any form of crusading desire, and *Ordre of Chyualry* is not a

⁷⁷ As Meg Roland notes, this reference to the Ottomans’ successful capture of Otranto during this conjecture is likely a further attempt to contextualise the narrative in the real-world concerns of fifteenth-century England. See Roland, ‘Arthur and the Turks’, p. 33.

romance.⁷⁸ However, like the opening to *Godeffroy*, Caxton concludes this text by highlighting a decline in the martial and spiritual values common to chivalry:

O ye knyghtes of Englonde where is the custome and vsage of noble
chyualry that was vsed in tho days / what do ye now / but go to the
baynes & playe att dyse And some not well aduysed vse not honest
and good rule ageyn alle ordre of knyghthode / leue this / leue it and
rede the noble volumes of saynt graal of lancelot / of galaad / of
Trystram / of perse forest / of Percyual / of gawayn / & many mo /
There shall ye see manhode / curtosye & gentylnesse.

(*Ordre*, 122.8–16)

Caxton's lament is sometimes read as an indication of his own views, possibly inspired by Burgundian ideas of chivalry that had been moulded by time spent with Duke Philip the Good.⁷⁹ Even so, it must be read alongside the crusading calls of his other paratexts as part of a response to popular notions that pursuing external war would result in peace across Christendom.⁸⁰ *Ordre* emphasises that chivalric teaching requires not only practical skills but also a firm ideological foundation;⁸¹ a knight must be part of a united community, a 'louer of the comyn wele / For by the comynalte of the people was the chyualrye founden and establyssed' (113.1–3). A Christendom divided—by the Wars of the Roses, or the Hundred Years War—could not, Caxton suggests, hope to stand against an external foe like the Ottoman Empire.

⁷⁸ Although, as Jennifer Goodman highlights, Caxton's source material—Raymón Lull's *Libre de orde de cavayleria*—is a largely secular text, but one that emphasises the knight's primary duty as being the defender of the faith. Caxton does not make explicit this connection in his epilogue. See Jennifer Goodman, 'Caxton's Chivalric Series', p. 268.

⁷⁹ Diane Bornstein suggests that the epilogue echoes Burgundian ideals and could be read as Caxton's own considerations on chivalry. More recently, Charles Wuest links this passage to a perceived decline in chivalric values in the Wars of the Roses, using Caxton's chivalric manuals as literary suggestions that highlight both functional and dysfunctional chivalric communities. See Bornstein, 'Caxton's Chivalric Romances', p. 7; Wuest, 'Closure and Caxton's Malory', pp. 60–78.

⁸⁰ Caxton's suggested reading includes the lives of a great many knights, both English and French, emphasising that their service to Christian chivalry is more important than their service to their respective Kings. See L. O. Fradenburg, 'Pro Patria Mori', in *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. by Kathy Lavezzo (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. 3–38 (p. 13).

⁸¹ Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 165.

As this thesis began by discussing, the prologue and epilogue to *Charles the Grete* are mostly based on Jean Bagnyon's work rather than Caxton's own words. Even so, the few additions Caxton makes amplify the concerns he expresses in his other prose romances. They indicate that he chose this text for its ability to appeal to English audiences and speak to the cultural concerns of the time. His brief paragraph at the end of the epilogue is in hope that the work has the potential to reach a wide audience:

I haue put me in deuoyr to translate thys sayd book, as ye heretofore
may se al a-longe and pl[a]yn, prayeng alle them that shal rede, see,
or here it, to pardon me of thys simple & rude trans[l]acyon.

(*Charles*, 251.32–252.1)

Caxton's reference to readers and listeners corresponds with his comments appended to the prologue, in which he explains his desire for a version of the text that is comprehensible to as many people as possible: 'For the moost quantyte of the people vnderstonde not latyn ne frensshe here in this noble royame of englund' (*Charles*, 2.36–3.2).⁸² He also uses the prologue to link *Charles* to his earlier prints, emphasising that this text follows *Godeffroy* and *Le Morte Darthur* as the final of the three texts detailing the lives of the Christian Worthies.

The large parts of the prologue and epilogue to *Charles* that are direct translations of Bagnyon's words also respond to the same English concerns Caxton expresses in his own writing. Bagnyon begins the prologue by citing St Paul on the recording of heroic deeds:

Saynt Poul, doctour of veryte, sayth to vs that al thynges that ben
reduced by wrytyng ben wryton to our doctryne [...] Neuertheles the

⁸² Listeners, in this context, could refer to public recitals that generated an audience inclusive of those who could not read or purchase a copy. However, public reading was not exclusive to those of lower social status; as Joyce Coleman notes, some who could afford books and were capable of reading them preferred instead to hear them read, in the company of small groups. Russel Rutter further identifies that a total of twenty-one of Caxton's books contain reference to 'readers and listeners' when considering audience. See Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*; Rutter, 'William Caxton and Literary Patronage', p. 461.

thynges passed dyuersley reduced to remembraunce engendre in vs
correction of vnlaful lyf. For the werkes of the auncient and olde
peple ben for to gyue to vs ensaumple to lyue in good & vertuous
operacions digne & worthy of helth, in folowyng the good and
eschewyng the euyl.

(*Charles*, 1.1–12)

This passage swiftly establishes that the great deeds of historical figures should be recorded not for their capacity as ecclesiastical exemplars but so they can offer secular guidelines for common people seeking self-improvement.⁸³ With its focus on a broad readership of nobility and common people alike, and the extent to which they should read texts didactically, this passage fits well with Caxton’s own comments explored in the previous paragraph. The result is a prologue that simultaneously speaks to the religious and political motivations behind crusade whilst also appealing personally to the individuals whose efforts could see such a crusade materialise.

The prologue and epilogue may have been particularly suitable for translation because of the resemblance between how Bagnyon refers to the Turks and how Caxton elsewhere discusses the Ottoman Empire. The great ‘werkes’ to be emulated, the prologue goes on to suggest, include any actions that are ‘to the exaltacyon of the crysten fayth and to the confusyon of the hethen sarazyns and myscreaunts, whiche is a werk wel contemplatyf for to lyue wel’ (1.25–2.3). This is a near-direct translation of

⁸³ James H. Morey refers to this passage (Romans 15:4) as ‘the most important touchstone for Paul in Middle English’. Caxton had considerable literary precedent for this reference, including Geoffrey Chaucer, who cites the idea once within the body of the *Canterbury Tales* and once again in his Retraction: ‘For oure book seith, “Al that is written is written for oure doctrine,” and that is myn entente’. Its position in the retraction places it, as here in *Charles the Grete*, as a debate over the purpose and source of literary authority. On this phrase and literary authority, William Kuskin argues that Caxton’s following discussion, of communal understanding and local imagination, articulates a form of literary authority in which the subject individual—the ‘secular reader’—can be brought under an umbrella of greater ideological authority. Caxton’s ‘critical program’, he suggests, makes his authorless texts intellectually recognisable to a broad audience, under the banner of a literary authority that is both exegetical and secular, but above all didactic. See William Caxton, *Jacobus de Cessolis, The Game of Chess*, in *Caxton’s Own Prose*, ed. by N. F. Blake (London: Andre Deutsch, 1973), pp. 87–88; James H. Morey, ‘Paul in Old and Middle English’, in *A Companion to St Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Steven Cartwright (Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 449–68 (pp. 466–67); Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘Heere taketh the makere of this book his leve’, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 [1987]), p. 328; Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 208–13.

Bagnyon: ‘la confusion des sarrazins et mescreans quelt oeuure bien contemplatiue a bien viure’.⁸⁴ It also parallels Caxton’s descriptions elsewhere: in *Godeffroy*, the Ottomans are ‘the mescreauntes and turkes’ (*Godeffroy*, 3.19–20) who have captured Constantinople. Just as the prologue to *Godeffroy* encourages the recapture of Constantinople and the Holy Land through crusade, so too do the paratexts to *Charles* demonstrate the need for an aggressive and coordinated response:

The iij book speketh how, by reuelacyon of saynt Iames, charles went and conquerd spayne & galyce, where as he dyd operacions vertuous, & made constytucyons of sauacyon, with many bataylles doon by hym and hys subgettes.

(*Charles*, 250.6–10)

The epilogue speaks of conquest, not of defence, and Charlemagne’s battles are an aggressive act against the Saracens. Even this aggression is framed as a necessary defence of Christendom, and comparable to the action that might be required in fifteenth-century Europe.

The romances Caxton printed towards the end of his life continued to respond to the social instability of the period. Henry VII’s reign was troubled by rebellions and contenders to the throne, during which time literature that spoke to concerns about social unity would have been generally well received.⁸⁵ Both *Aymon* and *Blanchardine* were printed in 1489, in the early years of Henry VII’s reign, and both texts show concern about societal instability. The ending of *Aymon* sees the chivalric community in the text reunite through a crusade to Jerusalem, exactly as Caxton suggested might be possible in the prologue to *Godeffroy*. The only surviving record of the prologue to

⁸⁴ Paris, BnF, MS 12148, fol 21r. <<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8600180x>>

⁸⁵ See S. B. Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), pp. 68–94.

Aymon is from William Copland's 1554 reprint, but Caxton's familiar mission statement can be found at the start:⁸⁶

above all thinges, the princes & lordes of hie estate and entendement /
desyre to see thystories / of the ryght noble and hie vertues of the
prodecessours / whiche ben digne, and worthy of remembrance of
perpetuall recommendation.

(*Aymon*, 3.13–17)⁸⁷

Caxton printed the virtuous deeds of past heroes because, as he suggests, his noble readers enjoyed works of chivalric prowess. He makes no direct reference to Reynaud's crusade for Jerusalem in the final portion of the text, but the stylistic link between this prologue and those of the crusading Worthies romances implies a shared reading of how crusade can combat chivalric decline. The prologue to *Blanchardine* is framed similarly: Caxton recognised his audience's desire for 'auncyent hystories of noble fayttes and valyaunt actes of armes and warre, which haue ben achyeued in olde tyme of many noble prynces, lordes and knyghtes'.⁸⁸ Caxton here presents chivalry in the same nostalgic and martial terms as in the Worthies romances, contributing to a growing subgenre that emphasises how a new crusade might lead to a new golden era of chivalry.

DE WORDE'S PARATEXTUAL MATERIAL AND WOODCUTS

De Worde reprinted many of Caxton's most popular prose romances, including the paratextual material with which Caxton had initially accompanied them. Critical work

⁸⁶ Whilst we cannot with certainty attribute these words to Caxton, because of the nature of the only extant source, the stylistic features of this prologue are remarkably similar to those seen in Caxton's earlier romances. See Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*, p. 83.

⁸⁷ William Caxton, *The Right Plesaunt and Goodly Historie of the Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, (1489), EETS ES 44 and 45, ed. by Octavia Richardson (London: Trübner and Co., 1884), 3.13–17. Henceforth *Aymon*.

⁸⁸ William Caxton, *Blanchardyn and Eglatine*, ed. by Leon Kellner, EETS ES 58 (London: Oxford University Press, [1890] 1962), 1.14–16.

on his output has benefitted from recent focus on the diversity and ingenuity of his editions.⁸⁹ De Worde's 1498 edition of *Le Morte Darthur* offers an immediate example. Tsuyoshi Mukai notes that de Worde calling this a 'new[ly en]pnynted' version should be read literally; the edition is different to Caxton's print and was likely edited from multiple sources, including the 1485 print and the Winchester manuscript.⁹⁰ Most of his textual emendations were for the purpose of fixing minor issues, such as "correcting" character names where they were wrong or unspecified in earlier editions.⁹¹ The 1498 work also contains woodcut images, perhaps intended to broaden the reach of the text to a non-reading audience.⁹² By revisiting these editions and viewing them as separate entities, distinguished from Caxton's earlier versions by the context in which they are printed and read, we can view de Worde as an innovator.⁹³

In revising Caxton's prints for a sixteenth-century audience, de Worde also ensured their continued relevance by altering the prologues and epilogues to tailor them towards contemporary political conditions. Just as Caxton's translation of Old French material involved reframing it to appeal to contemporary English readers, so too did de Worde's reprinting include reframing texts and updating prologues. For example, he edited Caxton's prologue to the *History of Troy* to avoid appealing to monarchs who had fallen out of favour.⁹⁴ He broadened the potential audience of other works, such as his 1494 reprint of *Speculum vitae Christi* and his 1501 reprint of extracts from the book of Margery Kempe, by altering the dialectal forms of each to a more homogenised English, less marked by regional distinctions.⁹⁵ While Caxton complained in the

⁸⁹ West, 'Old News', p. 245.

⁹⁰ Tsuyoshi Mukai, 'De Worde's 1498 *Morte Darthur* and Caxton's Copy-Text', *The Review of English Studies*, 51.201 (2000), 24–40 (p. 25).

⁹¹ Mukai, 'De Worde's 1498 *Morte Darthur*', p. 26 (n. 8).

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹³ West, 'Old News', pp. 242–45.

⁹⁴ Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the Publication of Romance', p. 293.

⁹⁵ Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, p. 31.

prologue to *Eneydos* that ‘comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother’ (*Eneydos*, 2.24–25), de Worde took it upon himself to actually resolve such perceived problems through his reprints.⁹⁶ In homogenising dialectal forms to speak to address as broad an audience as possible, de Worde showed a keen understanding of how the printing press had expanded his potential audience by the end of the fifteenth century. Also key to ensuring his reprinted works were well received was a web of mercantile and political connections. Most notable of these were prominent clergy figures like John Alcock, Bishop of Ely, and members of the nobility, like Lady Margaret Beaufort. Both of these individuals also appear to have patronised fellow printer, Richard Pynson, as well as de Worde.⁹⁷

Beaufort’s involvement with both Pynson and de Worde is demonstrable through a woodcut shared across their texts. Originally in Pynson’s work, the woodcut details English and French shields, surrounded by Tudor roses and the Beaufort portcullis, speaking to some of the political links and conflicts of the era.⁹⁸ De Worde commissioned a vast number of woodcuts, and although few of them were as outwardly political as the Beaufort heraldic taken from Pynson’s work, others were used in a way that created political links between texts. The cost of production alone may have been reason for de Worde to reuse woodcuts, particularly when many were general scenes of mounted knights or towering castles with too few details to tie them to a specific story. The woodcut that begins de Worde’s c.1497 reprint of *Siege of Thebes* is labelled as ‘the Royall Cyte of Thebes’, but depicts a general scene of city-building that might be easily applicable in another text.⁹⁹ Of the seventy-two woodcuts illustrating the second

⁹⁶ William Caxton, *Eneydos*, ed. by M. T. Culley and F. J. Furnivall, EETS ES 57 (London: Trench, Trübner and Co., 1813, repr. 1890), 2.24–25. Henceforth *Eneydos*.

⁹⁷ Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, pp. 100–102.

⁹⁸ Edwards and Meale, ‘The Marketing of Printed Books in Late Medieval England’, pp. 103–104.

⁹⁹ London, British Library, IA. 55268, John Lydgate, ‘The Siege of Thebes’ (imprinted by Wynkyn de Worde, c. 1497). STC 17031.

(and earliest extant) edition of de Worde's *Valentine and Orson* (c.1510), only five are specific enough to be relevant only to this text.¹⁰⁰ Some *Valentine and Orson* woodcuts were also used in romances with crusading impulses, such as *Olyuer of Castylle* and *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*.¹⁰¹ During de Worde's working lifespan, other European printers were also producing texts with far more specific woodcuts, such as Johannes Adelphus' *Die Turkische Chronica*, printed in Strasbourg in 1513, which contained specific depictions of events such as the 1480 Siege of Rhodes and the Ottoman capture of Otranto.¹⁰² De Worde's woodcuts did not offer such specificity, but Seth Lerer argues that their generalised nature offers an intertextual perspective that forges links between the texts in which they are re-used.¹⁰³ However, de Worde's re-use of woodcuts between texts was more likely an attempt to save on the cost of new commissions, relying on readers not noticing or minding the re-use rather than actively reading meaning into it. Even so, these woodcuts certainly linked texts together in some capacity. In many cases, they would have been placed in prominent places such as immediately before the text; placed there, and displaying common images and themes, they create the same sort of intertextual links as Caxton's prologues, in the same literary locations.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Dickson, 'Introduction', in *Valentine and Orson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. xlv.

¹⁰¹ Dickson, pp. xlix–xli. See also, Edward Hodnett, *English Woodcuts, 1480–1535* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 262.

¹⁰² Robert Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk (1453–1517)* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1967), p. 132; Charlotte Colding Smith, *Images of Islam, 1453–1600: Turks in Germany and Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 15–21.

¹⁰³ Seth Lerer, 'The Wiles of a Woodcut: Wynkyn de Worde and the Early Tudor Reader', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 59.4 (1996), 381–403 (pp. 381–82 and 395–96).

IMAGINED AND REAL AUDIENCES

The prologues and epilogues of the prose romances directly address their audiences. As previous sections of this chapter have demonstrated, the most direct of these addresses name people as pseudo-patrons, where Caxton nods to courtly figures who may have influenced his choice of text. Whilst these names can offer a perspective on Caxton's influences, they are not reliable indicators of either his intended or real audience.¹⁰⁴ As Yu-Chiao Wang notes, though Caxton refers to royal patrons, none of his romance prints can be linked to a royal owner or reader, English or otherwise.¹⁰⁵ When the paratexts do invoke audiences, these 'audiences' are rarely reflective of actual readerships; it is useful here to distinguish between a text's real readership and the imagined, or aspirational, one for whom the translator imagines they are translating.¹⁰⁶

The majority of Caxton's books were, instead, owned by the gentry, the merchant classes, and the bureaucratic classes.¹⁰⁷ These were individuals who would have had access to a book trade before Caxton began printing, as well as the means or need for book ownership.¹⁰⁸ Those in administrative roles, like Westminster's many bureaucrats, would have been literate and experienced with written documents, and would have had the means to purchase books.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, the merchants and the landed gentry would each have had the wealth to purchase books, even if only as status

¹⁰⁴ Considering other translated works, Anne Middleton suggests a useful distinction between 'audience', as the actual readership of a work, and 'public' as the imagined community for whom the translator imagines they are working. Middleton, 'The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*', pp. 101–23.

¹⁰⁵ Wang, 'Early Tudor Readers', p. 178.

¹⁰⁶ Here, see Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse*, pp. 11–12; Middleton, 'The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*'; Wogan-Browne, Watson, Taylor, and Evans (eds.), *The Idea of the Vernacular*, pp. 110–11.

¹⁰⁷ Lane Ford, 'Private Ownership of Printed Books', p. 213.

¹⁰⁸ Toshiyuki Takamiya and Richard Linenthal, 'Early Printed Continental Books Owned in England: Some Examples in the Takamiya Collection', in *Makers and Users of Medieval Books*, ed. by Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 178–90 (p. 178); Lane Ford, 'Private Ownership of Printed Books', p. 205.

¹⁰⁹ Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, p. 8.

symbols.¹¹⁰ That the printing press produced far more copies than could ever be desired by a single patron meant that Caxton's initial speculative translation would have been based on a desire to produce work that might appeal to any and all individuals with the means or need. His books may have been addressed to nobility, but they did not require the word-of-mouth of patronage circles to generate income, only the occasional support of individuals in financing an initial print run.¹¹¹ Caxton took care to appeal to a broad audience as well, whose purchases would provide much of the profit. As Wang suggests, his references to royalty in the prologues are akin to modern-day celebrity endorsements: owning a book purportedly marketed towards courtly circles was an indication of social status.¹¹² In this way, Caxton's texts appeal to merchant and bureaucratic audiences through both subject matter and perceived value.

In some instances, Caxton's prologues explicitly mention not only the aristocracy but also this wider readership, making clear the former is used to attract the latter. For example, the epilogue to *Fayttes of Armes* suggests that gentlemen might be interested in a book that their king desires them to read:

Kyng Henry the vii Kyng of Englund and of Fraunce, in his palais of Westmestre the xxiii day of Janyvere, the iiii yere of his regne, and desired and wyllde me to translate this said boke and reduce it into our English and natural tonge, and to put it in enprynte, to th'ende that every gentyelman born to armes and all manere men of werre, captayns, souldiours, vytayllers and all other, shold have knowlege how they ought to behave theym in the fayttes of warre and of

¹¹⁰ Though, as Boffey highlights, scholarly estimates suggest that approximately half of England could read by 1500. See; Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, p. 8; Lane Ford, 'Private Ownership', p. 218.

¹¹¹ There are limited records on Caxton's print runs, and greater study in this area would likely yield fruitful discussions about the extent to which Caxton's print catalogue was a direct response to genuine audience desire for crusade. Some book historians, such as Boffey and Tonry, have attempted to determine readership data through print runs by examining other records, such as the availability and price of materials or the specific print devices used. This thesis, however, relies primarily on Caxton's literary contributions, in the form of prologues and epilogues, to demonstrate how his print selections responded to contemporary audience interests and concerns. See Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, pp. 125–231; Tonry, *Agency and Intention*, pp. 40–41.

¹¹² As Kathleen Tonry further explores, some of Caxton's prologues participated in the 'self-fashioning' of readers by appealing to the outward markers of social class. Tonry, *Agency and Intention*, pp. 72–77; Wang, 'Early Tudor Readers', p. 173; Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, p. 306.

bataylles.

(Caxton, Prologue to *Fayttes*)¹¹³

The reliability of Caxton's statement—that King Henry commissioned the text—is dubious at best, but his given reason for print corresponds with other material in his catalogue: *Fayttes* offers genuine value to a wider reading population who either share contemporary political concerns over England's place in the world or would like further training in martial, active forms of chivalry. *Eneydos* is prefaced similarly: though the text is presented to Henry VII's son, Caxton adds that it 'sholde be moche requysyte to noble men to see' (*Eneydos*, 1.20–21). It is relevant to all 'noble' men, and Caxton defines the term loosely as one that includes bureaucrats and clerks alongside the landed gentry: 'For this booke is not for eury rude and vnconnyng man to see, but to clerkys and very gentylnes that vnderstand gentylnes and scyence' (*Eneydos*, 3.27–30). In doing so, Caxton indicates a desire for a readership comprised of a range of social strata.

In some of his prologues and epilogues, Caxton aligns himself with specific groups within his broad audience, concentrating often on mercantile and common audiences. In his prologue to *Caton*, Caxton presents his text 'unto the cyte of London', addressing himself first and foremost as not printer but as 'of the fraternyte and felauship of the mercerye' – his former career, abandoned two decades prior.¹¹⁴ By aligning himself with a merchant audience, Caxton acknowledges that his printing appeals to those with money to spend, although actual levels of ownership and readership of books in the merchant classes are difficult to determine.¹¹⁵ However,

¹¹³ Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*, pp. 81–82.

¹¹⁴ Caxton was, of course, still a merchant, but his ties with the Mercers guild were prominent during his early career trading in continental Europe. For quotations, see Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*, p. 63.

¹¹⁵ Anne F. Sutton, 'Merchants', in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain 1476–1558*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 127–33 (pp. 131–32).

Caxton's own mercantile connections would have likely granted him immediate access to a market of those interested in his business and aware of the value of printed books from prior continental imports.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, many wealthy households—including those of merchants—had their own chapels with need for a great amount of devotional literature, alongside any personal books that an individual may have desired.¹¹⁷ In other texts, such as *The Doctrinal of Sapience*, Caxton also speaks to broader, non-gentry audiences.¹¹⁸ He claims *Doctrinal* was 'made for symple peple and put into Englishe', appropriate for educating audiences who would have been ill acquainted with science and scripture.¹¹⁹ Much of Caxton's non-romance printing falls into the same category: indulgences, almanacs, and books of hours all occupied Caxton's press regularly and would have appealed to common audiences both as useful items and status symbols.¹²⁰ Even where he does not explicitly address non-courtly readers, Caxton directs his prologues and epilogues towards them by framing the texts in terms of moral didacticism applicable to everyone. As Alexandra Gillespie notes, Caxton's prologues and epilogues can sometimes be read as an attempt to associate the texts with traditional literary values, alongside their value as material commodities.¹²¹ Caxton was evidently concerned with both, as well as the didactic value of his texts to a broad spectrum of readers. He claims to print *Boethius* for the 'wele and helth' of readers' souls, *Polychronicon* so that they might 'knowe what is prouffitable to oure lyf', and *Fayttes of Armes* for any that 'entende to the fayttes of werre'.¹²² Caxton attributes to these

¹¹⁶ For work on continental imports prior to Caxton, see Armstrong, 'English Purchases of Printed Books'; Ford, 'Importation of Printed Books into England and Scotland'.

¹¹⁷ Sutton, 'Merchants', pp. 131–32.

¹¹⁸ See also Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, pp. 24–26.

¹¹⁹ Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*, p. 77.

¹²⁰ Erler, 'The Laity', pp. 135–41.

¹²¹ Gillespie, 'Some Histories of Fifteenth-Century Printed Books', pp. 169–70.

¹²² Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*, pp. 59, 128, and 82, respectively.

books an implicit moral value that is aimed at those who might wish to emulate stories of crusading heroes' bravery.

THE PROSE ROMANCES AND THE OTTOMAN THREAT

The prose romances that Caxton and de Worde selected contain motifs and narratives that responded to the cultural concerns of English readers. While these concerns were certainly due in part to domestic issues of civil strife, they were also partially formed in reaction to the threat of the expanding Ottoman Empire and the notion that crusade against it might help restore social unity in England and Christendom. The prose romances were printed in a literary culture that already linked crusades with the Ottoman threat, and this section considers the extent to which this connection would signify to a broad range of English readers.

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The Ottoman Empire was far from England, but it would have been considered by late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English readers as a credible political and religious threat and a crusading target. There were no formal crusades against the Holy Land following the fall of Acre in 1291, but crusading ideology and impulses remained relevant throughout the Middle Ages.¹²³ Christian inability to recapture and defend the

¹²³ Prevailing critical views on late medieval attitudes to crusade have recently shifted away from believing that 1291 marked the beginning of mass crusade disillusionment, and towards the now-accepted consensus that crusading ideas were still at the forefront of late medieval politics. On crusading spirit in the Middle Ages, see Manion, 'The Loss of the Holy Land', pp. 65–90; Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)* (Philadelphia, PA: The American Philosophical Society, 1976), Vol. 1, pp. 113–14; Norman Housley, 'The Crusading Movement 1274–1700', in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. by Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 260–93 (pp. 260 and 268–70); Housley, *The Later Crusades: From Lyons to Alcazar*, p. 24; Kathy Lavezzo, 'Complex Identities: Selves and Others' in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. by Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 434–56 (pp. 448–54); Robert

Holy Land after 1291 is proof only that the level of co-operation and co-investment required of European states for a successful venture was simply too great, not that there was no interest. Indeed, there were many smaller crusading excursions in the fourteenth century, into places on the borders of Christendom like Spain, Prussia, and Italy, which indicate that the crusading spirit had not withered even if the Holy Land seemed unobtainable.¹²⁴ By the late fifteenth century, when Caxton began translating and printing crusading prose romances, crusading concerns had shifted away from the Holy Land and had been reconfigured towards a more local focus that emphasised the need to defend Christendom's borders from heathen incursion. The Ottoman Empire represented the most recent and most impactful of these threats.

Ottoman expansion through the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe occurred in stages throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The strategy by which the Ottomans conquered involved a series of political steps: establishment of tributary states, vassalisation, and then outright conquest when the opportunity presented itself.¹²⁵ After Mehmed II captured Constantinople in 1453, causing uproar throughout the Christian world, he went on to capture Serbia, Bosnia and much of Albania in this stage-by-stage fashion, resulting in considerable Westward expansion that threatened Venice and Rome by proximity.¹²⁶ This threat led to the first Venetian-Ottoman war in 1463, which ended in 1479 with the Venetians suing for peace after attempts to

Allen Rouse, 'Crusaders', in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 173–83 (p. 182).

¹²⁴ As Lee Manion notes, these crusades had varying degrees of success, but they indicated more broadly that crusading spirits were still alive. Manion, 'The Loss of the Holy Land', p. 66. See also, Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, pp. 100–107.

¹²⁵ Kate Fleet, 'The Ottomans, 1451–1603: A Political History Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power*, ed. by Suraiya Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 19–43 (p. 24); Kate Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power*, ed. by Suraiya Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 141–72 (p. 147).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–25.

publicise the war in Catholic Western Europe resulted in no significant assistance against the Turks.¹²⁷ Each of these steps into Europe would have proved more and more troubling a political situation for those in Central and Western Europe, and Venetian printing houses had been spreading anti-Ottoman propaganda material suggesting so ever since their establishment in 1469.¹²⁸ However, even when strongly-personalised rhetoric was employed, such as Pope Sixtus IV's 1472 declaration that those who fought against the Turks did so to defend their own children and wives, those far from the Ottoman frontier did not coalesce into an actual crusading response.¹²⁹

In 1480, and in what would be the final push of Mehmed II, the Ottoman Empire attempted to expand into Christendom on several fronts. These assaults had varying degrees of success; whilst the capture of Otranto gave the Ottomans a foothold in Italy, their unsuccessful siege of Rhodes was taken up across the Christian world as proof of the need to stand against the Turks – and as proof that such a fight could be successful.¹³⁰ The loss of Otranto represented an alarming intrusion into the Italian peninsula, and one that was regarded by contemporary commentators as the first step in a larger Italian campaign.¹³¹ However, when Bayezid II succeeded Mehmed II in 1481, one of his first acts was to withdraw all forces from Southern Italy and attempt to broker truces with the Hospitallers and Venice.¹³² These simultaneous pushes kickstarted campaigns in Christendom and provided further material for printed propaganda campaigns that highlighted the real and expanding Ottoman threat. The defence marked the beginning of what Christopher Tyerman regards as a forty-year period of bright

¹²⁷ Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, p. 33.

¹²⁸ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, p. 10.

¹²⁹ Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, pp. 35–36.

¹³⁰ Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean', pp. 145–46.

¹³¹ Palmira Brummett, 'Ottoman Expansion in Europe, ca. 1453–1606', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power*, ed. by Suraiya Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 44–73, (p. 50); Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean', p. 146.

¹³² Fleet, 'The Ottomans, 1451–1603', p. 27.

prospects for a new crusade, during which Henry VII donated substantial sums of his own money to papal crusading causes.¹³³ This crusading optimism was almost certainly bolstered by Bayezid II's focus on Eastwards Ottoman expansion, which relieved some of the immediate pressure on Central European countries.¹³⁴ In this climate, the defence of Rhodes was publicised across Christendom as a major success in driving back the Ottomans. The island was already a significant pilgrimage site in the Christian world, and pilgrimage guides both before and after the 1480 siege praised its mighty fortifications and the work of the resident Hospitallers.¹³⁵

In the final two decades of the fifteenth century, Emperor Bayezid II turned the Ottoman Empire's attention away from the Christian West whilst embroiled in a succession crisis that saw his brother, Cem, defect to the Hospitallers.¹³⁶ Ruling from 1481 to 1512, Bayezid withdrew forces from Otranto upon assuming command, instead focusing his attention on the Egyptian Mamluks to the East.¹³⁷ Even so, this turn away from Western Europe did not stem the flow of Western European voices calling for crusade against the Empire. Records from 1481–1500 indicate a wealth of papal indulgences, each offering remission of sin in the eyes of God and acquired in exchange for a donation to support crusading funds.¹³⁸ Even when Europe was not under direct threat following Bayezid's succession in 1481, the idea of the Ottoman Empire as the modern day 'Saracens' of romance was deeply rooted. Perhaps rightly so, because

¹³³ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 350–51.

¹³⁴ Fleet, 'The Ottomans, 1451–1603', p. 28.

¹³⁵ Michel Balard, 'The Urban Landscape of Rhodes as Perceived by Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Travellers', in *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. by Benjamin Arbel (London: Frank Cass Ltd., 1996), pp. 24–34 (pp. 25–6 and 31).

¹³⁶ See Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean', pp. 148–50; Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda*, p. 42; Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 350–51.

¹³⁷ Fleet, 'The Ottomans, 1451–1603', pp. 27–28.

¹³⁸ Records exist of indulgences printed by Caxton, which this chapter has previously discussed, as well as those of other printers such as John Lettou, Wynkyn de Worde, and Richard Pynson. For a complete list of those printed 1481–1500, see Hellinga, *Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 55–61, nn. 209–221. I further explore the impact of these indulgences in the following section.

Bayezid's turn away from Western Europe did not last long. Following an Ottoman victory over the Mamluks, Ottoman-Venetian war reignited at the start of the sixteenth century.¹³⁹ Furthermore, Bayezid II was succeeded by Selim I in 1512, and he by Suleiman I 'The Magnificent' in 1520, who resumed active hostilities against European states. Suleiman conquered Rhodes in 1522, dampening the spirit of resistance garnered by the failed 1480 siege.¹⁴⁰ He also refocused Ottoman attention upon Eastern and Central European powers such as Belgrade and Hungary from 1520, enjoying repeated successes and rapid expansion throughout the early portion of his reign.¹⁴¹ Whilst the second half of Suleiman's reign was not as successful as the first, Ottoman conflict with Eastern and Central Europe continued throughout the sixteenth century.¹⁴² English perceptions of this conflict, throughout the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-centuries, were fuelled by printed material.

CONTEMPORARY CRUSADING CONTEXTS IN PRINT

The expansion of the Ottoman Empire resulted in a catalogue of printed materials across Europe appealing to anxieties about the need for a crusading response. The prose romances fitted neatly within this cultural climate, in which much information about the threat circulated in print, including papal indulgences or eyewitness propaganda accounts.¹⁴³

One of the most prominent and widespread pieces of propaganda that emerged from the 1480 siege of Rhodes was Guillaume Caoursin's *Obsidionis Rhodiae urbis descriptio*, which John Kay translated to English and printed in c.1482 as the

¹³⁹ Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean', pp. 149–50.

¹⁴⁰ Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean', pp. 154–55.

¹⁴¹ Brummett, 'Ottoman Expansion in Europe, ca. 1453–1606', pp. 51–52.

¹⁴² Fleet, 'The Ottomans, 1451–1603', pp. 36–43.

¹⁴³ Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453–1505*, pp. 167–74.

Description of the Siege of Rhodes.¹⁴⁴ Kay's translation has significant alterations from Caoursin's original, but both authors suggest that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 set in motion an inevitable series of events that would result in an attempt to capture Rhodes.¹⁴⁵ Thus, when Caxton laments in the prologue to *Godeffroy* that the capture of Otranto gave the Ottomans a means 'to entre in to the Royamme of Naples', from which they might push forward 'vnto Rome & ytalye' (*Godeffroy*, 4.9–11), he does so with some precedent from Caoursin's work. Kay's c.1482 *Siege of Rhodes* also has a similar focus on Italy and the Ottoman attempts to 'undo & subverte the holy cytee of Rome', suggesting a definite focus on the Ottoman threat in the early 1480s.¹⁴⁶ It begins with the lament that the Turks have 'vexed the crysten partyes & hane prevayled' for many years (*Rhodes*, p. 181) and now besiege Rhodes to 'persecute and outerly undo the crysten fayth' (*Rhodes*, p. 182). Though supposedly an eyewitness account, the text reads like a romance, detailing the siege with a focus on the battles and those key individuals orchestrating them. It ends by attributing success to Pope Sixtus, who unites Christendom in defence of Rhodes, in much the same way that romances like *Charles the Grete* end with Charlemagne uniting formerly-Saracen lands.¹⁴⁷ *Rhodes* became 'a best seller', published in seven Latin editions, as well as in Italian, Danish, German, and English.¹⁴⁸ This international spread indicates that knowledge of the Ottoman Empire's

¹⁴⁴ Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda*, p. 177; Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, p. 305.

¹⁴⁵ Vann and Kagay note that the description of the artillery in Kay's version matches that of D'Aubusson's French version, suggesting that Kay likely translated from the French rather than the Latin original. Elsewhere, Theresa Vann suggests that Kay, like his contemporary English translators, 'took liberties with the original Latin text' and translated for sense rather than accuracy of meaning. See Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety*, p. 179; Theresa M. Vann, 'John Kaye, the 'Dread Turk'', and the Siege of Rhodes', in *The Military Orders, Volume 3: History and Heritage*, ed. by Victor Mallia-Milanes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 245–52 (pp. 245–46).

¹⁴⁶ John Kay, *Description of the Siege of Rhodes*, in *Hospitaller Piety*, ed. by Theresa M. Vann and Donald J. Kagay, pp. 181–206, (p. 181). Henceforth, references are given to this edition in the body of the text as *Rhodes*.

¹⁴⁷ Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety*, p. 179.

¹⁴⁸ Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety*, p. ix.

aggression was common across Christendom, and that an English readership would have been receptive to texts such as Caxton's crusading romances.

English audiences would also have connected Ottoman expansion and crusade impulses through the papal indulgences that were common throughout the late fifteenth century. Issued in response to events like the failed 1480 siege of Rhodes, indulgences offered remission of sin in return for donations made towards crusading efforts. Between 1444 and 1502 there were twelve sales campaigns in England directed towards halting the Ottoman advance, which Christopher Tyerman suggests highlights the continued popularity of this form of investment.¹⁴⁹ It was also a form that—like popular romance—benefited greatly from the mass-production made possible through print technology. One of the earliest surviving prints from Caxton's press is a 1476 indulgence granted for donations towards a fleet to combat Turkish advances in the Mediterranean.¹⁵⁰ A papal campaign for the defence of Rhodes also resulted in a glut of printed indulgences from 1480–1481, and Caxton printed at least four that were granted by Pope Sixtus IV in 1479.¹⁵¹ Indulgences continued to be commissioned and printed in England through the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth century, even after Bayezid II had refocused the efforts of the Ottoman Empire east rather than west from 1481.¹⁵² Indulgences offered a way of personally involving the English public in a response to the Ottoman Empire, but they also kept reading audiences informed of the Empire's spread. They performed the same cultural work as the prose romances, which

¹⁴⁹ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, p. 315.

¹⁵⁰ Kew, The National Archives, MS E135/6/56. See also Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, p. 68; David R. Carlson, 'A Theory of the Early English Printing Firm', in *Caxton's Trace*, ed. by William Kuskin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 35–68 (pp. 39–40).

¹⁵¹ For a list of indulgences, see Lotte Hellinga, *Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century: E. Gordon Duff's Bibliography with Supplementary Descriptions, Chronologies, and a Census of Copies* by Lotte Hellinga (London: The Bibliographical Society, 2009), pp. 53–61.

¹⁵² For indulgences after Rhodes, see E. G. Duff, *Fifteenth-Century English Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), pp. 53–61, nos. 211–221; Hellinga, *Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 53–61.

Caxton frames as morally didactic and approachable for a broad audience of readers, knowledgeable and concerned about the contemporary Ottoman threat.

Some of Caxton's other non-romance translations also engaged with the sentiment that Ottoman advancement should be answered with chivalric action and social unity. Notably, Caxton printed *Fayttes of Armes*, a translation of Christine de Pisan's *Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*, and *Book of the Ordre of Chyualry*, a translation of Ramón Lull's *Le libre del ordre de cauayleria*. These texts, along with other similar works that had been translated into English earlier in the fifteenth century, drew inspiration from Vegetius' *de Re Militari*. They were well received as instruction manuals and, as Richard Firth Green notes, 'there is hardly a single aristocratic library which does not contain a copy of Vegetius, or, failing that, one of the works by Lull, Bonet, or Christine de Pisan'.¹⁵³ Vegetius' arguments, and the texts that drew upon them, found particular popularity in the social climate of the 1450s which was marked by the recent loss of English territory in France.¹⁵⁴ The notion that internal social order might be achieved by external war became conflated with the message that a crusade against the Ottoman Empire would unite Christendom under a single banner. The urgency of this message was redoubled in light of the internal conflict that was the Wars of the Roses in the later fifteenth century.¹⁵⁵ The crusading prose romances therefore engaged with a literary culture in which crusade promised a way of counteracting social disorder and of re-unifying Christendom in the wake of the Hundred Years War, and England, in the wake of the Wars of the Roses.

¹⁵³ Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 143–44.

¹⁵⁴ Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 48–50; Nall, 'Malory in Historical Context', pp. 15–31; Pollard, 'English Chivalry'.

¹⁵⁵ See Leitch, *Romancing Treason*; Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*.

LE MORTE DARTHUR AMONG THE PROSE ROMANCES

Malory's *Morte Darthur* was completed in 1469 and printed in 1485, amongst Caxton's other crusading prose romances. The text has issues of social and chivalric unity at its core, but it also speaks to the same crusading concerns that Caxton printed prose romances to address. As the introduction to this thesis has begun to explore, the *Morte* is already a focal point of critical study in comparison to other Arthurian and English verse romances.¹⁵⁶ Critics have more recently begun to read it alongside contemporary prose romances, but even these works focus on the *Morte* as a response to inward-looking concerns prompted by England's social instability.¹⁵⁷ These concerns are evident in the way the *Morte* associates chivalric community with social stability before sundering this community in a civil war not unlike the Wars of the Roses. But the *Morte* can also be read in light of the same crusading theme present across the prose romances, offering crusade as a means of healing England's domestic divisions and responding to its external threats.

CRUSADES IN LE MORTE DARTHUR

The most prominent crusading journey in the *Morte* is the Roman War, in which Arthur and the court venture beyond England to defeat Lucius's army of Saracens. Critics have productively argued that the Roman War in Malory's source, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, should be read as a crusade, and Malory adopts many of this text's crusading elements in creating his own.¹⁵⁸ However, the framing and positional choices Malory

¹⁵⁶ Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Notably: Cooper, 'Counter-Romance: Civil Strife and Father-Killing'; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*.

¹⁵⁸ As Nievergelt suggests, critics have long maintained that the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* has a direct relationship with contemporary issues like the ongoing conflict of the Hundred Years War, but the text is notably Christian and framed around the idea of pilgrimage as a crusading journey. See Nievergelt, 'Conquest, Crusade, and Pilgrimage', pp. 89–94; George R. Keiser, 'Edward III and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Speculum*, 41.1 (1973), 37–51.

makes in composing the *Morte Darthur* mean that this version of the Roman War has more resonance with contemporary crusading anxieties than that of the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. The changes Caxton makes (and which this chapter evidences through comparison between the Winchester manuscript and Caxton's 1485 print) move the episode even closer to a crusade defined by Arthur's imperialism.¹⁵⁹ Malory's version of the war against Emperor Lucius is conventionally positioned following Arthur's coronation and wedding instead of directly preceding the fatal civil war, as in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*.¹⁶⁰ In the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the campaign against Lucius is an overextension of chivalry that leads directly to the fall of Arthur's kingdom and his death.¹⁶¹ He is to be crowned in Rome 'with his ceptre, [forsothe], as soueraynge and lorde' (l. 3186), but the ceremony is interrupted by the news of Mordred's betrayal:¹⁶²

‘Sir, thi wardane es wikkede and wilde of his dedys,
For he wandreth has wroght sen pou awaye passede;
He has castells encrochede, and corownde hym seluen,
Kaughte in all þe rentis of þe Rownde Tabill.
He devisede þe rewme and delte as hym likes’.

(Alliterative *Morte*, ll. 3523–27)

¹⁵⁹ Eugène Vinaver's theory that Malory modelled this campaign after Henry V at Agincourt, creating a route that would serve as homage to Henry's victories, has been disavowed in more recent scholarship. However, as Meg Roland suggests, the image of Arthur as 'empire-builder and conqueror dominates the Roman War' in both the Caxton and Winchester versions of the episode. See Roland, 'The Recontextualization of the East', p. 68. See also Eugène Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, Vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 1368. Furthermore, Thomas Crofts suggests that the Roman War episode gave both Malory and Caxton opportunities to 'express anxieties about England's political continuity' through different modes of textual construction. See Crofts, *Malory's Contemporary Audience*, p. 94.

¹⁶⁰ Meg Roland highlights that this notable revision by Malory of his sources is a conscious change but one with precedent from the French Vulgate. Drawing upon Vinaver, she further suggests that the contemporary issue of empire might have prompted Malory's revisions, as the Roman War functions as a narrative vehicle towards positioning England as a real-world empire. See Roland, 'The Recontextualization of the East', pp. 66–68. Remnants of the *Morte Arthure*'s alliteration can be found throughout this episode in Malory's *Morte*. On these stylistic remnants, see Withrington, 'Caxton, Malory, and the Roman War', p. 350; Amanda Walling, 'Alliteration Deformed: The Stylistic Estrangement of Malory's Roman War', *Arthuriana*, 26.3 (2016), 3–24.

¹⁶¹ Nievergelt, 'Conquest, Crusade, and Pilgrimage', pp. 89–90; Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 140–41.

¹⁶² Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, ed. by Mary Hamel (London: Garland, 1984), l. 3186.

When Malory places this episode earlier in Arthur's life, he reframes it as a celebration of Arthur's authority as king of a unified realm that stretches across Christendom. As Elizabeth Archibald suggests, Malory's version of the tale is not a private adventure but a narrative that 'belongs unequivocally to the public, political realm'.¹⁶³ This successful crusade is as far away as possible, thematically and chronologically, from the internal fractures that eventually topple the kingdom.¹⁶⁴ It follows the tales that validate Arthur as monarch, as head of the Round Table, and as husband to Guinevere, establishing his military might and religious conviction at the head of a stable and unified realm, achieved through external conquest.

The Roman War campaign in *Le Morte Darthur* also has crusading resonances from its very beginning, when Arthur takes counsel from his knights. Arthur explains that his bloodline has a rightful claim to the Empire of Rome, after an ancestor 'recoverde the Crosse that Cryste dyed upon' (*Morte Darthur*, 147.23). Arthur here cites precedence based on prior conquests, framing the episode as a reconquest rather than an act of aggression. The language Arthur and his council use in this scene is also steeped in religious resonance. They lend their support with language that presents this episode as a crusade: they make vows to 'mylde Mary and unto Jesu Cryste' (*Morte*, 147.33–34) and recall their prior journeys as that of 'pylgrymage' (148.12) when granting Arthur their support. Malory's *Morte* locates the crusading journey, and the non-Christian army the crusaders fight, specifically in areas on the border of Christendom and in the Holy Land: Lucius sends messengers to 'Alysaundir, to Ynde', 'to Egypte, to Damaske, and to Damyate', to 'the King of Tars, and of Turkye', drawing

¹⁶³ Elizabeth Archibald, 'Beginnings: The Tale of King Arthur and King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius', in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 133–51 (p. 133).

¹⁶⁴ Felicity Riddy argues further that Malory uses Launcelot and Guinevere's love affair to isolate the imperialist Roman War from the civil war at the text's end. Riddy, 'Contextualizing *Le Morte Darthur*', pp. 65–66.

the support of all, from ‘Grekis’ and ‘Spaynardis’ to the broadly-defined and intrinsically-othered ‘Sarysyns’ (151.1–13) familiar to readers of romance. That the Emperor of Rome’s army has such a clear Saracen contingent further twists this war into a justifiable crusade, and one in which Arthur’s righteousness is ensured as he defends the unity, stability, and sanctity of a Christian realm.

The second crusade in *Le Morte Darthur* is in the final lines of ‘The Death of Arthur’, where the surviving members of the community conclude the narrative with a push into the Holy Land after the civil war has torn Arthur’s realm asunder:

And somme Englysshe bookes maken mencyon that they wente never oute of Englonde after the deth of Syr Launcelot, but that was but favour of makers. For the Frensshe book maketh mencyon, and is auctorysed, that Syr Bors, Syr Ector, Syr Blamour, and Syr Bleoberis wente into the Holy Lande, theas Jesu Cryst was quycke and deed. And anone as they had stablysshed theyr londes (for, the book saith, so Syr Launcelot commaunded them for to do or ever he passyd oute of thys world), these foure knyghtes dyd many bataylles upon the myscreantes or Turkes. And there they dyed upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake.

(*Morte*, 940.7–16)

These final lines show a return to an active, martial chivalric ideal that is realised in the commendable destruction of Turks in the Holy Land – one which could be emulated by audiences, at a time of national fracturing and decline in active chivalry.¹⁶⁵ Situated after the Arthurian community’s own fracturing, this ending offers a resolution that sees the few surviving knights return to these martial, strenuous—and, as the prose romances contend, crusading—values that are core to chivalric ideology.

¹⁶⁵ Pollard charts a series of progressions in twentieth- and twenty-first-century critical consideration of the decline of chivalry. Earlier scholarship, such as Johan Huizinga’s 1924 work, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, is regarded as contentious in its view that the later Middle Ages was a time of chivalric decline. More recent studies, such as those of Maurice Keen (1984) and Robert Kaeuper (1999) argue that some aspects of chivalry were still deeply embedded in fifteenth-century aristocratic life, and Pollard furthers this analysis by differentiating ‘strenuous knighthood’ as acting upon the martial values of chivalry. Pollard, ‘English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood’, pp. 140–47.

The final passage offers English readers hope for resolving the social fractures caused by the Wars of the Roses. In each instance of crusade, Malory draws upon Vegetius' ideas of internal peace through external war to demonstrate that communities can be unified and solidified by crusade.¹⁶⁶ Caxton did not print Christine de Pizan's version of Vegetius' *De Re Militari* (as *Book of the Fayttes of Arms*) until 1489, four years after he printed *Le Morte Darthur* and twenty years after Malory finished composing it. However, the ideas within were well-known to English fifteenth-century audiences during the period in which Malory was composing his *Arthuriad*.¹⁶⁷ The crusades within *Le Morte Darthur* respond to this audience's religious and political concerns over the Ottoman Empire by exemplifying what many of them would already perceive to be the most viable solution: a fifteenth-century crusade against the Turks.

FRAMING *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

When Caxton printed *Le Morte Darthur* in 1485, he added a prologue that framed it alongside the other prose romances and their responses to contemporary English concerns. As with his other prose romances, Caxton emphasised the *Morte* as a record of great heroes, whose deeds a reading audience might wish to emulate. He also included a brief description of the Nine Worthies like those found in the prologues to *Godeffroy* and *Charles*: 'of whome was fyrst the noble Arthur, whos noble actes I purpose to wryte in thys present book'.¹⁶⁸ Stories like this one offer an opportunity, Caxton's words suggest, for both chivalric nostalgia and moral instruction.

¹⁶⁶ Pollard, 'English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood', p. 147.

¹⁶⁷ Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 140–44; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 166–68.

¹⁶⁸ William Caxton, 'Prologue to *Le Morte Darthur*', in *Sir Thomas Malory: Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P. J. C. Field, Vol. II (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 854–57 (p. 854).

In his prologue to the *Morte Darthur*, Caxton is not explicit about crusade; he does not call upon readers to ‘warre ageyn the mescreautes’ as in *Godeffroy* (3.32), instead drawing attention to the ‘noble actes’ and ‘noble feates’ (Prologue: *Morte*, p. 854) that define individual worth:

For herein may be seen noble shyvalrye, curtosye, humanyte,
frendlynnesse, hardynesse, love, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate,
vertue, and synne. Doo after the good and leve the evyl, and it shal
brynge you to good fame and renommee.

(Prologue: *Morte*, p. 856)

Even the non-performative qualities listed, such as ‘frendlynnesse’, are marked by the instruction that a reader should enact, or ‘doo’ them. Caxton encourages his audience to emulate chivalric deeds, but here focuses on individual actions, through which ‘noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyvalrye’ (Prologue: *Morte*, p. 856).¹⁶⁹ This same focus on deeds is also found in Caxton’s description of Arthur’s acts which have bolstered his international reputation:

For in al places, Crysten and hethen, he is reputed and taken for one
of the nyne worthy, and the fyrst of the thre Crysten men. And also he
is more spoken of beyonde the see, moo books made of his noble
actes than there be in Englund: as wel in Duche, Ytalyen, Spaynysshe,
and Grekysshe, as in Frensshe.

(Prologue: *Morte*, p. 855)

In this statement, Caxton emphasises Arthur’s significance as a global figure, whose power might be encountered beyond England. He also draws attention to the extent to which the Arthurian legend has international sources. Alongside being a ‘man of this realm’, Arthur is known ‘in al places, Crysten and hethen’ as a legendary figure. Arthur

¹⁶⁹ Steven Bruso also argues that fifteenth-century English ideas of chivalry were constructed through a focus on deeds, and that bodily ‘hardening’ is foregrounded both in romance and in instruction manuals. He refers specifically to *Secretum Secretorum*, another Middle English verse translation of Vegetius’ *De Re Militari*. See Steven Bruso, ‘Bodies Hardened for War: Knighthood in Fifteenth-Century England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 47.2 (2017), 255–77 (p. 256).

is referred to as a great Christian king, rather than an English one, drawing upon notions of ‘Christendom’ as an overarching identity that co-exists alongside Englishness.¹⁷⁰

Caxton’s prologue to the *Morte* is unique in that it reveals very little about the extent of his textual intervention, whereas his other paratexts speak extensively on the topic. While there has, therefore, been considerable debate over the extent of his involvement, Caxton was almost certainly *Le Morte Darthur*’s first true ‘editor’.¹⁷¹ Eugène Vinaver’s 1947 edition, which presented Tale II in comparative format, demonstrated the considerable differences between the Winchester manuscript and the Caxton print and identified that the two versions derived independently from a common original.¹⁷² Lotte Hellinga has proved more recently that the Winchester manuscript was at least one of the texts that Caxton consulted, but that it could not have been the only one.¹⁷³ Upon the discovery of the manuscript, a consensus formed that Caxton had abridged the Roman War episode, moderating Malory’s lengthy and extensive reliance upon the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.¹⁷⁴ This view was challenged by William Matthews, whose argument that Malory himself revised the text for the 1485 edition was published posthumously and has been rebutted recently by scholars such as P. J. C. Field.¹⁷⁵ As Ralph Norris notes, Matthews’ argument stems from a belief that Caxton would have

¹⁷⁰ Thorlac Turville-Petre examines the formation of national identity in England, arguing that it was not superseded by the supra-national identity provided by the Church, but that the two could co-exist. As explored in the introduction to this thesis, I treat ‘Christendom’ in the prose romances as an expression of this religious identity that is foregrounded, but not at the expense of other identities, such as national or chivalric. See Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. vi and 27–31.

¹⁷¹ Hanks, ‘William Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and the Editing of Malory’s *Morte Darthur*’, pp. 46–67.

¹⁷² For an expanded version of this summary, see Withrington, ‘Caxton, Malory, and the Roman War’, pp. 350–53; see also Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, p. 128.

¹⁷³ Lotte Hellinga, ‘The Malory Manuscript and Caxton’, in *Aspects of Malory*, ed. by Toshiyuki Takamiya & Derek Brewer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1981), pp. 127–42 (p. 134); more recently revised in Lotte Hellinga, *Texts in Transit: Manuscript to Proof and Print in the Fifteenth Century* (Boston: Brill, 2014), pp. 410–430.

¹⁷⁴ Withrington, ‘Caxton, Malory, and the Roman War’, p. 351; C. S. Lewis, ‘The English Prose *Morte*’ in *Essays on Malory*, ed. by J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, Vol. III, p. 1366.

¹⁷⁵ William Matthews, ‘A Question of Texts’, in *The Malory Debate: Essays on the Texts of Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler, Robert Kindrick, and Michael Salda (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 65–107; Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, pp. 126–52.

articulated all of his (therefore few) changes in his prologue.¹⁷⁶ Matthews' argument has been widely disavowed because the absence of any explanation from Caxton cannot be taken as evidence for his inactivity.¹⁷⁷ There are good reasons why Caxton may not have publicised any editorial interventions to the *Morte Darthur*, which still permit a reading of this text as one that foregrounds crusade as a solution to civil war and external threats. For example, Field argues that Caxton is deferring authority on chivalry to the text's original knight-author, to whom his gentry audience might be more receptive on matters of chivalric didacticism.¹⁷⁸ Caxton's intended readership included those who were, or would aspire to be, 'gentylnen or gentylywymmen' and yet he bills himself as a 'symple person' (Prologue: *Morte*, p. 856). Caxton highlights morally-exemplary deeds of chivalry so that his audience might internalise and emulate them.

EDITING MALORY'S CRUSADES

The two crusading sections of the *Morte Darthur*—The Roman War and the ending—are the two sections that undergo the most drastic changes between the Winchester manuscript and the 1485 print. Whilst the Winchester manuscript could not have been Caxton's only source,¹⁷⁹ the differences between these two extant editions suggest that Caxton made significant textual emendations to the parts of the text most concerned

¹⁷⁶ Ralph Norris, 'Minor Sources in Caxton's Roman War', *Studies in Philology*, 103.1 (2006), 68–87 (p. 69).

¹⁷⁷ As Meg Roland notes, when comparing the Winchester manuscript to Caxton's printed edition, Caxton's publishing regularly involved the 'use of the past to craft the political present'. See Roland, 'Arthur and the Turks', p. 39.

¹⁷⁸ Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, pp. 132–33. Helen Cooper further suggests that Caxton may have selected *Le Morte Darthur* as the ideal text to endorse his enthusiasm for Burgundian chivalric ideals to the court of Edward IV. See Helen Cooper, 'Arthur in Transition', in *Romance and History: Imagining Time from the Medieval to the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Jon Whitman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 120–134 (p. 122).

¹⁷⁹ Hellinga, 'The Malory Manuscript and Caxton', p. 134.

with crusade and most concordant with the other printed prose romances on that topic.¹⁸⁰

The reason usually posited for Caxton's textual intervention in the Roman War episode is that he sought to shorten and modernise the story to match the rest of the *Morte Darthur*.¹⁸¹ Indeed, Caxton's 1485 print omits much of the alliteration in the Winchester manuscript and reduces the total length by around half.¹⁸² However, Caxton's Roman War is not only a reduction of Malory's work, but also a reframing that more explicitly connects the journey to the contemporary crusading concerns of a late fifteenth-century English audience. Many of the changes mean that the 1485 print is far more explicit than the Winchester manuscript in vilifying Saracen opponents and treating them as representative of the Ottoman Turks. Notably, Caxton omits a considerable passage following the death of Lucius in the Winchester manuscript, in which Arthur condemns even the Christians who have supported the Emperor, stating 'nother hethyn nor Crysten' should be spared.¹⁸³ Caxton, then, removes any ambiguity, implying that only Saracens were the enemy in this conflict and firmly classifying this as a religious war – a war upon which conflict with the Ottoman Empire might be modelled. Meg Roland reads this omission alongside other instances in which Caxton clarifies the war as wholly religious and identifies Lucius's army as clearly Saracen; her research corroborates Catherine Batt's argument that Caxton's version of this episode is

¹⁸⁰ Roland, 'Recontextualization of the East', p. 69.

¹⁸¹ See Withrington, 'Caxton, Malory, and the Roman War'.

¹⁸² As Ralph Norris notes, prior comparative study of the Winchester and Caxton editions has revealed that Caxton may have altered text at the bottom of pages due to the need to physically fit the text within the printing press. Norris, 'Minor Sources in Caxton's Roman War', p. 68; P. J. C. Field, 'King Arthur and the Emperor Lucius', in *Sir Thomas Malory: Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P. J. C. Field, Vol. II (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 113–14; Withrington, 'Caxton, Malory, and the Roman War', p. 350.

¹⁸³ London, British Library, Additional MS 59678, fol. 87r (l. 5). See also Vinaver, *Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 1394.

a far more ‘conventional crusade’ than Malory’s.¹⁸⁴ Elsewhere, Roland also identifies a crucial distinction between the Winchester and Caxton texts, where the latter includes ‘infidels’ alongside descriptions of Saracens in a manner highly reminiscent of Caxton’s other texts.¹⁸⁵

Caxton’s changes foreground the Roman War as a religious campaign, but his audience would not have had personal experience of the intricacies of a conventional crusade. For Caxton, crusade represents an opportunity to bring people together in the face of a common threat. It is another opportunity to encourage, as he articulates in the prologue to *Godeffroy*, ‘alle christen prynces to make peas / amyte and allyaunce eche with other’ (*Godeffroy*, 4.13–14) in an age of civil and religious infighting. P. J. C. Field has further noted that some of Caxton’s other changes support the notion that he viewed his 1485 print as politically resonant; in changing a dragon defeating a bear into a dragon defeating a boar, Caxton alludes to the political conflict between Henry Tudor and Richard III.¹⁸⁶ Since we cannot conclusively prove any royal ownership of Caxton’s prose romances, it is difficult to argue that this change was intended to garner favour with any one particular faction.¹⁸⁷ What this evidence does show, however, is that the prose romance narratives were relevant at their time of publication, but there was scope to alter them to match the current political landscape even more closely.

One of Caxton’s ‘more radical’ editorial interventions in the Roman War episode is the omission of a line that implies aggression on Arthur’s part, thus further justifying the crusade as a defensive act.¹⁸⁸ Throughout, the Roman War is not justified

¹⁸⁴ Roland, ‘Arthur and the Turks’, pp. 35–36; Catherine Batt, *Malory’s ‘Morte Darthur’: Remaking Arthurian Tradition* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 81.

¹⁸⁵ Roland, ‘Recontextualizing the East’, p. 75.

¹⁸⁶ As Field goes on to argue, this political allusion was a bold one, and one that would have only made sense at the time of publication. Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, p. 132.

¹⁸⁷ Wang, ‘Early Tudor Readers’.

¹⁸⁸ Quotation from Roland, ‘Arthur and the Turks’, p. 37.

by any desire to kill Saracens or reclaim historic territory, like the crusades of *Godeffroy* and *Charles*, but as a military response to the encroaching threat of an Eastern, religious ‘other’. At the end of the book, Caxton omits a passage present in the Winchester manuscript in which Arthur must be dissuaded from continuing the campaign towards Jerusalem. Caxton’s Arthur is satisfied with the capture of Rome, while the Winchester manuscript’s Arthur declares he will ‘gete me ouer the salte see with good men of armys to deme for His deth that for vs all on the roode dyed’.¹⁸⁹ This statement, in the Winchester, stems from the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, in which Arthur likewise intends to travel across the ocean to the Holy Land and reclaim it for Christendom.¹⁹⁰ The Winchester Arthur is dissuaded from his ambition by his men, but Caxton’s Arthur does not even entertain the notion of pushing onwards; Arthur’s men in the Caxton print still request to ‘goo home to oure wyves’, but only because the crusade is complete, rather than in response to any further demands placed upon them.¹⁹¹ For Caxton, a king who is disinterested in, or can be dissuaded from, crusade is a problematic figure. The exclusion of this passage ensures that Arthur is portrayed as a crusading hero, but also that the Roman War is a crusade undertaken in *defence* of Christendom.¹⁹² It is not an

¹⁸⁹ London, British Library, Additional MS 59678, f. 95r, ll. 16–17 [Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*]

¹⁹⁰ See *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by P. J. C. Field, Vol. 1, p. 187; Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, Vol. I, p. 246.

¹⁹¹ Manchester, John Rylands Library, *Le Morte Darthur*, (William Caxton, 1485), sig. k2v, (l. 26).

¹⁹² Meg Roland offers other possible explanations for the exclusion of the Jerusalem passage in Caxton’s printed edition. Building upon Raluca Radulescu’s suggestion that good governance and kingship were contemporary issues at the time (a suggestion that Radulescu expands upon in her monograph, *Romance and its Contexts*), Roland suggests that English readers may have been concerned about issues of governance in relation to England’s tumultuous internal politics. Roland does highlight that the ‘major subtext’ of the crusades in both *Morte* accounts of the Roman War draws a different sort of contemporary parallel, with Edward IV: ‘As Caxton prepared his text for publication, it was increasingly obvious that Edward IV was never going to make good on his pledge to Pope Paul II’s General Summons to Crusade against Mehmed II and the Turks’. The inclusion of the Jerusalem passage, in which Arthur ignores counsel and suffers great losses at home whilst crusading abroad, may have shared a little too much similarity with Edward IV’s own inability to crusade for fear of leaving a politically precarious situation in England and losing the crown. See Roland, ‘The Recontextualization of the East’, pp. 70–74 (quotation from pp. 73–74); Raluca Radulescu, ‘John Vale’s Book and Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*: A Political Agenda’, *Arthuriana*, 9.4 (1999), 69–80; Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*.

aggressive attempt to exert religious supremacy, but an appropriately-martial response to Eastern aggression that models a potential reader response to the encroachments of the Ottoman Empire into Europe.¹⁹³

The final lines of the *Morte Darthur*, in which the surviving knights venture into the Holy Land, are also possibly Caxton's invention, or at least intervention. The last quire of the Winchester manuscript, which is the final pages of Caxton's print, is absent.¹⁹⁴ In these final lines, and nowhere else in the *Morte*, the threat from the East is described as the 'Turkes' rather than the more generic 'Saracens':

And somme Englysshe bookes maken mencyon that they wente never oute of Englonde after the deth of Syr Launcelot, but that was but favour of makers. For the Frensshe book maketh mencyon, and is auctorysed, that Syr Bors, Syr Ector, Syr Blamour, and Syr Bleoberis wente into the Holy Lande, thereas Jesu Cryst was quycke and deed. And anone as they had stablysshed theyr londes (for, the book saith, so Syr Launcelot commaunded them for to do or ever he passyd oute of thys world), these foure knyghtes dyd many bataylles upon the myscreantes or Turkes. And there they dyed upon a Good Fryday for Goddes sake.

(*Morte*, 940.7–16)

Throughout *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory refers to the 'Frensshe bookes' as a source of apparent authority, and the mention of these sources alongside the 'Englysshe bookes' is unusual. As is frequently the case, the mention of the French book here is 'meant to conceal a departure from it' because in no French version are Arthur's knights ever represented as crusaders fighting Turks.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, there is no reference to 'Turkes' elsewhere in the *Morte*, but the word features frequently in Caxton's own prose, and

¹⁹³ In this model, Emperor Lucius likely stands in for Sultan Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire, who oversaw the capture of Constantinople in 1453 and Otranto in 1480–1481. As discussed in this chapter's previous section, Mehmed's aggressive expansion would have been at the forefront of Malory's and his readers' awareness through propaganda campaigns and indulgences. See Fleet, 'The Ottomans, 1451–1603'; Fleet, 'Ottoman Expansion in the Mediterranean'.

¹⁹⁴ Wuest, 'Closure and Caxton's Malory', p. 60.

¹⁹⁵ Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, vol. III, p. 1663.

often in the doublet of ‘myscreantes or Turkes’.¹⁹⁶ In *Godeffroy* he describes the ‘mescreauntes and turkes empyred / ayenst Christendom’ (*Godeffroy*, 3.19–20), and in *Charles the Grete* he directly translates Bagnyon’s call for war against ‘the hethen sarazyns and myscreauntes’ (*Charles*, 2.1–2). References to ‘Turkes’ and ‘mescreauntes’ in the prose romances are usually direct references to the Ottoman Empire, and these final lines may therefore have been Caxton’s own alterations to the final moments of the text, intending to explicitly draw it in line with his other anti-Ottoman selections.

Other scholars have already highlighted the possibility that sections of the absent quire are Caxton’s own creation. Charles Wuest foregrounds Sir Ector’s threnody for Launcelot, which ‘praises Launcelot’s good deeds and notably elides the less-admirable and even destructive behaviour of its subject’.¹⁹⁷ He argues that this passage bookends the text opposite Caxton’s prologue because it likewise emphasises Caxton’s desire for a reader to learn and emulate chivalric, moral codes from *Le Morte Darthur*.¹⁹⁸ This bookending may be a deliberate effort on Caxton’s part to encourage his readers to ‘doo after the good and leve the evyl’ (Prologue: *Morte*, p. 856) and follow chivalric ideals in pursuit of uniting against a common foe. The differences between Caxton’s 1485 print and the Winchester manuscript are most evident in the Roman war and the ending – the parts most concerned with the crusading desires with which Caxton’s other prints engaged. We cannot be certain this intervention was Caxton’s, because we do not know the nature of the second manuscript copy of the *Morte* that he is presumed to have had in his workshop alongside the Winchester manuscript.¹⁹⁹ But these alterations clearly separate Christian heroism from Saracen

¹⁹⁶ See Shunichi Noguchi, ‘The Winchester Malory’, *Arthuriana*, 5.2 (1995), 15–23 (p. 17); Roland, ‘Recontextualizing the East’, p. 76; Field, *Sir Thomas Malory: Le Morte Darthur*, Vol. II, p. 836.

¹⁹⁷ Wuest, ‘Closure and Caxton’s Malory’, p. 60.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁹⁹ Hellinga, ‘The Malory Manuscript and Caxton’, p. 134.

villainy to demonstrate that war against the latter is an unmitigated success, and they occur in the parts of the *Morte* that most clearly look beyond England and towards crusade targets. They suggest, therefore, that whoever made the changes did so to heighten the text's potential to respond to fifteenth-century anxieties about the Ottoman Empire.

CONCLUSION: CRUSADES IN PRINT

The English printed prose romances actively engage with late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century cultural concerns by offering a crusade as a viable response to threats from within England and beyond Christendom. English readers were well aware of the external threat posed by the Ottoman Empire, and of the fractures within their country made clear by the Wars of the Roses.²⁰⁰ When Caxton and de Worde selected and translated the prose romances, they did so with acute understanding of these interests and anxieties. Caxton's own prose corroborates this, offering outspoken parallels between the fictional settings of his prose romances and the present-day situation of Europe, which required an even greater response than that of the First Crusade:

I fynde very causes, as me semeth, moche semblable and lyke vnto
suche as we haue nowe dayly tofore vs, By the mescreauntes and
turkes emprysed / ayenst Cristendom. And yet moche more nowe than
were in his days / ffor in his days the turkes had conquerd vpon
Cristendom but vnto the braas of seynt George by Constantiople. And
had no foote on this syde the sayd Braas. But at this daye it is so that
they haue comen ouer and goten that Imperial Cyte, Constantynople.
(*Godeffroy*, 3.18–25)

²⁰⁰ On printed material detailing the Ottoman threat, see Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda*; Hellinga, *Printing in England in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 53–61.

By selecting chivalric texts in which an entire community rallies around a notable figurehead, Caxton and de Worde repeatedly offer the same model as a solution to English concerns, drawing upon the philosophies of Vegetius to encourage internal peace through external war: it is necessary for ‘alle cristen prynces to make peas [...] for the defense of our faith and moder / holy chirch / & also for the recuperacion of the holy londe’ (*Godeffroy*, 4.13–16).²⁰¹ Crusade, Caxton contends in paratexts, is a viable solution to fifteenth-century anxieties over English and Christian identities.

The printing press afforded Caxton and de Worde the opportunity to mass-produce works for a far broader audience than manuscript production could have ever reached. While Caxton made paratextual references to royalty and aristocracy, the audience to which he appealed was broad and marked at all levels by an interest in crusade.²⁰² Alongside the prose romances, printers produced papal indulgences through which the common layperson could contribute directly to a war effort. Other printers also produced eyewitness accounts, like John Kay’s *Description of the Siege of Rhodes*. Crusading and religious unity was at the forefront of English printing output in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, and the prose romances were fully engaged with these issues. The texts represented Christendom as an ideological identity and a geographical area, emphasising the need for a united front led by strong Christian kings that are represented in the prose romances by heroes such as Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey.²⁰³ Many of the prose romances were popular enough to be reprinted into the sixteenth century, alongside those new romances that de Worde selected for his

²⁰¹ Pollard, ‘English Chivalry and the Decline of Strenuous Knighthood’, p. 147.

²⁰² Wang, ‘Early Tudor Readers’, p. 173.

²⁰³ As Ailes and Hardman note, even the French heroes are valorised through their religious identity rather than their national identity. See Ailes and Hardman, ‘How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?’, pp. 43–56. On the Church as a supra-national identity that coexists with other forms of identity, see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*.

contemporary audience, like *Valentine and Orson* and *Huon of Burdeux*.²⁰⁴ These new romances, alongside the continued production of earlier ones, spoke to the continued relevance of their crusading subject matter through the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth. Suleiman's reign from 1520 to 1566 saw the Ottoman Empire expand significantly, making even further advances into central Europe than those, like Constantinople, that had prompted so much anxiety in fifteenth-century Western Europe. Whilst Western European printed propaganda against the Turks had always depended more on the Ottomans' perceived threat to Christendom than their actual successes, there can be little doubt that the capture of major states like Hungary in 1526 ensured that interest in the potential for crusade against the Turks would not wane for many years to come.

²⁰⁴ Mukai, 'De Worde's 1498 Morte Darthur', p. 25.

CHAPTER TWO: ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EAST

Encounters with Saracens are common in medieval English verse romance, and the late fifteenth- and early-sixteenth century printed prose romances likewise treat Saracens as conventional crusading enemies. However, these prose romances refine the genre's capacious category of 'Saracen' in order to represent specifically Islamic, Eastern opponents of Christendom, and they adapt conventional motifs in order to show these opponents being converted and assimilated into Christendom, rather than defeated and decapitated. Othered by their geographical, cultural, and ideological distance from the Christian community, such Saracens are frequently represented as Turks, in light of the Ottoman threat to Eastern and Central Europe. While Saracens also feature prominently in the prose romances as crusade opponents, this chapter considers *individual* Saracens and the motifs by which they are represented.

In *The Matter of Araby*, Dorothee Metlitzki suggests that Saracens in late medieval English verse romance can be reduced to four stock figures: 'the enamored Muslim princess; the converted Saracen; the defeated emir or sultan; and the archetypal Saracen giant whom the Christian hero overpowers and kills'.¹ In the prose romances, the treatment of two of these figures is particularly notable: whilst emirs, sultans, and archetypically-monstrous giants rarely submit to conversion, Saracen knights and princesses convert to Christendom in the prose romances whereas they are sometimes spurned or killed in earlier English verse romance. This turn towards assimilation can also be expressed in geopolitical terms: for instance, as Chapter One has considered, Malory repositions the Roman War to re-associate it with empire-building rather than civil war. The desire for assimilation is also paralleled in Malory's

¹ Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, p. 161.

‘Tale of Gareth’, which has no extant source: Gareth does not kill the errant knights he defeats but re-employs them in his service. The Saracen princesses and knights in the prose romances can be converted and assimilated because the texts repeatedly demonstrate that they are more closely aligned with the chivalric identities of Christian knights than with the ‘othered’ religious identity of their Saracen peers. Their conversions both convey and disrupt the binary paradigm of Christian/Saracen conflict at the core of the crusading prose romance narratives.²

This chapter begins by exploring how encounters with Saracen princesses and knights are typically configured across late medieval English romance, considering the encounters as ‘memes’ for their capacity to be replicated across texts but also adjusted and developed.³ It examines how the form and function of each encounter meme is broadly consistent across late medieval English romance but with specific, key developments in response to contemporary anxieties, creating distinctions between earlier verse romances and late fifteenth-century prose. This section therefore first examines how these memes are represented in earlier English verse romances, discussing *Guy of Warwick* (originally c. 1300),⁴ *Bevis of Hampton* (c. 1324), the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* (c. 1400), and the English Charlemagne ‘Fierabras’ romances, *Firumbras*, *Sir Ferumbras*, and *The Sowdone of Babylone* (late fourteenth to early fifteenth century). This chapter then explores the way these memes are reconfigured in the prose romances printed by William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde

² On the construction, and deconstruction, of these identities in medieval romance, see Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, p. 28; Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. 132–33; Crofts and Rouse, ‘Middle English Popular Romance’, pp. 82–85; Robert Allen Rouse, ‘Expectations vs. Experience: Encountering the Saracen Other in Middle English Romance’, *Selim*, 10 (2000), 123–43.

³ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 3.

⁴ This chapter primarily considers the ‘long couplet’ version of *Guy of Warwick*, which is widely considered the most complete version of the story. However, the themes and influences within it persist from the early fourteenth-century edition, upon which later material is based. For further information on the textual deviations in surviving editions and scraps of the text, see Alison Wiggins, ‘The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*’, in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 61–80.

to respond to contemporary concerns about crusade. The prose romances continue to convert Saracen princesses, but with a greater emphasis on their capacity to inflict violence upon their own kin. Moreover, the treatment of Saracen knights in texts like *Le Morte Darthur* (1485), *Charles the Grete* (1485), and *Valentine and Orson* (c. 1510) shows a marked turn towards privileging conversion over destruction. Through these two types of encounter, the prose romances speak to concerns over the need for, and benefits of, crusade against an encroaching Eastern Other.

RE-CONFIGURING ENCOUNTERS WITH SARACENS

The two encounters upon which this chapter focuses—with an enamoured Saracen princess and with a noble Saracen knight—are recurrent romance conventions of the sort that Helen Cooper calls ‘memes’.⁵ Her widely-accepted ‘family resemblance’ model for romance posits that a text might be recognised within the genre by the presence of some common memes, even when others are altered or absent.⁶ Just as romances consist of memes, so too can memes be broken down into smaller components. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, in her study of hospitality in romance, refers to these building blocks as ‘motifs’, which are not fixed requirements but interlocking parts that frequently occur together to constitute a convention or meme.⁷ Following Bruckner’s and Cooper’s methodology, I examine the two encounter types as memes comprised of recognisable and re-constructible motifs. This chapter demonstrates that

⁵ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 1–8.

⁶ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 7–15. On the ‘family resemblance’ model, see also Putter and Gilbert, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1–2.

⁷ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Narrative Invention in Twelfth-Century French Romance: The Convention of Hospitality (1160–1200)* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1980). See pp. 15–21 for initial explanations, and appendices I and II for a complete grouping of the motifs Bruckner identifies.

these highly adaptable memes are reconfigured in the prose romances in ways that speak to contemporary social concerns.

SARACEN PRINCESSES

The Saracen princess archetype has received considerable critical attention. The archetypal figure is usually referred to as the ‘enamoured Muslim princess’, emphasising the infatuation which prompts the princess’s conversion desires.⁸ More recent approaches have also used the figure to interrogate the intersectional racial, religious, and gender binaries common in late medieval romance.⁹ I refer to this figure as the Saracen princess to reflect the terminology used throughout this thesis, as justified in the introduction. Referring to the princess as ‘Saracen’, rather than ‘Muslim/Moslem’ also highlights that representations of alterity in late medieval literature are premised on not only religious difference, but also the broader cultural differences (of which religion plays a part) and depictions of physical difference.¹⁰

The encounter with a Saracen princess is a meme that is particularly prominent in *chansons de geste* and can also be found throughout late medieval romance.¹¹ In 1914, F. M Warren proposed a triptych of essential elements in the meme: ‘the release of a prisoner by the daughter of his captor; her conversion to his faith; her return with him to his native land’.¹² More recent scholarly work has used this basic framework to examine *chansons de geste* and late medieval English romance.¹³ In this section I

⁸ Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby*, pp. 161–77; F. M. Warren, ‘The Enamoured Moslem Princess in *Orderic Vital* and the French Epic’, *PMLA*, 29.3 (1914), 341–58 (p. 346).

⁹ Kinoshita, ‘Pagans are Wrong’, p. 92; de Weever, *Sheba’s Daughters*.

¹⁰ Heng, ‘The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race’, p. 332.

¹¹ Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 62–66; Mark Balfour, ‘Moses and the Princess: Josephus’ “*Antiquitates Judaicae*” and the *chansons de geste*’, *Medium Aevum*, 64.1 (1995), 1–16.

¹² Warren, ‘The Enamoured Moslem Princess’, p. 346.

¹³ Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 63–64; de Weever, *Sheba’s Daughters*; Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 186–87.

propose an expanded framework in which five core motifs comprise the meme: a Christian knight is imprisoned by an eminent or ruling Saracen figure with a daughter; the princess falls in love with the knight and agrees to convert for her love; the princess is presented as an attractive and appropriate bride despite her Saracen faith; the princess converts in a multi-staged sequence that concludes in baptism; and the princess is willing to harm other Saracens.

The Saracen princess is typically introduced when her father, an emir or admiral, imprisons a Christian knight. She falls in love with the imprisoned knight and agrees, with little argument, to convert in order to marry him. However, as Geraldine Heng notes, the princess may not always be able to correctly identify the knight with whom she has fallen in love.¹⁴ This is the case with Floripas, of the English Charlemagne verse romances and *Charles the Grete*, who loves Guy, having never before met him. In this sense, Saracen princesses are denied a form of power frequently granted to ladies of romance: that generated by the wooing process, in which a lady can demand repeated demonstrations of her suitor's devotion before accepting him. In this Saracen princess love story, the emphasis is upon her conversion rather than her marriage, and her suitability for the role is based on Christian purity rather than gender alone. Even in physical terms, the princesses is frequently depicted as attractive in typically Western terms, with features familiar to a Western Christian audience, such as white skin.¹⁵ As de Weever identifies, the princess paradoxically reflects 'Frankish standards of beauty but not Frankish values of loyalty to lord and devotion to the community', in her willingness to abandon her Saracen identity.¹⁶ Throughout the narrative, she also

¹⁴ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, p. 217 and p. 249, n. 45.

¹⁵ As de Weever demonstrates, this whitening is an incredibly common feature of the character archetype. See de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, pp. 3–46; See also Heng, *The Invention of Race*; de Weever, 'The Saracen as Narrative Knot', pp. 4–9.

¹⁶ De Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, pp. 113–16 (quotation from p. 115).

demonstrates an array of Christian virtues and her chastity is foregrounded. The conversion is therefore welcomed because the Saracen princess already fits the model of an appropriate Christian wife.

The Saracen princess must convert in order to marry a Christian knight, and this conversion is often extended throughout the narrative and incomplete until it culminates in a baptism. Even so, the princess often sees herself as a genuinely enthusiastic convert from the moment she agrees to the ceremony. Princesses like Josian, in *Bevis of Hampton*, and Floripas, in *Charles the Grete*, act for the benefit of the Christian protagonists from the point at which they agree to convert, but they remain Saracen in name until the point of baptism. This is a notable contrast to other characters in late medieval romance, like Palomides in *Le Morte Darthur*, who declares himself Christian but chooses to defer his baptism. During the intervening period, between accepting conversion and being baptised, the Saracen princess demonstrates her affinity with Christians through violence against other Saracens. Geraldine Heng notes that similar examples of ‘beautiful, feisty Islamic princesses’ exist in both Arabic cycles and Western European ones, indicating that the Saracen princess’s agency is a deconstruction of both gendered and religious binaries.¹⁷ Following Sharon Kinoshita’s discussion of gender and alterity in the *Chanson de Roland*, we might read ‘feistiness’ and violence towards Saracens in two ways: firstly, as an attempt to better distinguish between the ‘self’ and ‘other’ of Christian and Saracen, after a conversion sequence that highlights the already-blurry boundary between the two cultural spheres;¹⁸ secondly, as a demonstration that the female Saracen body—doubly-marginalized in Christian,

¹⁷ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, pp. 220–21.

¹⁸ Here, Sharon Kinoshita’s discussion of the *Chanson de Roland* is useful, along with her explanation for the poem’s disinterest in conversion. Kinoshita notes that the opposition between self and other, which is already stretched thin by the close similarities between the Christian and Saracen camps, would be further destabilised if this clear cultural and religious binary could be easily crossed. Kinoshita, ‘Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right’, pp. 85–6.

homosocial texts—is ‘the site where alterity is both articulated and overcome’.¹⁹ The figure of the violent, formerly-Saracen princess embodies alterity in both her conversion and her association with the violent, male world of crusaders and knights. Though the component motifs of this encounter meme appear in different orders in different late medieval romances, these components are generally all present. The encounter always ends with the princess’s conversion, a process which fulfils her desires and assimilates a valuable individual into Christendom.

HEROIC HEATHENS

Whilst Saracen Princess encounters are consistent across late medieval romance, encounters with Saracen knights undergo a notable shift in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century prose romances, in which the Saracen knights are converted at the end. I refer to these episodes as ‘Heroic Heathen’ encounters, to emphasise the extent to which the episode is centred around the ‘othered’ Saracen warrior being the Christian knight’s martial and chivalric equal, despite embodying the alterity of the Islamic East. The Heroic Heathen conventionally issues a formal challenge, showing respect to his Christian opponent and expecting it in return. In doing so, he participates in what Geraldine Heng refers to as the ‘theoretical universality of elite chivalric culture’.²⁰ More than a nameless barbarian, and standing out from an indistinct army of faceless Saracens, the Heroic Heathen is as knightly as his Christian opponent, blurring the religious and cultural boundaries by which these texts define Christendom and the East.²¹

¹⁹ Kinoshita, ‘Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right’, pp. 90–91.

²⁰ Heng, *The Invention of Race*, p. 56.

²¹ Cohen, ‘On Saracen Enjoyment’, pp. 119–24; Bly Calkin, ‘Saracens’, pp. 185–86.

The authors of Anglo-Norman and Middle English romances did not use ‘hero’ or ‘heroism’ to define a person revered for his or her own bravery, instead often referring to a knight’s ‘worship’.²² However, the modern terms of ‘hero’ and ‘heroism’ offer a useful way of highlighting chivalric reputation that transcends religious identity in a way that the modern ‘worship’ or ‘worshipful’ does not. Heroism, in this sense, must be proved through chivalric honour and battlefield rituals as well as through faith;²³ the Heroic Heathen encounter gives both Christian and Saracen knights space for such demonstrations. As this chapter explores, late medieval English verse romances generally reject the idea that Saracens could be held in as high esteem as Christians, even when they show Saracen knights performing the same chivalric rituals as their Christian counterparts. The late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century prose romances show Saracen knights demonstrating heroism to the same extent as Christian opponents and being rewarded with conversion and inclusion within the chivalric community.

Like the Saracen princess encounter, the Heroic Heathen encounter meme comprises several motifs. The Heroic Heathen encounter contains seven which, unlike those of the Saracen Princess encounter, occur in a set order. The first three motifs occur before the combat: the Saracen is introduced as embodying alterity physically; the Saracen boasts of his martial prowess and deeds against Christendom; the Saracen’s pre-combat rituals reveal him to be surprisingly chivalric and honourable. The fourth

²² As Laura Ashe notes, there was no word available to the writers of Anglo Norman and Middle English romance that unambiguously denoted heroism. Many available words were more closely analogous with ‘man’, ‘warrior’, or ‘superhuman’, none of which quite fit. A knight’s ‘worship’ was comprised of various layers, including his esteem within narratives and his intertextual existence across them. See Laura Ashe, ‘The Hero and his Realm in Medieval English Romance’, in *Boundaries in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 129–48 (pp. 129–39 and 146). See also Neil Cartlidge, ‘Introduction’, in *Heroes and Anti-Heroes in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 1–8 (pp. 1–2); Radulescu, *The Gentry Context*, pp. 17–18.

²³ On the blurred divide between Christians and Saracens in such instances, see Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 22–35; Sharon Kinoshita, ‘Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right’, pp. 81–83.

motif is the combat itself, which is typically given very little space by comparison with the pre- and post-combat sequences. The final three motifs occur after the combat and are particular to the prose romances: the fight ends and the Saracen knight pleads for mercy; the Saracen knight accepts conversion, which becomes a multi-staged process through the narrative; and the converted knight goes on to perform noteworthy deeds for Christendom.

The first three motifs, before the combat begins, emphasise the Saracen knight's religious alterity and his chivalric morality. When first introduced, the Heroic Heathen physically embodies the alterity of the antagonistic forces he represents. Romance Saracens are frequently described as looking different from Christians, even when this description is not monstrous. In *Paris and Vienne*, the Christian Paris can only pass as a Saracen when 'hys berde grewe longe / and after he took the habyte of a more' (*Paris*, 59.15–17).²⁴ The Heroic Heathen epitomises Saracen alterity through physical monstrosity such as giant stature. Fierabras, in *Charles the Grete*, is introduced as 'the moost meruayllous geaunt that euer was seen' (*Charles*, 40.7–8). Even when he is gigantic, the Heroic Heathen is as chivalric and articulate as his Christian counterparts. He is a far cry from the ferocious giants otherwise common to the genre, like the great cannibalistic giant of Mont St. Michel, or the nameless giants with which Malory's Emperor Lucius bolsters his army. Overtly-monstrous giants such as these occupy the liminal zone between man and animal. As Cohen notes, articulate and courteous versions of these monsters, such as Bertilak of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, muddy this representation even further.²⁵ Even so, the Heroic Heathen frequently boasts of his past deeds against Christendom, such as the sacking of Rome, even whilst

²⁴ William Caxton, *Paris and Vienne*, ed. by MacEdward Leach, EETS OS 234 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957, repr. 1970), p. 59. Henceforth *Paris*.

²⁵ Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 159. See also Mittman and Kim, 'Monsters and the Medieval Exotic', p. 700.

performing seemingly-honourable pre-combat rituals.²⁶ Heroic Heathens also blur the boundary between Christian and non-Christian through their status as at once physically monstrous and morally chivalric.

The pre-combat rituals of the Heroic Heathen encounter are the same as in other chivalric bouts, beginning with the Heroic Heathen requesting an organised fight against an evenly-matched opponent. The request itself is notable, as the knights do not conventionally encounter any issues of translation and must be assumed to be speaking the same language.²⁷ Priamus is a notable exception here. Gawain greets him ‘in Englyshe (*Morte*, 177.7) and Priamus answers ‘in his langage of Tuskeyne’ (177.8), but he is understood nevertheless. In all instances, the Saracen knight offers his name freely and indicates a desire for an honourable fight with a known and notable opponent who desires the same. By contrast, the Christian knight often hides his true identity.²⁸ Building an identity and gaining renown are important aspects of chivalry, and by offering his name the Heroic Heathen is willingly participating in the chivalric community. The Christian knight’s anonymity is an attempt to deny the Saracen a fair fight that might build renown, but it also brings the bout closer to a tournament bout, in which a knight may hide his identity to reveal it later once he has proven his worth.²⁹ Prior to combat, the Christian knight frequently offers to bring the Heroic Heathen into

²⁶ Lavezzo, ‘Complex Identities: Selves and Others’, p. 437.

²⁷ As Kinoshita identifies when discussing the *Chanson de Roland*, the ease with which the Saracen knight communicates with Christian opponents is itself an indication of the chivalric mirroring between the two parties. Kinoshita, ‘Pagans are Wrong’, p. 83.

²⁸ That Saracen characters are named offers a distinct presentation from other instances of romance Saracens as large, faceless armies. As Beatrice White suggests, these are individuals distinct from the nameless armies and ‘ripe for baptism’. See Andrew Lynch, *Malory’s Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in Le Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 1–15; Nancy Bisaha, “‘New Barbarian’ or Worthy Adversary? Humanist Constructs of the Ottoman Turks in Fifteenth-Century Italy”, in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), pp. 185–205 (pp. 192–94); White, ‘Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory’, p. 181.

²⁹ On disguising identity and names as recognition devices, see: Jane Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 36–42.

the chivalric community through conversion, and while the Saracen combatant only sometimes reciprocates this offer he always refuses it.³⁰ Refusal leads to preparations for actual combat, including the Arming of the Hero topos common to the romance genre, which appears perhaps most famously in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, when romance protagonists encounter Heroic Heathens, the topos is not limited to the Christian knight alone.³¹ The knights arm each other in many versions of the encounter, marking them both as the ‘heroes’ being prepared for battle and reinforcing the idea of a chivalric communal bond between them that transcends religious differences.

The actual combat of the Heroic Heathen encounter is frequently visceral and bloody, and while the knights will often fight all day and score equally devastating blows, the battle is generally resolved in very limited textual space. The battle always ends with Christian triumph and Saracen defeat, but this is the point at which the prose romances diverge from the version of the meme common to earlier romances. In earlier verse romances, the Christian knight typically beheads his Saracen opponent. In the later English prose romances, the fight ends with the Saracen requesting and receiving mercy and conversion. All of the events that follow this conversion are, therefore, distinctive to the prose romances, resulting in a new version of the encounter meme. The conversion that concludes a Heroic Heathen fight is not forced; it comes instead at

³⁰ Rouse posits that discourse with a non-Christian Other in romance must be understood in terms of individual characters and wider audience. While a scholar or abbot could debate faith with non-Christian others, he suggests that ‘a knight or other layman puts their faith at risk in doing so, and should instead respond with violent opposition’. See Rouse, ‘Crusaders’, p. 178.

³¹ On the Arming of the Hero topos, and the extent to which it represents a part of the existing tapestry of chivalric combat and tradition (into which the Heroic Heathen characters fit), see Derek Brewer, ‘Armour II: The Arming Topos as Literature’, in *A Companion to the Gawain Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 175–79; Albert C. Baugh, ‘Improvisation in the Middle English Romance’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 103.3 (1959), 418–54 (p. 419); Derek Brewer, *Tradition and Innovation in Chaucer* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 143–60.

the explicit request of the Saracen knight, and occurs in several stages.³² This request marks the start of a lengthy narrative, ending in a formal baptism after the Heroic Heathen has played an integral role in the text's crusade. The Heroic Heathen's continued presence signals their participation in rituals of social contract and chivalric fellowship that Leitch highlights as the 'ideal of social cohesion' in Malory's *Morte Darthur*.³³ Once converted and part of this community, the Heroic Heathen is no longer regarded as monstrous; both his past deeds against Christendom and his physical alterity no longer present an issue.³⁴ Accepting the former Saracen, rather than killing him, indicates a shift in how the prose romances treat crusading threats. In these encounters and elsewhere, the prose romances respond to contemporary crusade anxieties by reclaiming rather than destroying power, even when such power is contained within Saracen bodies. These bodies are sites of conflict and conversion that can be conquered in battle and repurposed to bolster Christendom, in the same way as the cities and kingdoms for which Christendom fights.

SARACEN INDIVIDUALS IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH VERSE

ROMANCE

In order to demonstrate the distinctive reworking of encounters with Saracen princesses and Heroic Heathens in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English printed prose

³² On converting Saracens actively requesting conversion, rather than having it forced upon them, see Mary Hamel, 'The "Christening" of Sir Priamus in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*', *Viator*, 13 (1982), 295–308 (p. 305).

³³ Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, p. 101; Elizabeth Archibald, 'Malory's Ideal of Fellowship', *The Review of English Studies*, 43.171 (1992), 311–28.

³⁴ See Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 162. The notable exception occurs in *King of Tars*, where a converting Saracen's skin colour is changed from black to white upon conversion, signalling that his physical alterity was incompatible with the conversion. See Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 15; Heng, *The Invention of Race*, pp. 214–16.

romances, it is necessary to consider how these encounters feature in earlier English verse romance. The verse romances explored in this section were available in manuscript form long before the prose romances were printed. However, some of them, such as *Guy of Warwick*, were also printed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The English prose and verse romances therefore co-existed in print media at times, although the two pursued very different cultural agendas. As this section considers, the late medieval English verse romances focus primarily on an eponymous hero and his interaction with the world. When this hero encounters Saracens, they serve primarily as personal challenges to overcome. The prose romances, by contrast, are concerned with broader chivalric communities. When these romance communities encounter Saracens, the focus is instead upon how a society's strength is the sum of its members and can be bolstered by the addition of noble Saracen knights. Whilst some verse romances attempt conversion, only the printed prose romances pursue this as a standard programme.

Encounters with Saracen princess take a similar form in earlier verse romances and the later prose romances: in both, these encounters eventually lead to conversion. By contrast, Heroic Heathen encounters feature Saracen conversion in the prose romances, where earlier verse romances refuse to countenance this possibility. The verse romances examined in this section are popular English romances featuring crusading journeys from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. They demonstrate a gradual shift towards acceptance and conversion in the treatment of Saracen knights, which is fully realised in late fifteenth-century prose. *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1300) does not pursue converting Saracens; *Bevis of Hampton* (c. 1324) and the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* (c. 1400) explore the notion but do not convert Saracen knights; and the early English Charlemagne romances—*Firumbras* and *The Sowdone of Babylone* (late

fourteenth century and mid-fifteenth century respectively)—show acceptance and conversion of Saracen knights and princesses alike.

ENGLISH VERSE ROMANCES

Guy of Warwick has two significant examples of the Heroic Heathen encounter meme, a shorter encounter with two notable but short-lived Saracens, and no mention of Saracen princesses. The Heroic Heathens are fearsome Saracen giants in each encounter, too monstrous to be converted. The shorter encounter, with Astadart and Aulart, and one of the major ones, with the ‘owtrageus stronge’ Amorant (l. 7956),³⁵ occur on a crusading journey, in cities of religious significance: Constantinople and Jerusalem.³⁶ The other major encounter is with Colbrond, a giant ‘of Awfryke’ (l. 9964), and occurs in England as a defence against Danish invasion. In each instance of the encounter, *Guy of Warwick* demonstrates that Saracen knights are too monstrous and othered for conversion and must be killed.

The encounter with Astadart and Aulart is brief, but it sets the tone for more significant Heroic Heathen encounters to follow. The Saracens are introduced as fearsome religious others but also chivalric equals: Astadart is ‘A sarasyn of wykyd parte’, but also ‘a bolde knyght and an hardye’ (ll. 2874–76), and Aulert is ‘A bolde sarasyn’ (l. 2880). The pair are unmistakably more ‘knyght’ than barbarian, and the encounters emphasise their past battles as evidence of their chivalric nature: Astadart has slain Sir Tebawde, and Aulert slain Sir Gylmyn (ll. 2877–83).³⁷ The encounter is

³⁵ *Guy of Warwick*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, EETS ES 25 and 26 (London: Trübner, 1875–76). Henceforth *Guy*.

³⁶ As Rosalind Field has recently considered, there is good reason to believe that Guy’s journey is a voluntary one, although prior critical opinion has suggested that it might be a journey of exile. See Rosalind Field, ‘From *Gui* to *Guy*: The Fashioning of a Popular Romance’ in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007), pp. 44–60 (p. 47).

³⁷ Though the text does not specify that these fights are chivalric bouts of single combat, this reading can be inferred from the little context given. Astadart has killed Tebawde ‘wyth a scharpe swyrde and with

neither long nor bloody, though does end as Aulart's 'hedde fro the body starte' (l. 2886). Astadart is called to joust with Guy and engage in formal chivalric combat but flees before the encounter can resume. While this retreat might seem to leave the encounter unresolved, he flees 'wyth a spere thorow the bodye' (l. 2952). Here, Saracen retreat signifies Christian triumph, and the text does not allow for ambiguity over whether a Saracen might be defeated but not killed.

The outcomes of the text's larger encounters, with Amorant and Colbrond, are similarly black and white: the Saracens here are defeated in a way that foregrounds their religious distinctions rather than allows for the possibility of reconciliation.³⁸ Guy first describes Amorant as 'þe deuell and no man' (l. 7960), though it has already been established that he is 'armed nobullye' (l. 7953) as a knight with 'Arcules swyrde' (l. 7977), or the sword of Hercules. This sword links Amorant to a more acceptable form of pagan hero, similar to the Nine Worthies.³⁹ Following this depiction of Amorant as knight, the text continues to suggest that chivalric identity is important to the character.⁴⁰ When Amorant requests his opponent's name, as is common in Heroic

mayne' (l. 2878), and Aulart has 'brought to grownde' Gylmyn before delivering the death blow, indicating the mounted combat familiar to the *chevalier*.

³⁸ Bly Calkin proposes that conversion is not pursued in romances where the Saracen is presented as monstrous, indicating that irreconcilable physical or ideological difference might deny the potential for conversion. However, as Kinoshita suggests, the Saracen knight's religious alterity is, in some cases, all that separates them from the Christian crusaders, making conversion equally impossible without disrupting the paper-thin binary between self and other. See Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 39–40; Kinoshita, 'Pagans are Wrong', p. 86.

³⁹ The pagan members of the Nine Worthies predated Christianity, and they are, therefore, the only acceptable pagan heroes. Hercules was not regarded as one of the Nine Worthies, but would have been regarded as a notable heroic figure. Notably, Amorant is pictured with a sword, where Hercules is iconographically presented with a club, suggesting that there are still distinctions between Amorant and acceptable forms of pagan heroism. See Ashe, 'The Hero and his Realm in Medieval English Romance', pp. 132–35.

⁴⁰ On the identity of Amorant, *Guy of Warwick*'s longevity into the sixteenth century and beyond included a staged version published anonymously in 1661, entitled 'The Tragical History of Guy Earl of Warwick'. In this production, Amorant is replaced with the Turkish Sultan Shamurath, and the bout of single combat replaced by a number of scenes in which Guy attempts to break a Turkish siege. Annaliese Connolly posits that this replacement was likely a result of the commercial pressures of the Elizabethan theatre and the desire to capitalise on a popular motif or character: in this case, the Turkish Sultan. However, the replacement is also revealing because Shamurath is explicitly Turkish, rather than the catch-all 'Saracen'. Caxton uses the two terms interchangeably in his prologues and epilogues, seeking to draw attention to the Ottoman Empire as the present-day 'Saracen' threat. See Annaliese Connolly, 'Guy

Heathen encounters, he implicitly requests acknowledgement of his chivalric identity, aligning himself more closely with man than monster.⁴¹ In the verse romance, this combat marks the end of the encounter, because ‘Betwene þem was so grete fyght,/ That no man þe bettur knowe myght’ (ll. 8069–70). Amorant is eventually defeated and beheaded in a manner common to earlier English verse versions of the meme:

Gye smote to hym faste
 And to þe grounde þe gyawnt caste.
 Hys ventayle he vnlasyd, y wote,
 And ys hedde of soone he smote.

(ll. 8309–12)

In this conclusion, the reader of *Guy* is not invited to even consider conversion as a possible outcome. Rather, Amorant is swiftly put to death, mitigating any further threat to Christendom that he might have posed.

Guy’s encounter with Colbrond ends similarly, with the insinuation that the giant is so monstrous that conversion cannot even be considered. Yet although Colbrond is physically monstrous, he is armed as a knight: he is ‘so large and so grett,/ That no hors hym myght/ Nodur in pese nor to fyght’ (ll. 10220–22), heavily armoured in a hauberk of ‘splentys of stele’ (l. 10233) and wielding axes alongside ‘Hys spere carvande of stele’ (l. 10243). However, Colbrond’s knightly appearance does not emphasise his own heroism so much as it emphasises Guy’s by contrast.⁴² Colbrond’s

of Warwick, Godfrey of Bouillon, and Elizabethan Repertory’, *Early Theatre*, 12.2 (2009), 207–222 (pp. 207 and 212–13).

⁴¹ Andrew Lynch discusses a similar situation in *Le Morte Darthur*, suggesting that the hiding of names reveals ‘a clear privileging of the external view of identity’. Here, Amorant is aware that chivalric honour is bound up in identity and requests the same knowledge that would be granted to any of Guy’s chivalric equals. See Lynch, *Malory’s Book of Arms*, p. 8.

⁴² Brewer notes that the formal arming in both *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* is positioned in a way that suggests a deliberate transition from prior romance, emphasising the heroism of the protagonist characters. He further argues that the topos disappears from romance, and that Malory ‘practically demolishes it’ when consulting from the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Whilst the formal characteristics by which Brewer defines this topos (an extended list, checking off each piece of armour in turn) is not common in the prose romances, the texts do engage with this topos during Heroic Heathen encounters. See Brewer, *Tradition and Innovation in Chaucer*, pp. 143–60.

arming depicts the dark and harsh materials with which he is associated: ‘gret and stronge’, ‘yron and stele’, ‘Black hyt was and lothelyche,/ his armowre, as hyt were pych’ (ll. 10236–48). Conversely, Guy’s arming is a symbol for the Christian, crusading cause he represents: he is armed ‘rychely’, ‘wyth a cros of golde þat schone bryght’ (ll.10167–68), and quite literally becomes a light against the darkness, casting ‘so grete light caste on þe nyzt,/ As hyt were the day bryght’ (ll. 10177–78). The depiction of Guy as a defensive crusader is sealed with his prayer not for strength but shielding: ‘fro þe 3ondur gloton’ (l. 10197). This prayer is addressed to the ‘lorde, þat reysed Lazerowne’ (l. 10193), in a plea referencing not a triumph but a resurrection. The battle against Colbrond, *Guy* seems to suggest, is a last defence of Christendom when its enemies have pushed it back to its core. In this circumstance, the text has no need to consider conversion. Colbrond offers Guy the opportunity to ‘cry mercye,/ And y schall haue mercy of the’ (ll. 10312–13) in a line that the later prose romances parallel when Saracen knights offer Christians the chance at conversion before a fight. In all verse and prose versions of the Heroic Heathen encounter, the Christian knights refuse any offer of conversion, although the offer itself encourages the reader to view the encounter as a chivalric duel.⁴³ The fight ends with Colbrond’s death, in a manner that mirrors that of another monstrous ‘gloton’ of middle English verse, the Giant of Mont St. Michael in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*: ‘soche a strok in þe neck he hym gafe,/ That hys hedd of dud flye’ (*Guy*, ll. 10362–63). As Cohen describes it, ‘giants always perish through the breaking of their bodies’.⁴⁴ The giant of the Alliterative *Morte* is a monstrous cannibal

⁴³ See Jon Gillingham, ‘From Civilitas to Civility: Codes of Manners in Medieval and Early Modern England’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 267–89 (pp. 276–77).

⁴⁴ The giant of Mont St. Michael is entirely intemperate, ‘encoding almost every negative attribute a monster is capable of embodying’, and it is this vein of monstrosity that the reader consults when hearing Colbrond described as a ‘gloton’. The association between monstrous appetite and foes that are othered is particularly relevant. No such judgement is cast upon monstrous, cannibalistic consumption when it is performed by the crusaders, as in *Richard Coer de Lyon* (c.1300), in an act that Robert Allen Rouse considers as reinforcing ‘notions of Christian English superiority’. See Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. 152–57; Rouse, ‘Crusaders’, p. 175; Geraldine Heng, ‘The Romance of England: Richard Coer de Lyon, Saracens,

and Colbrond is a mere heathen knight by comparison, but both ‘gloton’s receive the same visceral treatment.

Bevis of Hampton (c. 1324) likewise includes notable Saracen figures. The eponymous protagonist spends much of his crusading journey in the company of a Saracen princess, Josian, and a Saracen giant, Ascopard.⁴⁵ Both of these figures pledge to convert, but only Josian’s conversion is ultimately completed through a successful baptism. Even so, *Bevis* is a text that acknowledges throughout that defeating Saracens on crusade requires something more ideologically permanent than simply killing them. The text is concerned with the movement between cultures as evidenced by Bevis himself, who was ‘to the Sarzynys [...] bitauʒt’ at a young age and later moves between cultures as a crusader.⁴⁶ As Dieter Mehl considers, this crusading plot shows only to what extent the combination of loving God and hating Saracens is required of the perfect knight.⁴⁷ However, Bevis is not the only figure of this text marked as chivalric; whilst incomplete, the attempted conversion of Ascopard demonstrates that chivalric, knightly qualities go far beyond religious alignment.⁴⁸

Jews, and the Politics of Race and Nation’, in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 135–72.

⁴⁵ The text consulted for *Bevis* in this instance is from the ‘A’ version, from the Auchinleck manuscript (c. 1324), regarded as the most complete of six extant manuscripts that descended from a lost earlier version of the poem. See A. C. Baugh, ‘The Making of *Beves of Hampton*’, in *Bibliographic Studies in Honour of Rudolf Hirsch*, ed. by William E. Miller and Thomas G. Waldman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), pp. 15–37 (p. 34); ‘Bevis of Hampton: Introduction’, in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, ed. by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), pp. 187–99 (pp. 187–88).

⁴⁶ *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows, EETS OS 349 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Vol. I, l. 549. Henceforth *Bevis*. All further references are to this edition, favouring the transcriptions from the more complete ‘Naples’ manuscript where multiple are given.

⁴⁷ Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1968), p. 218.

⁴⁸ As Laura Ashe notes, medieval writers struggled to justify the importance of their central male protagonists in purely secular terms, ensuring that religious combat was central to establishing their prowess. She suggests that earlier works see the idea of heroism defined in Christian terms of martyrdom. Ashe, ‘The Hero and his Realm’, pp. 132–35 and 146.

At the court of the Saracen King Ermin of Armenia, Bevis is introduced to the King's daughter, princess Josian, who provides Bevis with legal and medical assistance. Josian falls in love with Bevis, despite the pair's religious differences, because 'that Beuys is so moche of myght' (*Bevis*, l. 989). She is Saracen and female, in a Christian, masculine romance, and finds agency in transgressing conventional gender roles as well as religious boundaries, declaring to Bevis, 'I haue the loud swithe yore' (l. 1227).⁴⁹ Bevis rejects her, 'For Gode' (l. 1231), and will not reconsider his position until she pledges she will 'fals godis al forsake / A Cristen be for thi sake' (ll. 1336–37). Conversion, as in other iterations of this meme, is both a necessary and lengthy process. Josian is not formally converted until baptism, but the reader learns during the later kidnap sequence that she has followed many of the principles of Christianity since agreeing to convert. She acquires a reputation for charity, and is known for offering food and aid to all beggars and pilgrims: 'The queen—that wel mote scho fare!— / Wel scho louith euery palmere' (ll. 2614–15). Moreover, she has been chaste throughout her marriage to the Saracen king and proclaims Bevis will 'fynde me maiden' still (l. 2752).⁵⁰ The lions Bevis later fights 'myght do hur no schame' (l. 2953) because she has remained a virgin. Josian's embodiment of these Christian virtues prompts a full conversion, completed as 'the bischop cristened' her (l. 3157), after which she goes on to play a central role in the narrative.

Whilst *Bevis* acknowledges the possibility of converting Saracen princesses, it does not suggest that Saracen knights can undergo the same change. The encounter with

⁴⁹ Corinne Saunders, 'Desire, Will and Intention in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*', in *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Phillipa Hardman (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), pp. 29–42 (p. 38).

⁵⁰ Bevis takes Josian's declaration on trust, though enforcing a spiritual or physical test for chastity, even during marriage, is not unheard of in medieval literature. The explanation behind this feat is explored in Chapter Four, during the discussion of magical objects. On chastity and virginity, see Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 63–86.

Ascopard is the most prominent instance of the Heroic Heathen meme in *Bevis*, although not the only instance of single combat with a Saracen Other. Bevis's earlier combat with a Saracen is against King Grander and is resolved quickly via beheading: 'smote of Grandeneris heuyd' (l. 2271). At this early stage, the text remains entirely unconcerned with the possibility of conversion. Bevis's later encounter with Ascopard is longer and contains many of the motifs common to the Heroic Heathen encounter meme. Ascopard is 'wondur stronge' (l. 3073) and introduces himself in chivalric terms: "'My name," he seid, "is Ascoparte"' (l. 3082). When combat ensues, Ascopard is equally skilled and 'smote aftir Beuys a dynt grete' (l. 3103). However, before Bevis can destroy his opponent, Josian intervenes. At this point, she is neither fully Saracen nor Christian, having pledged her conversion but not yet completed it through baptism. She appeals to Bevis, 'lete him lyve and be oure knave!' (l. 3111), thus placing Ascopard in the same nebulous position as herself as neither Christian nor Saracen. He 'Sir Beuysis page' (l. 3115), lexically marking this as a 'conversion' that is incomplete and secular. The reader expects that Ascopard's baptism will follow after Josian's, which happens shortly after the combat encounter. However, as Ascopard declares, 'The Devil of Hel yeue the pyne! Y am to moche to be Cristyne.' (l. 3163). This phrase can be interpreted in terms of size, because Ascopard's giant stature renders him unable to fit within a conventional font. However, it can also be read in terms of spirituality: Ascopard is simply too much a Saracen to ever be Christian. Indeed, Bevis's earlier warning that Ascopard 'wol vs betray' (l. 3112) is ultimately proved correct some time after the failed conversion attempt, when Ascopard turns against Bevis and returns to King Yvor. No reasoning is given for Ascopard's betrayal, suggesting that the poet views the act as Ascopard staying true to his ontological nature as Saracen – antagonistic and untrustworthy. *Bevis* is not a text that rejects movement between

religious ideology, as is evidenced by Josian's successful conversion. However, it is a text that enforces a limit upon the boundaries of conversion, and one in which Saracen knights cannot ever fully convert.

The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* also contains the conversion of Priamus, one of the most significant Saracen individuals in the text.⁵¹ However, this conversion is complicated and incomplete, and Priamus is not fully assimilated within the chivalric community. As the previous chapter has discussed, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* is a crusade narrative. Gawain's encounter with Priamus is, in this text, a break from the crusading narrative that occurs as Gawain adventures alone in foreign and unknown lands.⁵² The encounter is prefaced by a number of motifs common to the Heroic Heathen meme, beginning with brief descriptions of arms and armour: Priamus is a chivalric individual bearing 'g[l]essenande in golde thre grayhondes of sable / With chapes a[nd] cheynes of chalke-whyte syluer' (Alliterative *Morte*, ll. 2521–22). He is 'a cheefe anterous' (l. 2524), who the reader is warned should not be lightly challenged, and a martial and chivalric match for Gawain. However, he only joins the chivalric community as one of the 'knyghttes' (l. 2553) after his combat with Gawain. The knights exchange names after the encounter, but Priamus further expresses identity through lineage by noting that 'a prynce es my fadyre' (l. 2595), and that he is 'of Alexandire blode' (l. 2602). Here, like Amorant in *Guy of Warwick*, Priamus is linked to a more acceptable pagan being. He is not explicitly Saracen, and his lineage links him with four of the Nine Worthies: he is 'of Alexandire blode' and has connections to 'sir Ector of Troye', and of 'Judas and Josue' (ll. 2602–05).

⁵¹ Priamus in *Le Morte Darthur* is considered later in this chapter, alongside Fierabras and the Green Knight.

⁵² On the brief geographical and natural description in the alliterative *Morte*, see John Finlayson, 'Rhetorical "Descriptio" of place in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*', *Modern Philology*, 61.1 (1963), 1–11 (pp. 4–5).

At the end of the Alliterative *Morte* version of this encounter, Priamus requests mercy and confession from Gawain:

‘3ise, I say þe sothely, and sekire þe my trowthe,
No surgyone in Salarne sall saue þe bettyre,
With-thy þat thowe suffre me, for sake of thy Cryste,
To schewe schortly my schrifte and schape for myn ende.’
‘3is’ quod sir Gawayne, ‘so me God helpe,
I gyfe þe grace and graunt, þofe þou hafte grefe seruede—’.
(ll. 2585–90)

Despite the power imbalance when Priamus requests mercy and Gawain grants it, this exchange is clearly mutually beneficial: the wound Priamus has given Gawain can be mended only by his hand. As Mary Hamel notes, this moment in the Alliterative *Morte* is a request for confession, not conversion, and the use of ‘thy Cryste’ makes explicit that Gawain’s Christ is not—and will not be—Priamus’.⁵³ Some critics have suggested that there are lines missing following ‘thy Cryste’, which would turn this into a more explicit request for conversion.⁵⁴ Even if this was the case, Priamus’ conversion is like Ascopard’s in *Bevis* because it is never fully realised through baptism. Priamus proves useful to the Arthurian knights throughout the rest of the campaign, offering vital information on the locations of troops, including ‘mo þan seuen hundredth / Of þe Sowdanes knyghtes’ (ll. 2815–16). However, he is never explicitly aligned with the Arthurian knights in any religious capacity. Priamus’ presence in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* indicates that non-Christians can be ‘knyghttes’ (l. 2553), and they can be included alongside Christians in a company of ‘cheualrous men’ (l. 2989). However, the lack of specificity in not calling Priamus Saracen and his incomplete conversion

⁵³ Hamel, ‘The “Christening” of Sir Priamus’, p. 297.

⁵⁴ Edward E. Foster and Larry D. Benson (eds.), *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), p. 276. See note on l. 2588.

sequence avoid offering an explicit statement that Christians and Saracens are chivalric equals.

The English Charlemagne romances also include the conversion of prominent Saracen figures. In the 'Fierabras' tradition, from which Caxton's *Charles the Grete* stems, these are Fierabras, a Saracen knight, and his sister, Floripas. The popularity of this tradition in English is attested to by the range of extant manuscripts and textual versions: notably, *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras* (c. 1380) are both Middle English versions of the Anglo-Norman 'Vulgate' *Fierabras* (and its equivalent Anglo-Norman 'version courte', *Fierenbras*); and *The Sowdone of Babylone* (mid c.15) is a Middle English version of the Anglo-Norman 'version courte' *La Destruction de Rome* (which itself has a parallel 'Vulgate' text) combined with the Anglo-Norman *Fierenbras*.⁵⁵ This section addresses the Fierabras and Floripas encounters in the English Charlemagne verse romances, and later sections of this chapter consider the encounters in English prose versions.

Each of these three texts includes a version of the Fierabras episode, in which the Saracen giant, Fierabras, challenges Oliver and accepts conversion upon his defeat. They also include the Floripas episode, in which Fierabras's sister converts separately from her brother, for the love of a Christian knight. Owing to the similarity of these episodes across these verse romances, and the focus of this thesis being the prose romances, I will discuss the Fierabras episode in *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras*, and the Floripas episode in *Sowdone*.⁵⁶ I discuss *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras* together, as they

⁵⁵ For full information on the textual transmission and extant manuscripts, see Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England*. Notably, see the appendix: 'The Corpus: Texts and Manuscripts', pp. 412–17. See also White, 'Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory', p. 179; Phillipa Hardman, 'The Sege of Melayne: A Fifteenth-Century Reading', in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), pp. 71–86; Ailes and Hardman, 'How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?', pp. 43–56.

⁵⁶ As I discuss later in this section, with reference to the sacking of Rome episode, there are small and interesting differences between the Heroic Heathen and Saracen Princess encounters in these three texts. This study, however, does not seek to offer a comparison between the verse romances but rather to use

stem from the same Anglo-Norman source, and for the avoidance of confusion will refer to them by the names of their extant (though incomplete) manuscripts: *Sir Ferumbras* is Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 33 ('Ashmole'), and *Firumbras* is British Library MS Add. 37492 ('Fillingham').⁵⁷ Of the two, Ashmole is the more complete, including much of the Heroic Heathen encounter, and will be the primary point of reference.

Fillingham begins partway through the episode, after the capture of the French peers, skipping the beginning of the Heroic Heathen encounter but still including some common motifs. By contrast, Ashmole begins at the point at which Ferumbras issues a challenge to the French peers: Fierabras, or 'Ferumbras' here, is introduced as a 'Sarasyne werreour' before he is even introduced by name, indicating a certain level of martial prowess.⁵⁸ He is physically monstrous, yet defined by chivalric deeds – unequalled 'of strengþe, of schap, of hugenys; of dedes of armes bolde' (l. 52). Ferumbras demonstrates his power by recounting past deeds that Oliver declares are of 'distrucion myche to christen lawe' (l. 379). He claims, for example, to have killed the pope: 'slow ich þan [þe] pope prout' (l. 366). Despite these deeds, Oliver would rather convert Ferumbras 'to crestendome' (l. 396) than have to fight him, but the offer is refused. The combatants are evenly matched 'as twey lyons' (l. 627) in the 'strong batayl' (l. 602), highlighting Ferumbras' strength and treating the pair as chivalric equals. This is emphasised further by Ferumbras requesting Oliver's 'rizte name' (l. 441) both before and during battle.

them as a reference point for the interesting developments when these narratives are recreated in printed prose.

⁵⁷ See Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, p. 414.

⁵⁸ *Sir Ferumbras*, ed. Sidney J. Herrtage, in *The English Charlemagne Romances Part 1: Sir Ferumbras, Edited from the Unique Manuscript Bodleian MS. Ashmole 33*, EETS ES 34 (London: Oxford University Press, 1879, repr. 1966), l. 50. All further references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically within the body of the text.

The fight ends with the promise of conversion when Ferumbras requests ‘mercy of me, iantail knyȝt’ (l. 753) as it is his ‘wille cristned to bee’ (l. 755). The request is subsequently granted upon the promise that he will make ‘peynymes cristned be’ (l. 762), further spreading the faith, and Ferumbras is ‘cristned sir Firumbras’ (l. 1086) and brought into the chivalric community. In Fillingham, though the initial encounter is missing, the text still includes Ferumbras’s attempt at the end to convince his father to convert rather than die. Admiral Balan, his father, is far from a Heroic Heathen figure, and the attempted conversion suggests that Ferumbras’s conversion (present in Ashmole and missing in Fillingham), has set a precedent: ‘swythe do the christen, as y dyd me!’.⁵⁹ Balan will not convert, but Ferumbras’s attempts to convince him indicate that Ferumbras himself is a typical Heroic Heathen figure: he is defined by a chivalric and religious identity, rather than a national one, brought within a broader community than could be defined by national allegiance alone.⁶⁰

The Fierabras and Floripas encounters in *The Sowdone of Babylon* are largely similar to those of *Sir Ferumbras* and *Firumbras*, but *Sowdone* has some differences which could be attributed to its lost source.⁶¹ Its treatment of the Floripas encounter, however, is comparable to the other versions: all of the expected motifs are present. The princess is the ‘faire doghter Floripas’ (l. 124), who demonstrates Christian sympathies

⁵⁹ *Firumbras*, ed. by Mary Isabelle O’Sullivan, in *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland, Edited from MS. Brit. Mus. Addit. 37492*, EETS 198 (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), l. 1685.

⁶⁰ Ailes and Hardman note that the English Charlemagne romances foreground these religious and chivalric identities as part of their suitability for an English audience: the protagonists are not French but Christian. Ailes and Hardman, ‘How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?’, pp. 50–52. See also Warm, ‘Identity, Narrative and Participation’, pp. 87–100; Crofts and Rouse, ‘Middle English Popular Romance’ pp. 86–88.

⁶¹ Notably, Ferumbras’s sacking of Rome is detailed in *Sowdone* but not present in either *Firumbras* or the later *Charles the Grete*, despite the latter depicting it as one of the great and powerful deeds accomplished before the Heroic Heathen encounter. See Emil Hausknecht, ‘Introduction’ in *The Romance of the Sowdone of Babylone, and of Ferumbras his Sone who Conquered Rome*, ed. by Emil Hausknecht, EETS ES 38 (London: Trübner, 1881), pp. i–lxvii (p. xxii).

after meeting Christian knights that her father holds prisoner.⁶² Hearing the prisoners' lamentations, Floripas 'rued on hem anoon ful soore' (l. 1561) and seeks to bring them food. This display of charity, which is similar to those demonstrated by Josian in *Bevis of Hampton*, is contrasted by a capacity for violence. Floripas accesses the jail by killing another Saracen, hitting the jailer so hard that 'the brayne sterte oute of his hede' (l. 1605). Once she has escorted the knights to safety, Floripas declares her love for Sir Guy and immediately offers to convert for his sake: 'for his love wille I cristenede be' (l. 1895). Guy acquiesces only because 'baptizede wole she be' (l. 1906), and the conversion process begins. As in other instances of the meme, marriage is inseparable from conversion from the moment the former is introduced. The encounter in Caxton's prose *Charles the Grete* likewise links these concepts.

Floripas's conversion is drawn out, as conversions often are in both prose and verse versions of the encounter. As soon as Floripas and Guy have agreed the marriage and conversion, the process begins in a highly ceremonial way:

Floripas thay cleped forth tho
 And brought fourth a cuppe of golde,
 Ful of noble mighty wyne
 And saide, 'My love and my lorde,
 Myn herte, my body, my goode is thyn'.

(ll. 1925–29)

Despite the ceremony, this is neither a marriage nor a conversion. It is, instead, a marker of the point from which Floripas begins assisting the Christian knights. She orchestrates the knights' plans against her Saracen father, shelters them in her tower, and reveals she can 'comforte you with-all' (l. 2302) via a magical girdle of sustenance.⁶³ The actual

⁶² 'The Sultan of Babylon', in *Three Middle English Charlemagne Romances*, ed. by Alan Lupack (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990), pp. 7–103. *Sowdone* citations are taken from this edition.

⁶³ I explore the details of this encounter in the prose *Charles the Grete* in a later section of this chapter, and the girdle as a supernatural object in Chapter Four.

marriage comes at the end of *Sowdone*, and is linked with her conversion and that of her maidens: ‘Dame Florip was baptysed than / And here maydyns alle / And to Sir Gye i-maryed’ (ll. 3191–93). Floripas’s conversion is uncomplicated throughout the English Charlemagne verse romances, paralleling earlier princesses like Josian in *Bevis*. These later verse romances, however, also demonstrate a further turn towards assimilating Saracens by affording their Saracen knights, like Fierabras, the same conversion opportunities.

Across the late medieval English verse romances there is an increasing trend towards an acceptance that Saracen knights, like Saracen princesses, might be converted and reclaimed for Christendom. The late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century printed prose romances therefore built upon a growing precedent when they demonstrate, repeatedly, that Saracen knights should be converted rather than killed. The move towards this acceptance is gradual: in *Guy of Warwick* (c. 1300 originally), we find a rigid insistence on the need to kill Saracen opponents; in *Bevis of Hampton* (c. 1324) a Saracen is briefly accommodated as a page, but his conversion, though attempted, fails to be completed;⁶⁴ in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* (c. 1400), Priamus’ conversion is incomplete and lacks a baptism. It is not until the English Charlemagne romances of the late fourteenth and mid-fifteenth century that English verse romance shows Saracen knights who are worthy of conversion – those who actively seek out, and are granted, baptism upon their defeat. The English prose romances of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries continue this trend, with conversion sequences for Saracen

⁶⁴ *Sir Isumbras* offers another example of an episode that can be read as an incomplete conversion, with a similar date of inception of some time prior to 1320. Though Isumbras’s wife is initially kidnapped by a Saracen King, she embraces her new public role as ‘qwene of his land’ (l. 293) as if she had been converted voluntarily. Thus, when she is eventually rescued by Isumbras and becomes complicit in the slaughter of Saracens, she can be read as reverting, or reconverting, back to Christianity. Neither of these moves are marked by any lexis of conversion or baptism, but the wife’s active embracing of both Saracen and Christian public roles can be read as akin to a temporary, or failed, conversion sequence. See Harriet Hudson (ed.), *Four Middle English Romances* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006).

princesses and Saracen knights alike in a form that embraces conversion as a means of both martially and spiritually overcoming a Saracen threat.

SARACENS IN THE PROSE ROMANCES

The late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English prose romances replicate the memes common to English romance whilst also developing them. The Saracen princesses in these texts still play important roles in rescuing Christian knights and are rewarded for their agency and their Christian morality with conversion and acceptance. However, in a shift towards assimilation and the reconstruction of a broad Christian identity, the prose romances insist on the conversion of Saracen knights. This shift aligns with the contemporary concerns considered in Chapter One, by the extent to which converting and reclaiming Saracen bodies models the way that crusades seek to reclaim Saracen spaces.

SARACEN PRINCESS ENCOUNTERS IN THE PROSE ROMANCES

The Saracen princess encounters in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century prose romances are consistent with those in the earlier English verse romances. The same five motifs comprise the meme, presented in any order: a Christian knight is imprisoned by a Saracen leader; the Saracen's princess daughter falls in love with the knight and agrees to convert for him; the princess is represented as an appropriate bride despite her Saracen faith; the princess converts in a multi-staged sequence that concludes in baptism; and the princess is willing to harm other Saracens. There are three notable Saracen princess encounters in the prose romances: Floripas of *Charles the Grete*, Esclarmonde of *Huon of Burdeux*, and Clerimonde of *Valentine and Orson*.

The Floripas and Esclarmonde encounters appear in English print only approximately thirty years apart, and they follow a similar structure.⁶⁵ The Floripas encounter in *Charles the Grete* is also broadly similar to its renditions in the earlier English verse romances of *Sir Ferumbras*, *Firumbras*, and *The Sowdone of Babylon*. As in these earlier romances, the Christian knights first encounter Floripas whilst imprisoned by the Saracen Admiral Balan. Though Saracen, she has ‘grete compassyon’ (*Charles*, 90.10) towards the Christian knights and ultimately resolves to free them by giving the jailor ‘suche a stroke on the visage’ that it removes the eye from his head (92.8). Floripas is introduced as being capable of violence against other Saracens, indicating her appropriateness for conversion. Though Esclarmonde is not introduced as violent, she is a similar goal to be claimed for Christendom; Huon must ‘kys thre tymes the fayre Esclarmonde, dowghter to the Admyrall Gaudysse’ as part of his penance, establishing the princess as a crusading prize (*Huon*, 50.11–12).⁶⁶ Once Huon is jailed—for this impertinence, amongst other crimes—Esclarmonde visits her newfound love ‘euery mornynge & euery euenynge’ (127.10–11) and is met with Huon’s scorn until she suggests that ‘for the loue of the I wyll become crystened’ (127.24–25). Floripas’s conversion request does not come until later, when the knights are safe in her tower, but stems from the same reasoning: ‘there is a knyght in fraunce whome I haue longe tyme loued’ (*Charles*, 95.34–35). Floripas, too, acknowledges that love alone is insufficient, and that a religious conversion is necessary for her acceptance into the

⁶⁵ Caxton printed *Charles the Grete* in 1485. Whilst the dating for *Huon of Burdeux* cannot be clearly ascertained, Joyce Boro posits that the earliest English edition is 1515. See Joyce Boro, ‘The Textual History of *Huon of Burdeux*: A Reassessment of the Facts’, *Notes and Queries*, 48 (2001), 233–37.

⁶⁶ Amongst other items, Huon must return with the Admiral’s teeth and beard. Both Charlemagne and the text leave it implicit that the Saracen Admiral cannot simply be *persuaded* to be parted with his teeth and beard, and it is therefore not a stretch to read the three kisses as an implication that Esclarmonde herself should be claimed for Christendom, just as her father should be killed for it.

Christian, chivalric community, agreeing to ‘be baptysed & byleue in the god of crysten men’ (96.12–13) for the love of Guy.

Both Esclarmonde and Floripas are presented as suitable candidates for conversion from the beginning, because of their physical appearance and their Christian morality. While Saracen giants—Heroic Heathen or otherwise—are sometimes depicted with black skin and deformed or devilish features, Saracen princesses are conventionally whitened and westernised in what Jacqueline de Weever considers to be part of the ‘rhetoric of desire and sexual gratification’.⁶⁷ As in the English verse versions, Floripas of *Charles the Grete* is ‘whyt and rody as rose in maye’ with hair ‘shynyng as the fine golde’ (90.12–13). In a text where female Saracen threats like Amyotte, ‘the geantesse’ (175.32) can be ‘blacke as pytche boyllid’ with eyes ‘red as brennyng fyre’ (176.1–2), Floripas is whitened to match Western Christian beauty standards well in advance of conversion. Even where the depictions are not so explicit, as with Esclarmonde, Saracen princesses are sometimes depicted as beautiful women made ugly by their heathen faith. Huon’s response, when Esclarmonde declares her love, exemplifies how these texts measure a Saracen princess’s worth through beauty and faith. Esclarmonde may be beautiful, but she is still a Saracen:

Fayre lady Esclaramond, ye be a sarazyn, and I am crystened. trew it is, in that I dyd kys you, was by the commaundement of king Charlemayne, who sent me hether, but or elles I had rather to haue bene here in perpetuall pryson / then to haue touched eny parte of your flessch or mouthe as long as ye be a saryzyn.

(*Huon*, 126.4–9)

The reader is here invited to see Esclarmonde as conventionally ‘fayre’, invoking an imagined whiteness common with other Saracen princesses in romance. However, she is still marked by her Saracen nature: Huon regrets that he has even touched Esclarmonde

⁶⁷ De Weever, *Sheba’s Daughters*, p. 38. See also Heng, *The Invention of Race*.

while she is still Saracen. Christian knights, the passage suggests, may acknowledge the beauty of Saracen princesses just as they can appreciate the martial prowess of Saracen warriors elsewhere. However, even when these characters match the moral and ethical values of Christianity, they are defined still by their Saracen faith.

In each encounter, conversion is a drawn out process that grants the Saracen princess sufficient narrative attention to prove herself an asset to Christendom. Esclarmonde's christening happens in two parts, after Huon defeats the Admiral. Huon immediately 'cristenyd ye fayre lady Esclaramonde' (*Huon*, 154.31–32), although his lack of religious authority means Esclarmonde's conversion remains incomplete until the pair are married and she is formally christened by the Pope 'without chaungynge of her name' (216.32). Floripas's conversion occurs long after she pledges herself to Guy and orchestrates the Christians' escape, as much of the central narrative of *Charles the Grete* sees Floripas and the knights besieged in her tower. As in earlier verse romance versions of the Fierabras story, Floripas behaves and acts as a Christian from the point at which she declares her love and intention to convert, but she remains technically Saracen until baptised. When Guy and Floripas agree to marry, she 'durst not kysse hym on the mouthe, but on hys chekes & chynne, by cause she was a paynym' (*Charles*, 115.30–31), paralleling Huon's regret at having kissed a Saracen. After the knights and Floripas have been rescued from their siege, the conversion is completed and 'she was baptyسد [...] wythout chaunchyng hyr name' (198.26–28). In both the Esclarmonde and Floripas encounters, as well as the Heroic Heathen encounters of prose romance, the identity invested in a name is important. The converting Saracen knights and princesses in prose romance are rarely granted a new name; in a world where one's identity is associated with one's name, this distinction emphasises the extent to which characters like Floripas, Fierabras, Priamus and Clerimonde have

already cultivated identities conducive to the places in Christian society that they go on to hold.

In *Charles the Grete*, Floripas shows considerable capacity for violence against other Saracens. She is granted a form of agency more closely associated with knights than princesses. As in the English verse romances, Floripas frees the French peers from prison by slaying the jailor. Shortly after, and once the peers are safely within the tower, Floripas attacks one of her maids for threatening to reveal what she has done, ‘and threwe the woman in to the see’ (94.35–95.1). That the Saracen princess can harm other Saracens is a recurring component of the meme, but the prose romances are particularly concerned with the gendering of this violence. Floripas’s violent actions, like the slaying of the jailor, are looked upon as ‘the werke of a man wel approued’ (96.34–35), but those actions motivated by her love for Guy are dismissed as the ‘desyre & wylle of wymmen for to knowe newe thynges’ (96.31–32). Floripas’s baptism is also sealed with an act of violent aggression against Saracen ideologies. As is often the case with knights, the instances in which Floripas controls her own destiny and has the agency to make impactful decisions are also those marked by performative acts of violence. In this scene, Guy attacks the statues of Saracen gods in front of her and, from this performance, ‘Florypes had al theyre goddes in despyte, and byleued in Ihesu Cryste’ (126.16–18).

In *Huon of Burdeux*, by contrast, the Saracen princess is not violent. Esclarmonde spends her time in prayer to ‘lord god Jesu Cryst’ (*Huon*, 162.28) to remain faithful to Huon, and she considers joining ‘some abbey of nonnes’ (195.19) when she believes him dead. While Esclarmonde’s quiet contemplation aligns her with the Christian virtues expected of a convert, it stands in contrast to the ways in which other Saracen princesses influence the narrative. Elsewhere in *Huon*, an episode with

another princess likewise reveals the extent to which this text denies its Saracen women this agency. The princess in this episode is both the contestant and wager in a chess game, though not by her own design. Huon strikes an agreement with her father, who promises Huon that ‘yf thou canst mate her I promyse that thou shalt haue her one nyght in thy bed to do with her at thy pleasure’ (178.15–17). Winning the game is linked with successful sexual conquest, demonstrating the forced sexual nature of the bargain.⁶⁸ As both player and prize, the princess falls in love with Huon, neglecting the game in the hope she might be in ‘bed with hym all nyght’ (179.14–15). Her intentional loss does place her as the architect of her own destiny to some extent, but the text reframes this defeat as Huon being ‘content to relese’ her from the wager (180.22–23). Unlike Esclarmonde or Floripas, who can appropriate violent male agency to achieve their aims, this unnamed princess is denied even the agency to surrender herself.⁶⁹ Her scornful later comments, that ‘yf I had knowe that thou woldest thus a refused my company I wold haue mated the & then thou haddest lost thy hed’ (180.30–181.2), further evidence the extent to which Saracen princesses are presented as potentially capable of performing violence, even when they decide not to.

The encounter with Clerimonde, in *Valentine and Orson*, also contains all expected motifs, although the order in which they occur differs slightly. Sister to both the converted Green Knight, and a fearsome Saracen giant, Ferragus, Clerimonde is introduced as caught between the spheres of Christian and Saracen communities from the point at which Valentine and Orson first venture to her castle. She is not aligned

⁶⁸ As Leitch further explores, the game of chess has been read in late medieval literature as, amongst other possibilities, metaphorical of love or fortune, and as upholding a political order. Megan G. Leitch, ‘Ritual, Revenge and the Politics of Chess in Medieval Romance’, in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, ed. by Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. 129–46 (pp. 130–31).

⁶⁹ On medieval perspectives of gender, see Jacqueline Murray, ‘Thinking about Gender: The Diversity of Medieval Perspectives’, in *The Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. by Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1995), pp. 1–12.

with either her Saracen or Christian brother in physical terms, positioned far outside of the central narrative and reachable only after a ‘long tyme abyden vpon the hye Sea’ (*Valentine*, 133.1–2), or in spiritual terms, as the owner of a magical and omnipotent brass head and the mistress of the magical dwarf, Pacolet.⁷⁰ The encounter with Clerimonde includes both initial conventions of the Floripas and Esclarmonde encounters—in which a captured Christian knight is aided by a Saracen princess, and in which the princess falls in love with the knight and offers to convert—but in a different order. Once introductions have been made at the castle, Clerimonde declares her love to Valentine: ‘I gyue me and habandone me vnto you as my parfyte loue’ (141.24–25). Valentine reminds her that she must first take ‘the lawe of Ihesu chryste’ (141.37) like her brother, the Green Knight, and she accepts the proposal gladly.

Despite their early encounter, Valentine and Clerimonde do not marry until the final stages of the narrative, when ‘Valentine made her to be rychely clothed and on the morowe wedded her with great solempnite’ (296.12–14). As is typical of these encounters, the conversion process is drawn out, and Clerimonde plays an integral role throughout the text’s crusades. She is repeatedly kidnapped by Saracens, maintaining her chastity only through religious deception. To King Trompartes, one such captor, she claims she has ‘made an othe and auowe before the ymage of God mahoune’ (188.28–29) to take no husband; to the King of Ynde, she makes the same vow for the length of a year. Once that latter vow is up, Clerimonde resolves to ‘kepe her fayth and her promyse vnto the noble knyght Valentyne’ (231.8–9), again framing her deception as both an act of gendered agency and a reaffirming of her conversion. *Valentine and Orson* thus treats Clerimonde’s conversion similarly to that of the Green Knight, or

⁷⁰ Both the brass head and Pacolet are chaotic supernatural elements in the text, which go on to grant the Christian knights a close understanding of the Saracen supernatural; they are the subject of further discussion in Chapter Four.

other Heroic Heathens such as Fierabras: the initial agreement is a significant moment, but the act of converting is a continuous act that has a constant, religious presence throughout the narrative. At the end of *Valentine and Orson*, Clerimonde takes the habit to become ‘a nonne’ (326.17), as Abbess of an order specifically dedicated to the newly-canonised St Valentine. Her decision is inherently religious but also prompted by the sorrow of having lost ‘my ioye, my lyfe and my comferte, and myne onely hope’ (326.1–2). Whilst the Saracen princess encounter with Clerimonde follows a different pattern from other printed prose romances, it shares with those of Floripas and Esclarmonde—and with those in the earlier English verse romances such as that of Josian—the combination of marriage and conversion into a single, unified process.

HEROIC HEATHEN ENCOUNTERS IN THE PROSE ROMANCES

While the Saracen princess encounter meme is the same in the prose romances as in earlier verse romances, the Heroic Heathen encounter meme undergoes a notable shift towards converting the Saracen knight. As mentioned, here there are seven component motifs: physical alterity; threatening deeds; chivalric honour; single combat; granting mercy; a lengthy conversion sequence; and acceptance into the chivalric community.

The encounters with Fierabras of *Charles the Grete*, The Green Knight of *Valentine and Orson*, and Priamus of *Le Morte Darthur* follow this pattern, including the final three motifs whereas encounters in the earlier verse romances do not.

The first common motif in the Heroic Heathen encounter is the physical configuration of the Saracen as of powerful physical stature. Without any mention of size, Priamus is a ‘sterne knyght’ (*Morte*, 177.6), heavily armoured and bearing himself in the same chivalric manner as the Arthurian knights elsewhere in the *Morte*. Priamus’ introduction is brief, but when texts offer longer physical descriptions of a Heroic

Heathen, they sometimes compare his extreme physicality to actual giants. The Saracen knights in earlier English verse romances are frequently presented in this way, as we have seen, but these characters are rarely, if ever, viable candidates for conversion for various other reasons. The introduction to Fierabras in *Charles the Grete*, depicts him as gigantic, but without the barbarousness that accompanies other giants of medieval romance: he is ‘the moost meruayllous geaunt that euer was seen’ (*Charles*, 40.7–8), at ‘by comyn estymacyon xv foot longe’ (58.7–8). The Green Knight of *Valentine and Orson* is likewise referred to as ‘the Gyaunte’ (*Valentine*, 114.20) when in battle. As Beatrice White has noted, great size is not an inherently antagonistic attribute, but one that is often associated with great heroes too. Charlemagne’s height varies wildly in medieval stories – up to twenty feet tall in some romances.⁷¹ Reynaud, who leads the crusade for Jerusalem at the end of *Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, is also ‘the tallest manne that was founde at that tyme in al the worlde, for he had .xvi. feete of lengthe and more’ (*Aymon*, 16.27–29). The description of each Heroic Heathen also focuses on physicality and prowess: Gawain’s fight with Priamus leaves him ‘sore greved’ (*Morte*, 177.30–31) and mortally wounded; Fierabras’s strength is so great that ‘to hym was none like’ (*Charles*, 40.10); and of the Green Knight, Valentine notes he is ‘so puyssaynt and so stronge’ (*Valentine*, 110.22–23) that he might be unrivalled.

When the texts compare Heroic Heathens to giants they draw upon the ways giants break cultural boundaries and blur the distinction between human and non-human. As this chapter has already suggested in brief, giants of medieval romance are recognisably anthropomorphic but monstrous through animalistic distortions or behavioural taboos. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen suggests, they are a ‘monstrous

⁷¹ White, ‘Saracens and Crusaders’, p. 181.

embodiment of sexual violence and unauthorized aggression'.⁷² They therefore contravene two key expectations that should, as per Malory's Pentecostal Oath, rule a chivalric knight: 'to gyff mercy unto hym that askith mercy [...] and allwayes to do ladyes, damesels, and jantilwomen and wydowes soccour' (*Morte*, 97.29–32). Within the Roman War episode of the *Morte*, for example, the giant of Mont Saint Michel is 'the foulst wyght that ever man sye' (157.9), raping and consuming the local population, and Lucius's nameless 'grete gyauntes of Gene' fight with ferocious violence as they crush heads with 'clubbys of steele' (171.4). These giants break down the boundary between the human body and animal in a way that the Heroic Heathen does not. The Heroic Heathen instead blurs a different boundary: they are physically 'Gyaunte' (*Valentine*, 114.20), but ethically similar to Christian knights, thus deconstructing the chivalric boundary that might otherwise distinguish the Saracen antagonists from Christian crusaders.

The second core motif of this encounter is that the Heroic Heathen is demonstrably a threat to Christendom, as proven by his martial skill and past deeds. These past deeds are retold through boasts, which emphasise the alterity of his Saracen identity in much the same way as his monstrous body. They also suggest a martial prowess comparable to that of the Christian knights. Fierabras boasts, for example, that he has destroyed Rome and that he has captured Christian relics 'more worth than al the golde in the world' (*Charles*, 69.2).⁷³ He claims, therefore, to have led a force on a significant conquest and dealt a dire blow to Christendom. The Green Knight boasts similarly, addressing a hall of Christendom's greatest warriors and threatening to have

⁷² Cohen, *Of Giants*, p. 102.

⁷³ Despite Fierabras's boasts, the destruction of Rome episode is not included in *Charles the Grete*. Chapter one considers the textual history behind Caxton's *Charles the Grete* in further detail. For a textual history of the earlier verse romances, some of which included the destruction of Rome, see Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, p. 412–17.

them ‘hanged on the hygheste of all my tree’ (*Valentine*, 102.32). Each of these situations invokes past deeds to highlight threatening martial prowess against Christians. By contrast, the Priamus encounter offers no boasts, beginning with minimal conversation between Priamus and Gawain before the combat, in which the knights ‘com on spedyly with full syker dyntes’ (*Morte*, 177.15–16). Priamus presents, however, an exoticised threat to be feared both for his martial power and his decadent approach to chivalric combat. His armour is studded with ‘rybbys that were ryche’ (177.26), and he fights with such fury that both Gawain and Priamus ‘bled so muche that every man had wondir that they myght sitte in their sadyls’ (180.11–12).

The third common motif is that the Heroic Heathen is chivalric in nature, proven by his performance of the same pre-combat rituals as the Christian knights. By engaging with the expected preamble to a fair fight, such as helping each other prepare and proposing a resolution that does not require combat, the Saracen knight demonstrates his clear fit within the chivalric community. The narrative voice often emphasises this fit, encouraging the reader to see the two knights as equals:

O, what grete loyalte of noblesse was bytwene them whyche were of
 fayth and creauce contrarye! I suppose that god shold be wel pleased
 yf there were suche confyaunce emonge crysten men.

(*Charles*, 59.9–13)

The narrative voice of *Charles the Grete* casts both Oliver and Fierabras in an equally honourable light in advance of their combat; of Fierabras, it suggests that ‘yf he wold haue be baptysed and byleue in Ihesu Cryst there had neuer be seen a man of his valure’ (58.8–9). Oliver begins the encounter injured, and Fierabras encourages him to heal himself first because ‘it shold be grete dyshonour for me to ouercome you in bataylle & destroye you’ (61.14–16). Likewise, Oliver promises to ‘neuer forsake thy companye’ (61.34) if Fierabras will only convert before the fight. This offer of conversion is

common in advance of combat, although the Heroic Heathen always refuses an offer in advance of the challenge. Just as Fierabras refuses conversion until bested, so too does Priamus acknowledge once beaten that while he ‘helde no man my pere’, he will convert after having found one who ‘hath gevyn me of fyghtyng my fylle’ (*Morte*, 178.24–26). The Green Knight is likewise offered conversion before combat, retorting that ‘for neuer the dayes of my life wyl I byleue in thy god’ (*Valentine*, 82.4). He does, however, offer terms of a challenge to the Duke, highlighting in the same manner as the Priamus encounter the honour of seeking chivalric challenge. The Green Knight will permit Sauary to return with his life provided he can find a knight who ‘by strength of armes’ (82.21–22) can overcome the Green Knight. In each of these cases, the actions and words of the Heroic Heathen emphasise his capability as an honourable and chivalric individual.

The combat between Heroic Heathen and Christian knight is presented as an organised challenge. That the Saracen knight seeks a formal bout of combat, rather than an uncontrolled skirmish, again draws attention to his chivalric nature. Fierabras formally addresses Charlemagne, ‘kyng of Parys’, on his approach, requesting that ‘the moost stronge & the moste hardy’ (*Charles*, 41.2–4) barons of France meet him in combat. Upon making this request he ‘dysarmed hym of the armes of whyche he was cladde, and bonde his hors vnto a tree’ (41.17–19), indicating that any fight must be preceded by a formal discussion of the terms. When Oliver arrives, Fierabras introduces himself by name, distinguishing him from the armies of faceless, nameless Saracens common to romance.⁷⁴ Though the Green Knight is introduced to the reader through

⁷⁴ Beatrice White suggests that certain Saracen figures are ‘ripe for baptism’, and that while they are particularly battle-crazed and bloodthirsty ‘there is very little that is individual about them’. However, reducing these figures to caricatures is an inferred reading, not an implied one. The moral qualities within the Heroic Heathen characters are made explicit by the texts from the outset, and the notion that it is possible to pick any Saracen for conversion once they have been suitably cultivated, like a low-hanging

battle with Duke Sauary, in which he captures the Duke and threatens him with execution, he introduces himself to the Christian knights in surprisingly chivalric fashion. Rather than barging into the feasting hall in which they are gathered, as does the totally-green Bertilak in *Sir Gawain in the Green Knight*, the Green Knight of *Valentine and Orson* waits at the gate of Sauray's hall until the Duke says he 'haue lycence' to enter and address the knights (*Valentine*, 102.27). The Green Knight is not named until his much later conversion, and he thus exists at the margins of chivalric society, warned by Sauray that he has no place amongst the Christian knights that gather in his hall. His given name is Pepin, and the Green Knight thus shares a Christian name with the King of France. However, the name is not mentioned again throughout the text; as Jane Bliss notes, the text actively refuses to re-use this name even after King Pepin's death.⁷⁵ Therefore, it is perhaps not an issue of comprehension that sees the Green Knight remain nameless throughout the narrative, but instead an issue of connection: the Green Knight's Saracen roots mark him always as an outsider of sorts, and one who can never be too closely connected to a Christian king.

The single combat between Christian and Saracen forms the centrepiece of the Heroic Heathen encounter and is the fourth component motif. Throughout the fight, the Saracen knight typically fights honourably whilst the Christian knight can be deceptive and dishonest. Even before the fight in *Charles the Grete*, Charlemagne's peers resort to violence amongst themselves when deciding who will fight Fierabras. The means by which Oliver eventually overcomes Fierabras in battle are also dubiously honourable, at best: he steals Fierabras's weapon with the boast, 'O kyng of Alexandrye, now is tyme to compte. For I am pourueyed of your swerde of whych I shal make you wroth'

fruit, ignores the substantial textual space granted to praising the chivalric behavior of specific Saracen knights. See White, 'Saracens and Crusaders', p. 181.

⁷⁵ Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness*, p. 33.

(*Charles*, 74.33–75.2). Oliver’s behaviour is questionable, which further emphasises Fierabras’s appropriate behaviour by comparison, and it also calls to mind the ways in which this encounter modifies the Arming of the Hero topos expected in romance.⁷⁶ In a similar reversal of honour, before the fight takes place in *Valentine and Orson*, Orson ‘espied a wall and caste the grene knyghte agaynst it’ (*Valentine*, 103.8–9), assaulting him in civilized company. The coda the Green Knight uses for this attack is one of deceit, that he has been ‘deceyued and betrayed’ (103.32–33), but any retaliation is reserved for formal combat the following day. During this combat, the very means by which he is overcome involves an act of deception on Valentine’s part: he asks Orson, who will ‘obeye vnto valentyne and his commaundementes’ (112.32–33), to take his place for the second day of the fight. The Green Knight acknowledges the switch once the battle is complete, but does not admonish either Valentine or Orson despite their conduct: ‘Syr knyght me thynke that you are he that had batayll agaynst me yesterdaye, and that sholde haue returned agayne to day’ (116.1–3). Gawain does not perform any notably dishonourable action against Priamus, but his resounding defeat does encourage the reader to view Priamus as the more martially capable of the two: Gawain scores hits upon Priamus but he is ultimately ‘grevyd wondirly sore’ and ‘kut thorow a vayne’ (*Morte*, 177.23 and 30), prompting Priamus to end the combat out of concern for the wounds he has caused.

In each of these three Heroic Heathen encounters, the discrepancy between the Saracen knight’s chivalric honour and the Christian knight’s deception is so great that the texts must make explicit that the Christian’s cause is more just. All three Heroic Heathens possess the same Christian relic, which the crusaders must reclaim: the

⁷⁶ For further discussion of romance antagonists calling into question the honour of the heroes, see Bly Calkin, ‘Saracens’, pp. 192–200. On the Arming of the Hero topos, see Brewer, *Tradition and Innovation in Chaucer*, pp. 143–60.

healing ‘baume of our lorde Ihesu cryst’ (*Valentine*, 108.22–23). Each of these encounters is, therefore, representative of the wider crusade because of the need to recover an important artefact from enemy hands. As if to reassert to a reader that Saracens are ontologically antagonistic, both Fierabras and the Green Knight use the balm to cheat and gain a supernatural advantage by healing the injuries they sustain. Priamus also uses the relic, but after the battle, to heal both himself and Gawain. The balm, as Fierabras describes it, was ‘the bawme that I conquered in Iherusalem’ (*Charles*, 56.28–29), and though he covets its monetary value, he displays enough knowledge of Christianity to understand its significance: ‘it is the same of whyche your god was embawmed wyth whan he was taken down fro the crosse’ (56.29–31). Oliver refuses Fierabras’s offer to ‘drynke at thyn ease’ (67.32), instead throwing the balm into the river. In *Le Morte Darthur*, the balm is never explicitly stated to be the same relic from the other Heroic Heathen encounters, but it likewise serves an important role. In each example, the balm frames the encounter as a recovery, initially of a Christian relic but ultimately of a Saracen body.⁷⁷

Distinctively in the prose romances, the Heroic Heathen encounter ends with a request for conversion that sees the Saracen body claimed and repurposed for the benefit of Christendom. The request for mercy and request for conversion are often a combined statement, made after the Heroic Heathen has proved his martial ability and chivalric honour. Despite typically having made assertions that he ‘ne shal forsake ne abandoune Mahoun’ (*Charles*, 62.1–2), the Heroic Heathen actively seeks baptism after defeat. Fierabras begs Oliver that he ‘re quyre the that I dye not tyl I be baptysed’ (77.32), and the Green Knight is quick to ‘denye and renunce all the false goddes’

⁷⁷ The concept of recovery was already particularly prominent in late medieval literature, and already linked with crusading desires. See Tyerman, *God’s War*, pp. 827–29.

(*Valentine*, 115.28–29) after his defeat. The Priamus encounter in the *Morte Darthur* is not an outright victory for Gawain, because Priamus has inflicted a potentially-mortal wound upon Gawain. He agrees to close Gawain's wounds via the healing balm if he can be converted, and his eagerness is evident: 'Now mercy I Jesu beseche, and I shall becom Crysten and in God stedfastly beleve' (*Morte*, 178.9–10). This eagerness is manifested only after the encounter; while the Heroic Heathen proves himself ethically suitable for conversion before the encounter, it is the performative nature of chivalric combat that finalises the deal.

The conversion is a process of multiple stages, for both Saracen princesses and Heroic Heathens. For a Saracen knight, the process begins after he is defeated and accepts conversion, and it culminates in baptism much later. Even so, other characters regard the Heroic Heathen as converted from the initial agreement, trusting him immediately. Priamus offers the Crusaders useful information against his former Saracen brothers, warning that 'here is by the Deuke of Lorayne with his knyghtes', and offering the assistance of 'a hondred of good knyghtes that ar of my retynew' (*Morte*, 179.16–18 and 26–27).⁷⁸ After Oliver defeats Fierabras in *Charles the Grete* he is captured by a Saracen ambush, leaving Fierabras to return alone to Charlemagne's camp to address the King, this time as 'O ryche emperor & noble' (*Charles*, 84.15–16). The promise that he shall be baptised and that 'the holy reliques shal be delyuerd' (84.25–26) is sufficient to convince Charlemagne that Fierabras can be trusted. The Green

⁷⁸ As I have considered in Chapter One, there are notable differences between the Winchester Manuscript and the 1485 print of the *Morte Darthur*, many of which include Priamus. In this passage, Caxton's print is the only one that specifies that the foes Priamus identifies are 'sarasyns and mysbyleuyng men'. As Meg Roland notes, points at which words like 'Saracen' and 'Turk' appear in the *Morte* often indicate a passage that has been edited in direct response to late fifteenth-century anxieties over the Ottoman Turks. See Roland, 'Arthur and the Turks', p. 36. Quotations can be found at [Winchester MS, fol. 90v, l.1314] and [Caxton sig i.viii (v), ll. 37–38]. For a line-by-line comparison, see Margaret Mary Roland, 'Material Malory: the Caxton and Winchester Documents and a Parallel-Text Edition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Washington, 2002), pp. 256–57. On the comparison between Malory's *Morte Darthur* and his sources, see Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, vol. III, pp. 1400–01.

Knight, likewise, is entrusted with making his own way to King Pepin, rather than being escorted by either Valentine or Orson. The promise of conversion in the Heroic Heathen encounters is a tangible, powerful force, and one that inspires an immediate and obvious faith. In a notable distinction from the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Malory's Roman War ends the Priamus encounter by demonstrating the almost-visible nature of this conversion. Priamus is brought before Arthur, who can immediately see that Priamus differs from the other prisoners, 'for presonere is he non lyke' (*Morte*, 185.9). The power of the Heroic Heathen's newfound faith is further evident through his ability to convert others. Fierabras promises Charlemagne that not only will he convert, but that through this action 'many sarasyns shal be maad crysten' (*Charles*, 84.24). Far later in *Valentine and Orson*, when Valentine and the Green Knight are captured having fought side by side, the capturing sultan believes it foolish to send them to the Saracen King Ferragus as prisoners because 'this knyght hath lefte our law and made hym to be christened' (*Valentine*, 176.3–4).

The final motif of the Heroic Heathen meme is the converted Saracen's longevity within the chivalric community he has joined. Once accepted into the community, the Heroic Heathen becomes a respected member of his chivalric court, featuring as frequently in future battles as other members. Crucially, his loyalty is never doubted, unlike Saracens like Ascopard in *Bevis of Hampton*. In *Valentine and Orson*, Valentine's prowess in battle is matched by the Green Knight's, and the two become close friends on the further crusades of the text: together, 'they hewed downe the chefe standarde of the false paynims and sarazyns' (*Valentine*, 174.2–3). In *Charles the Grete*, Fierabras chooses the chivalric community over his own Saracen family. When Charlemagne is considering how to treat with Fierabras's father, Balan, Fierabras remarks that if his father refuses to engage then 'I shal neuer praye for hym, ne haue

pyte of hym, though I see hym hewen and deye' (*Charles*, 185.28–29). This statement holds true as Ogier later 'smote of hys heed & Fyerabras pardoned hym gladly' (197.31–32). Balan, having never been presented as the honourable and chivalrous figure Fierabras was from his introduction, can never fulfil the Heroic Heathen ending of conversion. Balan meets a violent end, in stark contrast to that of Heroic Heathens like his son, whose actions are rewarded and praised for the remainder of their lives.

Heroic Heathens are also frequently granted some of the most unambiguously—and uncharacteristically—happy endings in the genre. In texts that conclude with generally unhappy endings, depicting societal collapse or social disorder, Heroic Heathens are rewarded with lands, titles, and long lives.⁷⁹ Their conversions are optimistic, representative of Christendom's ability to expand and conquer heathen, Saracen lands and forces. They offer an opposite perspective to the cynicism inherent in depictions of civil wars like the end of the *Morte Darthur*. At the end of the prose Roman War campaign Arthur singles out Priamus to receive specific reward, despite not doing so for any other knight originally of his fellowship and not doing so in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. These others are granted lands, though not by name, and Priamus is paid a 'fee' Arthur feels he is owed:

'Where art thou, Priamus? Thy fee is yet behynde. Here I make the
deuke and gyff the the deukedom of Lorayne for ever unto the and
thyne ayres; and whan we com into Ingleonde, for to purvey the of
horse-mete, a thousande ponde quarterly, for to mayntene thy
servauntes. So thou leve not my felyship, this gyffte ys thyne owne'.
(*Morte*, 188.20–25)

⁷⁹ As Helen Cooper notes, these romances emerge from 'secular epics of legendary histories that do not offer any expectation of happiness at their conclusion'. Megan Leitch further explores how the late medieval prose romances demonstrate an emphasis on secular didacticism in their unhappy endings. See Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 362–63; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 184–86.

Fierabras is likewise rewarded at the point of baptism, when the narrative voice reveals at this early point that ‘at the laste ende of hys dayes he was a saynt and god shewed for hym myracles’ (*Charles*, 85.15–16). The Green Knight’s fate, in *Valentine and Orson*, is not considered until the text’s end, but he is granted land to govern and, upon outlasting both eponymous characters, the honour of raising Orson’s children to ‘gouverne the Empyre of grece’ (*Valentine*, 327.15–16), the seat of the Eastern Christian church.

In the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century prose romances, therefore, the Heroic Heathen encounter is marked by both violence and acceptance. These texts show continuity with earlier English verse in the way they represent Saracen knights as martial threats but chivalric individuals. However, the prose romances are distinctive in their treatment of the Saracen knights after the combat encounter, representing them as individuals who desire—and indeed deserve—conversion. In the prose romances, this encounter is more than an opportunity to inflict a blow upon a Saracen Other and assert Christian martial supremacy. It is a measured response to the contemporary anxieties of the late medieval English readership who, as I have explored in Chapter One, were already well-acquainted with crusade and conversion in printed literature.⁸⁰ When Heroic Heathens are converted, they strengthen and expand the boundaries of Christendom in geographical and ideological terms. They provide a model of crusade against the Ottoman Turks which emphasises reclamation, rather than destruction, of lands and people alike.

⁸⁰ Further still, as Nall has discussed extensively, the notion that England’s internal, civil issues might be remedied by uniting on an external crusade was also commonplace by the time the prose romances were printed. See Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 48–74.

PALOMIDES IN *LE MORTE D'ARTHUR*: THE HEROIC HEATHEN AT HOME

Malory's Palomides is perhaps the best known 'good Saracen knight' of the prose romances, but he is also the most distinctive from the others discussed.⁸¹ Whilst still demonstrating many of the motifs common to the meme, Palomides is already 'well cherysshed with the kyng and the queene' (302.15) and actually seeks conversion from the start. The character stems from the thirteenth-century prose *Tristan* cycle, and Malory is the first to bring him into an English Arthurian text.⁸² Palomides resides within the chivalric 'home' in Western European Christendom, which demonstrates Christendom's allure to chivalric individuals. His association with the Saracen East is therefore not geographic: he is not found on crusade, like Fierabras, the Green Knight, or Priamus. Rather, his Saracen identity is located in his name and religion. He is 'a Sarysen' (524.13), 'Sir Palomydes the Sarasyn' (302.14), and 'Sir Palomydes, that is yet uncrystened, a noble knyght' (565.22–23). Despite Palomides' own insistence that 'in my harte I am crystynde, and crystynde woll I be' (527.12–13), the reader cannot forget that he is an outsider.

Although Palomides' goal is to win Isolde's love, it is repeatedly denied to him. A more tangible goal, and one that he actually achieves, is membership of the Round Table. For Priamus, elsewhere in the *Morte*, the challenge of finding one that 'hath gevyn me of fyghtyng my fylle' (178.26) is goal enough, with the reward of conversion treated as an afterthought. For Palomides, though, inclusion in the chivalric community is something to strive for, and whilst he acknowledges the need for conversion, it can happen only on his terms: 'I may nat be crystynde tyll I have done seven trewe bataylis

⁸¹ Description of Palomides as 'the good Saracen knight' from Armstrong, 'Postcolonial Palomides', p. 177.

⁸² Nina Dulin-Mallory, "'Seven trewe bataylis for Jesus sake': The Long-Suffering Saracen Palomides", in *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), pp. 165–72 (p. 166). On the sources for the Tristan tale, see Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, vol. III, p. 1449.

for Jesus sake' (527.13–15). As Nina Dulin-Mallory suggests, Palomides seems to have no intention of deemphasising his status as a heathen Other.⁸³ He seeks conversion and acceptance, but it is only his own repeated deferral of baptism that thwarts any progress and ensures his identity is marked by the title of 'Saracen'. Even while Palomides' prowess is praised throughout the chivalric community, scorn is cast upon his identity: Arthur remarks of Palomides' victories that it is a 'grete dispyte that suche a Sarysen shall smyte downe my blood' (524.12–13). However, these victories are significant in moving Palomides towards complete membership of the chivalric community through conversion, even if only in fulfilling his personal goal. For other Heroic Heathen figures, such as Fierabras or the Green Knight, such victories are unnecessary: the Heroic Heathen conventionally fights a single bout of combat and, even in defeat, marks himself out from the Saracen crowd as the Christian knight's chivalric equal. Acceptance there comes through conversion, which the Heroic Heathen willingly seeks after the single combat. That Palomides defers his conversion so repeatedly, whilst yearning so desperately for inclusion, proves troubling to the community in a way unlike other Saracens such as Priamus.⁸⁴

Palomides' conversion comes not after multiple triumphs but multiple defeats, at the hands of the Christian community he wishes to join. Just as the Green Knight seeks one that 'by strength of armes maye wyn thy doughter agaynst me' (*Valentine*, 82.21–22), so too must Palomides suffer both physical and chivalric defeat before he converts. His first defeat at Tristram's hands, shortly after his introduction, is insufficient. In this encounter, Palomides is concerned only that he has been 'shamed' (*Morte*, 305.18), and he is presented with a secular demand rather than a spiritual one: not conversion, but

⁸³ Dulin-Mallory, 'The Long-Suffering Saracen', p. 169.

⁸⁴ Armstrong, 'Postcolonial Palomides', p. 177.

banishment, ‘othir here shalt thou dye’ (305.16–17). Though Palomides faces Tristram on numerous occasions throughout the text, and suffers as many defeats, it is the final fight that holds the most significance. After combat abates, Palomides remarks that he has ‘no grete luste to fyght no more, and for thys cause’ (663.8), finally requesting that Tristram ‘se youreselff that I be truly baptysed’ (663.22). This defeat is more than martial; it is an acknowledgement that suitable chivalric challenge might only be found when fighting for Christendom, and an understanding that Christian faith and chivalric prowess are inseparable.

UNCONVENTIONAL HEROIC HEATHENS

The prose romances also feature some characters who fit the mould of the Heroic Heathen but who lack a conventional aspect – the Saracen faith. Paris, in Caxton’s *Paris and Vienne* (c. 1490), and Orson, in *Valentine and Orson* (c. 1510), are both of Christian lineage and, by adventure or misadventure, move beyond the chivalric community before being reclaimed by it. Paris remains Christian throughout, but Orson is technically heathen because he has never been baptised.

Paris’s journey, in *Paris and Vienne*, is a crusading journey into Saracen lands to ‘see the holy sayntuaryes / & for tacomplysshe the holy pylgremage’ (*Paris*, 59.21–22). Paris submits fully to exploring the Saracen lands by learning Saracen languages and taking on the appearance of the romance Saracen whilst ‘alle waye faste byleue in our lord Ihesu Cryste’ (*Paris*, 59.18).⁸⁵ The change required to disguise as a Saracen is substantial, incorporating physical, linguistic, and cultural aspects:

he lerned for to speke the langage of moors / And whan Parys coude
wel speke mouryske / he and his varlet took the waye toward ynde /

⁸⁵ The generalisation of ‘Saracen’ in this text is indicative of a belief that alterity stemmed from culture, within which religion played a component part. See Kinoshita, ‘Pagans are Wrong’, p. 81.

Ande so ferre laboured by theyr Journeys / that they arryued in the
londe of prester Iohan / In whyche he dwelled a longe tyme And in
that whyle hys berde grewe longe / and after he took the habyte of a
more / and also lerned alle the custommes and maners of the contree.
(*Paris*, 59.11–17)

The extent to which Paris must change to pass as Saracen is in stark contrast to the ease with which converting Saracen knights and princesses can integrate into the Christian community. *Paris* here demonstrates cultural crossing from the opposite direction to that of other prose romances. The passage highlights the extent to which Heroic Heathens, who do not struggle with language barriers, and Saracen princesses, pale and fair-haired, are remarkably appropriate for conversion for their closeness to the hegemonic self of the Christian, Western European readership.⁸⁶ Paris's disguise is a means of concealing this identity. When he is embraced by the 'grace of the souldan' (60.23–24) at the Saracen court, he is further decorated with 'ryche clothes & vestymentes of cloth of golde and of sylke' (65.17–18) to demonstrate the exotic alterity of the Saracen world.⁸⁷

Paris's time at the Sultan's court sees him more closely aligned with converting Saracen princesses than Heroic Heathens. He resolves to free Vienne's father from Saracen imprisonment in order to win Vienne's hand, in a parallel to the Saracen princesses who free Christian knights whom they love. Paris visits the jail on the premise of having 'good wylle to the crysten men' (64.16–17), indicating that Saracens with Christian sympathies are an expected part of the genre. Like Floripas, who across many versions of the Fierabras story slays her father's jailer to rescue the Christian knights, Paris 'slewe alle the kepars' (69.21) to ensure Vienne's father's escape. From

⁸⁶ See the thesis introduction for further discussion. Kinoshita, 'Pagans are Wrong', p. 83; Heng, *The Invention of Race*; Ormrod, Lambert, and Mackman, *Immigrant England, 1300–1550*, pp. 187–92.

⁸⁷ In particular, mention of lavish materials and clothing is indicative of a distant culture being considered exotic and interesting. For further discussion of exoticism and the Far East/'Near' East, see Freedman, 'Locating the Exotic', p. 28; Mittman and Kim, 'Monsters and the Medieval Exotic', pp. 680–81.

the perspective of this Christian captive, Paris is a Saracen individual seeking not conversion but wealth: Paris agrees to help upon the promise that the Dauphin will ‘mayntene hym in more gretter estate than he ne is here’ (68.10–11). The plot is, ultimately, a ploy to win Vienne’s hand, and one that Paris maintains until the very end by negotiating Vienne as his reward. Whilst Vienne takes some convincing, she agrees to marry Paris upon the condition that he ‘become crysten’ (72.14) in a sequence that draws comparison with the conversion agreements of Floripas, Esclarmonde and Clerimonde. Whilst Paris’s journey sees him in disguise as a Saracen warrior, and one who is held in high esteem by the Sultan’s court, his return to Christendom mirrors the conversion sequences of Saracen princesses rather than Saracen knights. His encounter, therefore, demonstrates how the Heroic Heathen encounter meme can be developed whilst it is replicated and how it continues to respond, in its various forms, to cultural concerns over knightly movement between Christendom and the East.

Orson, of *Valentine and Orson*, is closer to a conventional Heroic Heathen encounter. Born of a royal lineage that binds together the Kingdom of France and the Empire of Constantinople, Orson is lost at birth and raised by bears in ‘an euydent myracle’ (*Valentine*, 38.4). He is an outsider from the court who must be tamed and christened in order to discover his lineage. Orson’s progression from savage to knight explores aspects of the Heroic Heathen meme concerned with taming and assimilating an outside threat, drawing upon fifteenth-century humanist descriptions of Turks and Muslims as barbaric.⁸⁸ Nancy Bisaha describes the distorted humanist beliefs of this period that the Turks, particularly following the capture of Constantinople, were considered as ‘culturally inferior to European civilization’—the barbaric destroyers of

⁸⁸ Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent*, p. 152.

culture and civilization.⁸⁹ Orson, despite being born to the Christian Empress of the East, is barbaric: a ‘wylde man’ (64.28) known to civilised courts as ‘ledang the life of a wilde beaste, without wering of any cloth, or any worde speaking’ (38.26–27). Orson is infamous for his fearsome martial prowess and his monstrous crimes of theft, murder and rape: ‘the wilde man came and toke al frome vs and ete it, and more ouer he toke my wife and dyde twyes his wyl with her’ (64.30–32). King Pepin laments that ‘by hym is deed many valyaunt men’ (66.12), in a statement of deeds comparable with the boasts by which Heroic Heathens introduce themselves. Though Orson does not (and cannot) communicate these deeds himself, his identity is well known amongst chivalric society.

Orson must be defeated in single combat before he can join the Christian court, just like the more conventional Heroic Heathen of this text – the Green Knight. Of the three most important Christian knights in *Valentine and Orson* (Valentine, Orson, and the Green Knight), Valentine alone begins the tale as both Christian and chivalric. Valentine’s vow to ‘neuer reste in no place tyll that I haue founde the wylde man’ (65.36) leads him to fight Orson in a battle as difficult and mutually-destructive as his encounter with the Green Knight. Whilst Orson is of Christian heritage, he was born in the forest and has not been formally christened, and is technically a heathen. The reader is reminded of this when Valentine makes ‘the sygn of the crosse in recommaunding him vnto god’ (68.17–18) before the encounter, as is common for Christian knights preparing to fight Saracen foes. In combat, the parallel between the Saracen knight’s prowess and Orson’s barbarism is most clear: whilst Valentine fights with ‘sword’ and ‘sharpe poynted knyfe’ (68.18 and 30–31), Orson is capable of matching him through brute strength, using ‘his nailes’ (69.8) to strike blows with comparable strength and skill. Orson is ‘so cruel [and] so strong that he would haue slaine Valentyne dyuers

⁸⁹ Bisaha, ““New Barbarian” or Worthy Adversary?”, p. 187.

tymes' (69.25–26), had Valentine not the advantages granted to him by chivalric society: a sword and armour.⁹⁰ By the end of the encounter they are both 'wery and strongly trauayled' (69.29), but Valentine is able to convince Orson that he shall 'make the be baptized, and shall teache the, the holy fayth' (69.35–36), drawing the encounter to a close upon Orson's surrender. As Dorothy Yamamoto suggests, this surrender is a 'submission to the dominant code' of a Christian, chivalric life, a code to which Orson has been repeatedly attracted during the combat as he marvels at Valentine's colourful armaments.⁹¹

Conversion in the Heroic Heathen encounter is conventionally a lengthy process, ensuring the presence of the newly-converted knight throughout the crusading narrative. Orson's integration into the chivalric community is similarly lengthy, but his Christian lineage means that this process is primarily about taming a barbarian. His journey from wild man to Christian knight occurs through a series of small steps, beginning with food and drink. Orson initially drinks from a caldron, 'in the which he put in his head and dronke as a horse doth at the ryuer' (71.28–29), before Valentine introduces him to more courtly refreshments and mannerisms. Soon, 'Orson shewed hym by sygnes that the wyne was better then the water' (72.3–4). When Orson is eventually brought to court and baptised, 'Valentyne serued him of the cuppe, for that was his offyce' (74.12–13). Here, the act of baptism is not the same defining narrative point as in other Heroic Heathen encounters, and Orson's maturation continues until he can express himself fully through chivalric deeds. Upon first being armed, Orson 'behelde himselfe strongly, and kepte a proud countenance' (96.9–10), as if it were natural to him, and on first being made able to speak, he is able to do so 'veray ryght and pleasauntly' (144.9–

⁹⁰ For further discussion of Orson's barbarism in combat against chivalric opponents, see Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 188–95.

⁹¹ Yamamoto, *Boundaries of the Human*, p. 190.

10). By the halfway point of the text, he is fully integrated into the chivalric community, so 'wyse and well taught in maners' (157.3) that he may dine amongst his fellow knights. By the narrative's end, 'Emperour Orson' (320.22) of Greece takes his rightful place at the seat of Constantinople. Orson's remarkable progression, from wild man to knight to emperor, is not a conventional Heroic Heathen encounter because of his Christian lineage. As a man born to the King of France and Empress of Constantinople, Orson's place in a crusading narrative is to serve as a Christian and chivalric link that might bind together Eastern and Western Christianity. The means by which he reaches this point, however, parallels the Green Knight's conversion and the conversion of other Heroic Heathen characters throughout the prose romances.

CONCLUSION: THE SHIFT TOWARDS CONVERSION

The late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century printed prose romances replicate and build upon some of the memes already common to romance in the way they address encounters with Saracens. The encounters with Saracen princesses in these texts are consistent with those in earlier verse romances, where conversion is the anticipated ending. The encounters with Saracen knights, or Heroic Heathens, move from favouring Saracen execution in earlier verse romances towards favouring their conversion in fifteenth-century texts. These two styles of encounter demonstrate how the prose romances both drew upon and adapted the established traditions of the genre to speak to a range of contemporary concerns.

The Floripas encounter in *Charles the Grete* shares much with earlier English versions in *Firumbras*, *Sir Ferumbras*, and *The Sowdone of Babylon*, demonstrating in each iteration that Saracen individuals can request and receive conversion if they prove

themselves well-aligned with Christian morality.⁹² Esclarmonde's and Clerimonde's conversions likewise draw upon the conventions of this meme, even when some elements are re-ordered, as in *Valentine and Orson*. These Saracen princesses are morally and physically attuned with Christendom from their very introductions, and the extended nature of their conversion sequences keeps at the forefront the need to recapture and reclaim spaces and bodies alike on crusade. Whilst the prose romances treat Saracen princesses in the same way as earlier verse romances, there is a notable distinction in the way they treat Saracen knights. The Heroic Heathen encounters in the prose romances draw upon established conventions of Christian knights defeating powerful Saracens, but they develop the meme in a way that responds to contemporary crusading interests in conversion and assimilation. Where the earlier verse romances are hesitant to allow Saracens like Ascopard access to the full Christian world that a conversion would offer, the prose romances embrace Heroic Heathens like Fierabras and the Green Knight as models of how Saracen forces might be defeated in a way that explicitly strengthens Christian crusading aims.

In selecting and printing prose romances that replicate, adjust, and subvert memes already common in English romance, Caxton and de Worde cultivated a subgenre that spoke to the concerns of contemporary English audiences. The optimism with which these romances convert Saracen knights as a means of extending the boundaries of Christendom into unknown Eastern lands stands in direct contrast to the cynicism with which these late prose romances frequently depict internal struggles and civil war.⁹³ As Chapter One has argued, this audience were of a generation familiar with

⁹² However, as is discussed in Chapter Four, *Charles the Grete* frames some parts of this encounter in more explicitly supernatural terms than any of the earlier verse versions. There are, therefore, distinctions between the encounter in English prose and in English verse, but these do not directly relate to the Saracen princess or the process by which she converts to Christianity.

⁹³ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 362–63; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 184–86.

the internal strife of the Wars of the Roses and with the after-effects of the Hundred Years War. They were of a social class interested in and capable of purchasing printed books, and who might be most concerned about the fracturing of a Christian community. This shift in the way that their reading material represents Saracen individuals is significant, and suggests the way in which the prose romances offered crusade as a solution to both the Ottoman Empire's expansion and the need to reaffirm and unite English and Christian identities. Read alongside other similar adaptations in the prose romances, such as in the representation of spaces and of the supernatural (as discussed in the following two chapters), this change forms part of a wider literary movement in which romances are adapted for late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English readerships.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ARCHITECTURAL EAST

The crusading narratives of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English prose romances are intrinsically concerned with capturing and converting significant spaces. These spaces are organisational nodes in the crusade narratives: they offer protection as structures and, when converted, expand the influence of Christendom to push back against an expanding East. Each bridge won, or tower infiltrated, or city taken by force, further encourages the reader—who is invited to see such episodes as microcosmic of the crusading goal of capturing cities such as Jerusalem or Constantinople—of both the significance and the achievability of contemporary crusading desires.

This chapter examines how the prose romances treat architectural spaces that are initially controlled by Saracens, and approach conversion of such spaces as a goal in itself. In some prose romances, notably including *Godeffroy of Boloyne* and *Charles the Grete*, architecture plays a central role: towers, keeps, bridges, and cities punctuate the landscape and act as markers of crusaders' progress. I begin by considering late medieval depictions of place through the lens of spatial theory, before discussing how the prose romances pay more attention than earlier verse romances to the ideological significance of architectural features. This chapter then considers three types of space frequently represented in the prose romances: towers, which act as ideological bastions and control centres; bridges and gateways, which are both contested structures and points of spatial crossing; and cities, which are the ultimate crusading goals of both the prose romance narratives and the real-world campaigns that Caxton's paratexts encourage. This chapter's final section on aesthetics examines how visual representation of all of these structures can act as a marker for the set of beliefs they contain. The description of bridges and towers as exotic and threatening reinforces the perceived alterity of the Saracens who own them.

SPATIAL THEORY AND SPACE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

This chapter draws on spatial theory to examine how architectural structures in the prose romances enclose space that is associated with a set of religious and cultural beliefs. I draw upon the work of twentieth-century theorists including Georg Simmel and Henri Lefebvre to distinguish between *place*, as the physical location, and *space*, as the ideological charge of that location, shaped by (and shaping) its occupants.¹ The crusading prose romances frequently feature *places* of interest as physical bastions, such as bridges, towers, and cities, but their real concern is the conversion of *spaces* in order to expand Christendom's influence. As Simmel argues convincingly in his essay, 'Bridge and Door', the material nature of architectural elements—the *place*—is a physical expression of how we construct the significance of a space, making visible the boundaries and separations that structure our experience.² The castles and cities of the prose romances are both physical structures and spaces of power, in much the same way that Christendom in these texts is both a nebulous geographical area and an aspirational idea of religious unity and dominance. Both Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja have considered the notion of 'third space' ('social space' and 'lived space' are alternative and more productive titles in this instance), in which a physical space is created, owned and purposed through the worldviews of those that inhabit it.³ The power of a space is shaped by the Christian or Saracen bodies that occupy it and their ideological leanings.

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, repr. 1996).

² Georg Simmel, 'Bridge and Door', in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 11 (1994), 5–10. See also Georg Simmel, 'The Social Boundary', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 24 (2007), 53–56 (Originally published as 'Exkurs über die soziale Begrenzung' in *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* in 1908).

³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 11, 73, and 84–85; Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places* (Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996). For further information, particularly on Lefebvre's triple division of space that begins this discussion, see John Allen, *Lost Geographies of Power* (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 159–62.

Recent critical work has built upon Lefebvre's notions of social space to consider power and dominion in urban spaces.⁴ These discussions are relevant to the prose romances as these texts regularly privilege urban spaces over those of wilderness and forest otherwise customary in the genre.⁵ Derek Gregory builds upon Lefebvre's argument that 'symbolic space' was not fully constructed until Western European feudalism, suggesting the cathedral as an example of a space that is both social and symbolic.⁶ The physical structures of the crusading prose romances are defined by this same religious and cultural symbolism despite not being spaces of worship. Gregory's discussion of skyscrapers as capital-driven spaces that dominate a skyline can also be applied to how towers in the prose romances are imposing landmarks that bolster or resist the hegemonic religious ideology of their surroundings.⁷ John Urry's work on spatial power in cities is helpful for its use of modern sociological developments like the dimension of time, because the cities of the prose romances are coded by the ideological beliefs of their citizens.⁸ Moving beyond sociological fields, Kim Knott has considered spatial theory alongside religious studies and suggests a framework for the analysis of a place in terms of its spatial attributes.⁹ Knott also emphasises the body as central to social life, and 'foundational for human experience of space'.¹⁰ Bodies encode spaces in ideological ways and impose upon them a purpose, and the prose romances demonstrate how spaces can be converted by removing Saracen bodies.

⁴ For a broad overview, see Allen, *Lost Geographies of Power*, pp. 159–88.

⁵ See Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993).

⁶ Gregory's discussions of spatial power, alongside Simmel's ideas on rooms and doorways, are explored in greater detail during this chapter's consideration of Saracen towers. See Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 387–88.

⁷ Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*, pp. 334–35; Claude Bragdon, *Architecture and Democracy* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1918).

⁸ John Urry, 'The Sociology of Space and Place', in *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, ed. by Judith R. Blau (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), pp. 1–15.

⁹ Kim Knott, 'Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion', *Temenos*, 41.2 (2005), 153–84; Kim Knott, 'Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion', *Religion Compass*, 2.6 (2008), 1102–16.

¹⁰ Knott, 'Spatial Theory and Method', p. 158.

While spatial theory was not developed with a view towards applying it to medieval literature, many of its core principles can be applied to medieval texts, as Keith Lilley asserts: by reconceptualising medieval spaces in light of modern theory, or through our interpretation of medieval socio-political theory.¹¹ This chapter applies modern theoretical perspectives to the imagined medieval spaces of prose romances – literary representations of the East. Existing scholarship in this area focuses largely on urban identity: for example, Megan Cassidy-Welch draws together scholarship on space, identity and gender in relation to the medieval city space.¹² Other work on medieval space likewise uses distinct structures such as cities or churches to show how, in the Middle Ages, ‘space carried meanings’ just as it does now.¹³ Spaces often organise the narratives of popular medieval romance. Chaucer’s *Knights’ Tale*, for example, is organised through two distinct, architectural images of the prison tower with garden and the amphitheatre;¹⁴ *Gawain and the Green Knight* is likewise organised through juxtapositions between Camelot, the wild forest, castle Hautdesert and the Green Chapel. The importance of Christian priorities in chivalric literature means that some of these symbolic spaces are religious ones, which have their own spatial rules governing what is permitted within. The same sort of spatial rules would already be familiar to any reader or scribe familiar with Church or monastic settings.¹⁵ The crusading narratives of the prose romances do not frequently feature churches or

¹¹ Keith Lilley, ‘Mapping Cosmopolis: Moral Topographies of the Medieval City’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22 (2004), 681–98 (pp. 682–83). See also Robert Grinnell, ‘The Theoretical Attitude towards Space in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 21.1 (1946), 141–157 (pp. 142–46).

¹² Cassidy-Welch, ‘Space and Place in Medieval Contexts’, pp. 6–7.

¹³ Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka, ‘Introduction’, in *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (London: University of Minneapolis, 2000), pp. ix–xviii (quotation from p. x).

¹⁴ V. A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 86.

¹⁵ As Valerie Flint notes, monks were expected to moderate their behaviour based on spaces in a monastery in a way that instilled specific religious spaces with moral values. Valerie I. J. Flint, ‘Space and Discipline in Early Medieval Europe’, in *Medieval Practices of Space*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and Michal Kobialka (London: University of Minneapolis, 2000), pp. 149–66.

monasteries, given that much of the crusading action takes place in the Saracen East, but many of their other spaces like bridges and towers are imbued with religious significance through their roles in the crusading narratives.

This thesis considers the architectural spaces that are most prominent in the prose romances and their crusading journeys. Castles, therefore, are only infrequently mentioned. As Molly A. Martin's recent book, *Castles and Space in Malory's Morte Darthur*, demonstrates, castles are interesting spaces in which political, communal, domestic and martial identities are negotiated. However, while the castle spaces that Martin explores are the centres of political and domestic life in the *Morte*, they do not feature the same conflicts of religious and political identity common to other architectural spaces in the prose romances. They are only rarely encountered in these crusading narratives, where the centres of political power in the East are more often depicted as cities. When castles do feature in the prose romances, the texts focus instead on specific parts of the structure such as the central tower or the bridge at the entrance. Martin also builds upon Lefebvre's and Soja's discussions of social space, preferring to use the term 'space', which she suggests 'encompasses the physical (in particular, the architectural) and social in ways that 'place' does not'.¹⁶ The distinction between *space* and *place* is, however, important to this thesis, because both play fundamental roles in the prose romances: the physical architecture (or the *place*) in prose is a marker of crusading progress on a physical landscape, and the metaphorical control of this place (or the *space*) provides a model of how crusaders can convert and repurpose the world around them to the benefit of Christianity.

¹⁶ Molly A. Martin, *Castles and Space in Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019), p. 16.

ARCHITECTURE IN THE PROSE ROMANCES

The printed prose romances present architectural and ideologically-charged spaces distinctly, as compared to earlier English verse romances. Most notably, the prose romances foreground these spaces as part of the crusading narratives. Earlier English verse romances do sometimes feature significant cities, but they do not generally focus on specific architectural elements or the need to convert spaces within the city. *The Siege of Melayne* is a rare exception: the text begins with the Lord of Milan and Charlemagne sharing dream visions, in which angels give them crusading instructions with direct relation to the architecture of Milan. The Lord of Milan's vision begins with an angel standing directly on city walls: 'Than herde by hym on a walle / Ane angelle that unto hym gane saye...'.¹⁷ In Charlemagne's parallel vision, the connection is made more explicit, as the angel appears to tear down the city walls: 'The walles abowte Melayne townne / Hym thoghte the angele dange tham downn' (*Melayne*, ll. 127–28). This example is uncommon among other late medieval English verse romances for its focus on specific architectural features. This focus does, however, reflect the extent to which *Melayne* is intrinsically concerned with the religious resonances of significant spaces.

In the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century printed prose romances, description of specific architectural elements is far more common. Structures in the prose romances are often non-specific representations of the Saracen East, but they can also be imagined versions of real places. While some readers may have had real experience of significant places like Constantinople and Jerusalem, most of the bridges, gateways, castles and towers in the texts are fictional creations, intended to convey a

¹⁷ *The Siege of Milan*, ed. by Alan Lupack (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1990), ll. 90–91. Henceforth *Melayne*.

general idea of the power and alterity of those who inhabit the East.¹⁸ This does not make them inaccurate, however; the First Crusade led to an increase in the number of defensive structures built in the East, which were often constructed in the style of European castles.¹⁹ While there are interesting comparisons possible between the architectural styles of the Christian and Islamic worlds, this chapter concentrates instead on the control and conversion of space in the crusading prose romances.²⁰ Here, occupying a defensive structure provides an important place of refuge but also demonstrates Christendom's capacity to recapture other crusading targets.

While architectural spaces organise journeys in medieval romance more broadly, the English prose romances also pay more attention than their earlier, verse counterparts to the ideological significance of these spaces.²¹ These organisational spaces are urban, constructed settings that can be contested and won. When knights in the crusading prose romances venture through mysterious lands, they seek places that are created by and significant to people: a city like Jerusalem, that is spiritually significant, or a castle, from which Saracen control of the land is established. *Le Morte Darthur* offers an interesting combination: while some Tales employ the wilderness and forest settings

¹⁸ Jeffrey Cohen discusses literary representations of the East as one of the only ways that late medieval readers would be able to 'visit' such distant lands. See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Pilgrimages, Travel Writing, and the Medieval Exotic', in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, ed. by Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 610–28 (p. 613).

¹⁹ Nasser Rabbat, 'The Militarization of Taste in Bilad Al-Sham', in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. by Hugh Kennedy (Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 84–105 (p. 88); Andrew Cowell, 'The Subjectivity of Space: Walls and Castles in *La Prise d'Orange*', in *Locating the Middle Ages: The Spaces and Places of Medieval Culture*, ed. by Julian Weiss and Sarah Salih (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2012), pp. 185–96 (pp. 185 and 192).

²⁰ Some comparison between Christian and Saracen structures features later in this chapter during the discussion of castles and fortifications, this is not the primary objective of my work. For an overview of the changes made during the later medieval period, and comparison of Eastern and Western structural styles, see John France, 'Fortifications East and West', in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. by Hugh Kennedy (Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 281–94; Benjamin Michaudel, 'The Development of Islamic Military Architecture during the Ayyubid and Mamluk Reconquests of Frankish Syria', in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. by Hugh Kennedy (Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 106–21; Robert Ousterhout, 'The East, the West, and the Appropriation of the Past in Early Ottoman Architecture', *Gesta*, 43.2 (2004), 165–76 (p. 170).

²¹ Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, pp. 85–157.

common in English romance more broadly, other Tales share with contemporary crusading romances their focus on urban, architectural spaces. In the Tale of Gareth, the eponymous knight journeys through the forest of romance and engages in combat that directly involves the wild landscape: in one bout, he even fights directly ‘in the myddys of the watir’ (*Morte*, 231.18–19). The forest of romance is likewise as central to Malory’s *Sankgreal* as it is to earlier versions of the Grail Quest; as Corinne Saunders suggests, the forests of Malory’s *Morte* begin as geographically realistic spaces but become, as the narrative unfolds, a ‘landscape associated with the strange powers of destiny and *aventure* which shape the Arthurian world’.²² The parts of *Le Morte Darthur* that focus on crusade—the Roman War episode and the final lines of Malory’s eighth and final book—instead parallel how space is used elsewhere in the prose romances: in his crusade against Lucius, Arthur ‘wynnys towrys and townys full hyghe’ (187.15) until his coronation in ‘the cite of Syon that is Rome callyd’ (*Morte*, 187.27). The crusade is one of architectural progress through an urban landscape, and encounters take place upon and over man-made structures.

In some cases, the prose romances are explicit in the imagined nature of their spaces, even when dealing with locations of real-world contemporary significance. The prison tower of Alexandria as depicted in *Paris and Vienne*, for example, could be a reference to the Lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.²³ This tower is described as ‘an hard and stronge toure’ in ‘Alysaundrye’ (*Paris*, 62.25), without further detail. The indefinite article, ‘an’, rather than the definite ‘the’, is Caxton’s accurate translation of his source material.²⁴ However, Caxton later departs

²² Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance*, pp. 123 and 164–65.

²³ Mary Rebecca Bynum, ‘Teaching the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World’, *The Classical Journal*, 92.3 (1997), 271–77; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, ‘The Islamic History of the Lighthouse of Alexandria’, *Muqarnas*, 23 (2006), 1–14.

²⁴ Leach, in his transcription of Caxton’s text, suggests that Caxton’s version is closest to a French print by Leeu in 1487, and to manuscript B. N. fr. 20044. This manuscript confirms the indefinite article of ‘un

from his source at a crucial point in his translation to specify that Paris passes this ‘toure where the dolphyn was in pryson’ (65.36–37). Here, the source (B.N. fr. 20044) instead refers to Paris merely passing an unspecified structure, the ‘tour au milieu de la cite’, or the tower ‘in the middle of the city’, which is presumably not a lighthouse.²⁵ Caxton’s translation makes clear that the significant tower space in *Paris and Vienne*, which is the subject of a particularly lengthy episode, cannot be the tower most notably associated with the real city of Alexandria. Therefore, like other structures in the prose romances, this tower is an imagined space through which *Paris and Vienne* explores the religious and political implications of spatial control.

PILLARS OF FAITH: TOWERS AS SYMBOLIC SPACES

Towers are defensive structures and places of containment that separate their internal space as a prison or refuge, distinct from the religious and cultural ‘others’ of the outside world. In the prose romances, these binaries are represented by the crusading war between Christendom and the Saracens.²⁶ Georg Simmel’s discussion of rooms and internal space is useful here: he argues that the significant action of the first dwelling-builders was not the creation of physical structures; more importantly, they ‘cut a portion out of the continuity and infinity of space and arranged this into a particular

[...] fourde tour’, or ‘a strong tower’. See Leach, ‘Introduction’, p. xxii. See also Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, B.N. fr. 20044, fol.h4 r., [*Roman de Paris et Vienne*], Accessed online on 11/08/2016 at < <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10721305x> >. Translation mine.

²⁵ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, B.N. fr. 20044, fol.h6 v. Translation mine.

²⁶ As I have explored in the introduction to this thesis, this view of Christians and Saracens as broad, super-national entities is in concordance with fifteenth-century crusading discussions. Whilst there was no formal notion of a unified Western, Christian Europe that was not marred by internal, political struggles, the concept of crusade brings together groups of people (which cannot, at this early point, be accurately labelled as ‘nations’ or ‘states’) into a single community of Christendom, defined against what it is not: the Saracen, Eastern ‘Other’ of the Ottoman Empire. See Paul Strohm, *Politique* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), particularly pp. 238–39; Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity*, pp. 55–57.

unity in accordance with a single meaning'.²⁷ In the prose romances, this 'single meaning' is the resistant space inside the tower, set against the religious and cultural hegemonic ideology outside it, and it is rarely won by force: physical walls prevent intrusion and allow the space to stand strong against mounting ideological pressure from outside. Towers are captured instead through diplomacy, subterfuge, or betrayal. They are unidirectionally permeable, and the beliefs they represent depend upon the actions of the bodies *within* them rather than the actions of those outside. Towers are converted when the controlling individuals, be those Saracen leaders, princesses, or crusading knights, relinquish control of the space or are forced out.

IDEOLOGICAL BASTIONS

Towers in the prose romances are ideological bastions that resist the religious and cultural pressures of the world around them. When crusaders shelter in towers deep within Saracen lands, they gain from these spaces an island of Christian space. The tower of Ynde in *Valentine and Orson* is a clear example of this type of containment. The tower stands in the Saracen city of Ynde and houses a small group of Christian men who live in seclusion on the condition that they do not attempt to convert anyone beyond the borders of their tower. Physically, the tower is marked as a Christian space; it is a 'great toure muche hye and faire vpon the whiche stode a crosse' (*Valentine*, 239.37–38). Valentine is drawn to the tower and discovers a 'a church by the licence of the king' (240.9–10) inside, with a 'mynister and habytacion of christen men' (240.15). The Christian worshippers within are oppressed and confined to their space and must each 'paye a great trybute' (240.32) to continue their practice within the city. As the

²⁷ Simmel, 'Bridge and Door', p. 7.

minister explains, ‘may no christen men come hether but if thei be pilgrims’ (240.29–30), and these pilgrims must bring offerings for the Saracen kings that control the city.

The tower of Ynde appears to be a dominant structure, imposing the symbol of the cross upon the city skyline. However, it is actually the last stand of one cultural group oppressed by another.²⁸ Though it is not the subject of a violent siege, this tower is a site of religious contest that demonstrates Lefebvre’s notion that control of space is a constant struggle and a ‘matter of life and death’.²⁹ The religious iconography of the cross is an attempt to bypass any potential conflict by segregating a distinct Christian space apart from the Saracen city.³⁰ On the inside, this space’s permanent Christian identity is reinforced by its Christian occupants, as well as another, literal body: ‘the holy saint Thomas the martyr, of whom the body is in this churche’ (240.28–29). As a focal point of the city, the tower exists as part of the tenuous diplomacy between the religious groups inhabiting the city, and it preserves the small slice of Christendom within from total destruction.

Bastion towers begin as Saracen spaces and end as Christian ones, but the conversion is not generally a result of direct, physical assault. In *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, the city of Rages features a tower of this sort. Rages sits on the crusaders’ path to Jerusalem and is significant because the citizens have already converted to Christianity despite the will of their Saracen overlords: whilst ‘the Cytezeyns of this cyte receyued cristen fayth’ (*Godeffroy*, 124.29), they are oppressed by ‘the turkes that were about them’ (125.1). Their ruler, a ‘greek that was moche oold’ (125.12), acts in the service of

²⁸ Here, see Derek Gregory’s discussion of modern skyscrapers as symbols of capitalist dominance. Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*, p. 334.

²⁹ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 417.

³⁰ Kim Knott considers the work of Lefebvre and Foucault, both of whom suggest that space emerges from the body, to suggest that religion is embedded in spaces. In the prose romances, this is visible in the architectural designs of the towers and in the struggles for control of the space. Knott, ‘Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion’, pp. 1108–10.

the Saracen Turks and has retreated to a tower to remain ‘alwey in his baylliage’ (125.16).³¹ Rages itself is a Christian bastion in Saracen lands, but the tower at its core is a Saracen space that the people attempt to physically reclaim:

they wente al armed, as it was enterprised, vnto a tour where as he
laye. And began strongly to tassayle it, and enuyronned round about.
(*Godeffroy*, 128.19–21)

This siege situation turns the tower into a final bastion for the Saracens, but one that cannot be overcome by violence alone. Speaking and acting for the crusaders, Baldwin leads the Christian resistance at Rages after the citizens elect him as their preferred new overlord. Baldwin’s first attempt at conflict resolution is one of diplomacy, warning the Duke that he ‘myght not remedye’ (128.30) the anger of his people any longer and should perhaps escape both their fury and the tower. The Duke’s attempted escape, in which he ‘bonde a corde to a wyndowe and descended down thereby’ (128.31–32), takes him beyond the physical safety of the tower and thus vacates the tower for Christian bodies to occupy it instead. Once outside of the space of containment, the Duke’s safety is not guaranteed: he is ‘thurgh smeton with arowes er he myght come to therthe’ (128.32–33). Although the Duke is killed through violent actions, the violence of those outside the tower is useless in converting the interior space; this conversion is only achieved when the occupying body is removed.

There is a similar bastion in *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, in which the Saracen admiral makes his final stand as Jerusalem is captured by crusaders. Once Reynaud and the crusaders capture the outer-city areas, the Saracen Admiral withdraws ‘his folke agen in to the cyte of Iherusalem’ (*Aymon*, 504.14), hiding within the tower with a small

³¹ The Early English Texts Society edition glosses this as an ‘aged and childless Turk’. However, whilst the lord clearly acts in the service of the Saracen Turks, the text specifies that it is ‘the turkes that dwellyd in this lande’ (125.25–26) who hear of the crusaders’ coming and seek to oppose them, rather than the aged lord specifically.

group and holding the Christian King Thomas as hostage. The Admiral uses the architectural possibilities of the tower to enforce his demands as conqueror:

‘Kynge Thomas, ye must chuse of two thynges thone / that is, that ye must save my liff that I maye go to perce agen wyth two of my men in my felishyp, or ells ye to be now caste oute of thise wyndowes down’.
(*Aymon*, 519.20–24)

By this point, the tower space is the last portion of the city that is under Saracen control; the crusaders have had immense success in having ‘recovered agen the cyte of Iherusalem’ (519.10–11). Reynaud commands the siege and orders the tower to be ‘wonne by force of armes’ (521.17), ordering the use of ladders which ‘he hymselfe began first to clime vp’ (521.24), along with archers below to ‘shote vpwarde / where they sawe the sarrasins loke out’ (521.28–29). Though the city is won with ease, Reynaud has little success in this physical assault of a tower space; he is forced to call off the assault at the Admiral’s threat that he will ‘caste the kynge thomas down yf ye pardonne me not / and I shall slee myself wyth him’, having ‘toke hym by the [neck] & had him to the wyndow’ (522.8–12). Assaulting the tower by force would result in Thomas’s death and thus an unsatisfactory end to the crusade. Instead, Reynaud opts to negotiate with the Saracen Admiral and capture the tower through diplomacy. In exchange for his surrender, the Admiral shall ‘goo on fote in to perce’ (522.30–31) and ‘shall not be touched at this tyme’ (523.5–6). As with Rages in *Godeffroy*, the tower space here can only change hands through the actions of those contained within rather than the actions of those assaulting the structure externally.

CONQUEST FROM WITHIN

As examples of tower bastions have demonstrated, besieging towers through traditional warfare is rarely productive in the prose romances. The space can only be converted

when the occupants relinquish control, which results in episodes in which crusaders infiltrate and conquer a tower from within. Floripas's tower in *Charles the Grete*, which sits at the heart of Admiral Balan's seat of government, is won through this form of subterfuge. When this Saracen princess frees the French knights and agrees to convert, as the previous chapter has already explored, she also redefines the tower space—and part of Balan's castle—as a Christian refuge. This repurposing, like her own conversion, is a betrayal of her Saracen faith and father, and one that enables the Christians to capture the whole castle from within.

Once the crusaders control Floripas's tower, they have access to the wider structure of Castle Agrymore and are able to capture a key seat of Saracen control. Henri Lefebvre's notion that administrative or governmental buildings show a condensed version of social relationships, including the domination of a space by one ideology or another, is useful here. Lefebvre refers to buildings from the nineteenth century on, but these principles can be just as easily applied to the medieval castles, palaces and towers that represent administrative and military control in the prose romances.³² As such an important governmental structure, Agrymore is not a place that the French peers could ever hope to successfully assault. However, once already inside, with control of Floripas's tower, the peers 'gyrde their swerdes aboute them' (*Charles*, 120.15–16) to launch a successful assault from within. This attempt to 'slee all the paynymys and sarasyns that they fonde in the paleys' (120.24–25) is a religious war waged within an enclosed Saracen space, and one that highlights both the power of the

³² The Winchester manuscript version of Malory's Roman War demonstrates the administrative power of a tower space, when Arthur gathers his knights 'within a towre' when they are discussing whether or not to crusade against the East. This line is omitted from Caxton's 1485 print. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, pp. 227–28; Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, in: Eugène Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), vol. I, p. 187. For further discussion of Saracen seats of control, and the positioning of power in Saracen architecture, see Rabbat, 'The Militarization of Taste', pp. 84–88.

crusaders and the necessity of striking against a Saracen space from within. They emerge victorious, not only killing many Saracens but forcing them to flee and relinquish the space, thus extending Christian spatial control to the whole castle.

Once the castle has been captured from within, it becomes a wholly Christian space that can resist assault from Saracen forces. The text represents this resistance when Balan returns to surround the castle with armies, in a lengthy siege that occupies the central third of the text.³³ Assembling ‘slynges and other engynes’ (124.17), Balan is able to damage the castle walls, but not to recapture it. While Balan unsuccessfully casts ‘stones & dartes enuenymed’ (124.18) at the castle walls, the Christian knights inside reassert their own spatial control, by smashing Saracen idols until they are ‘alle to-broken’ (126.12).³⁴ Whilst the assault on the walls has little effect, the parallel destruction of the Saracen gods reinforces in Floripas the need to hold Saracen ‘goddess in despyte’ (126.17) and embrace her newfound Christianity. The presence of Christian occupants ensures that the space resists Saracen intrusion, even as vulnerabilities are exposed when the knights breach the tower boundaries to ‘goo oute for to gete somme vytaylle’ (125.6–7). Thierry and Geoffrey agree to remain inside and ‘kepe the place’ (127.11) along with Floripas, to ensure continued control of the space that might be otherwise lost if all inhabitants were to relinquish the space, as at Rages in *Godeffroy* or Jerusalem in *Aymon*.

Admiral Balan eventually makes some progress on the assault, breaching the walls and conquering the ‘first wardes of the castel’ (141.14) whilst holding ‘þe space of a myle longe aboute the toure’ (141.7–8). Despite this progress, however, he is stopped again at the ‘yates of the toure’ (141.15–16) where the peers ‘made contynuel

³³ See Chapter One for further exploration of the structure of Caxton’s translation and its source material by Jean Bagnyon. See also Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 224–25.

³⁴ I return to this siege in the following chapter’s discussion of Saracen enchantment and nigromancy, because Admiral Balan breaks the siege in a noteworthy and supernatural way.

resystence' (141.21–22) to defend the heart of their spatial control: Floripas's tower. When the tower itself is physically assaulted, Floripas advises the peers to repel the forces by throwing her father's treasure from the walls: 'the tresour of my fader is herin, which is in grete wedges and plates of golde & buyllyon. late vs goo fetche it, And as wel may we slee the paynyms therwyth, as wyth stones, and better' (142.34–143.3). This strange act forces Balan to call a halt to the siege, lamenting not that his soldiers are struck down but that 'I see my tresour wasteth & is loste' (143.18). However, the value of the gold is not in its material worth but in its religious power; the reason for Balan's lament over its loss is that he 'had recomaunded it to my god mahon and had made hym kepar of it' (143.20–21). When the peers slay Saracen men by throwing Saracen treasure at them, they are expelling from the space the final remnants of Saracen ideology. A similar reinforcing of this idea occurs later once Balan's siege engines have made 'fyue grete holes in the toure' (179.21–22). Upon seeing this physical breach, Floripas produces two Christian relics, 'the crowne of Ihesus, & two of the nayles that he was nayled with to the crosse' (181.1–2). Once the Saracens ascending the tower walls see the relics she wields, they 'tombled down to þe grounde, dede, & al to-broken' (181.16–17).³⁵ Here, *Charles the Grete* provides a clear example of how the power of towers lies in their capacity for ideological containment and conversion, not their fortifications.

The prison tower of *Paris and Vienne* also demonstrates how space can be converted from within via subterfuge. The episode in which Paris frees the Christian Dauphin from a Saracen prison, whilst disguised as a Saracen, speaks to the blurring of

³⁵ Siobhain Bly Calkin reads these relics, and the ritual surrounding them, as an attempt to re-associate and reclaim the power of significant objects for Christianity. In this action, however, the relics also help with reclaiming the surrounding space as Christian. Siobhain Bly Calkin, 'Devotional Objects, Saracen Spaces, and Miracles, in Two Matter of France Romances', in *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*, ed. by Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. 59–74 (pp. 68–72).

boundaries between Saracen and Christian individuals. However, the prison space itself is equally significant. It is ‘an harde pryson’ and a ‘stronge toure’ (62.25) in a Saracen city, guarded by Saracen ‘kepars that kept [the Christian prisoner] nyzt and day’ (62.26). When Paris instigates the escape sequence, the prison space is captured and reconverted for Christendom in a way that can be aligned with Lefebvre’s definition of social space as ideologically loaded.³⁶ The Dauphin’s imprisonment is explicitly religious, ensuring that the conflict between Christians and Saracens dominates the episode: he is imprisoned after revealing to the Sultan ‘how the Pope had gyuen oute a croysee [crusade] ayenst them’ (62.17). When Paris visits the Dauphin in prison, his secret Christian faith prompts the start of a spatial conversion. After several visits, Paris brings ‘one of the freres [friars] wyth hym that coude speke mouryske’ (66.20–21), sharing the secret of his Christian faith within the walls of the prison and converting the space into a sanctuary of sorts. By the time of the escape, the Dauphin has enough confidence in the tower as a Christian space that he thanks ‘god & thys moure of the good wylle that he hath toward me’ (68.4–5). As Paris kills his way through the jailors in the subsequent escape sequence, he reclaims both the Dauphin and the tower space for the benefit of Christendom. As with Charlemagne’s peers in *Charles*, this reclamation is made possible only through inside access gained through subterfuge. Furthermore, while violence upon Saracen bodies is conducive to claiming the space, violence upon the physical structure is not.

DEFENESTRATION AND THRESHOLD-CROSSING

Tower windows are important portals between the contained space and the exterior from which those inside are protected. As George Simmel argues of interior spaces, the

³⁶ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 26.

walls surrounding them are mute but ‘the door speaks’, because whilst walls can contain a set of ideological beliefs, it is the permeable points of the enclosure that permit ideologies to come into contact.³⁷ In the prose romances, the windows also speak: they are far more frequently used for escape and defenestration than observation. Simmel’s directional focus is equally important, and he further notes that the significance of windows is that they are a means of looking out, not in.³⁸ The prose romances do not generally show crusaders assaulting towers through their windows, but they do frequently show the windows as points through which Saracens can escape, or through which they are violently expelled. The boundaries of the tower space are thus unilaterally permeable by violent means.

Defenestration is a motif that recurs across romance more broadly. It also features in those printed prose romances that are not crusade-focused, such as *Melusine*. In the prose romances, defenestration is specifically and frequently used to signify the transfer of religious spatial control, or the threat of such a transfer. *Charles the Grete* offers several clear examples of escape and ejection. Floripas’s conversion sequence begins when she rescues the French knights and brings them to her tower. Upon entry, she is met by her governess, Maragond, who acts as a bodily representative of Saracen control of the space, a control which Floripas now rejects through conversion.³⁹ Maragond swears ‘to my god Mahomet that he curse me yf I euer ete or drynke tyl I haue tolde your fader my lord thadmyrall’ (94.28–30). In response, Floripas ‘called her varlet whyche cam to hyr prestly and threwe the woman in to the see’ (94.35–95.1), violently ejecting the last Saracen occupant from this now-Christian space. The boundary-crossing of defenestration is also here one that brings the violence of the

³⁷ Simmel, ‘Bridge and Door’, p. 7.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁹ Here, see Lefebvre’s notions of social or ‘lived’ space as a product of the bodies that inhabit it and the ideologies they represent. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 40.

siege, against which the tower protects its occupants, into the internal space. The multiple transgressions that the tower space facilitates—from Floripas’s betrayal of her father and her murder of Saracens to the religious conversion of the space and the breaking of the religious boundary of the walls—reveal the porous nature of the structural and ideological boundaries, at least from within.⁴⁰ Even when these boundaries are not pierced, the threat of such action is treated the same as the action itself. In the final siege of Jerusalem in *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, the cornered Admiral threatens to ‘caste the kyng thomas doun yf ye pardonne me not’ (*Aymon*, 522.11). Though the situation is resolved peacefully, the threat is enough to prompt in the crusaders an acknowledgement that his death would be ‘grete shame to vs’ (522.23). Even the threat of defenestration is problematic, not only because it would result in King Thomas’s death but also because it would leave the tower a fortified Saracen space that would be notably harder to conquer.

Windows are also escape routes in the prose romances, again functioning unidirectionally with the consequence of relinquishing spatial control. When the peers of *Charles the Grete* capture Agrymore from within, using the tower as a staging point, they kill a great many Saracens who ‘goon to therthe slayn and dysmembred’ (*Charles*, 120.31–32). However, many more ‘lepe out of the wyndowes’ (120.32) in an attempt to avoid the slaughter. All ‘after were founden dede’ (120.33) apart from one, Admiral Balan: ‘Thadmyral, all araged, put hym self to flyght oute of a wyndowe and lepe doun in to the depe dyche’ (120.34–35–121.1). As is indicated by the ‘depe dyche’, this escape is a final resort; much of Balan’s rage in these lines stems from this desperation, and the knowledge that in escaping from Agrymore he is abandoning a highly defensible space with cultural and administrative significance; his Iberian seat of power

⁴⁰ Cowell, ‘The Subjectivity of Space’, p. 191.

will not be easy to recapture, as the text goes on to prove. The use of windows in this example is, notably, an act of suicide rather than one exclusively linked to escape. The text offers a later parallel when Floripas threatens to ‘lepe oute of the wyndowe’ and ‘dye in desperacyon’ (134.32–33) if her beloved is not rescued. Even when these acts of defenestration are framed as suicide, the end result is the same: the ideological alignment of a space is defined by those who occupy it, and any character removing themselves from this space relinquishes control to those who remain – the Christian knights.

CROSSING BETWEEN WORLDS: BRIDGES AND PASSAGEWAYS

Bridges and gateways are socially- and politically-charged liminal spaces that both demarcate and destabilise boundaries between Saracen and Christian areas of spatial control. They are inherently transitional, connecting opposing spheres of influence and permitting passage between them, and they provide the possibility of converting and conquering the space beyond. Passageways divide ideological worldviews and convene violent encounters between them. These are spaces of separation first, as to acknowledge the existence of a passageway is to acknowledge that it must pass from one definable space into another; in Georg Simmel’s words, ‘we can only sense those things to be related which we have previously somehow isolated from one another’.⁴¹ In the prose romances, understanding the crusading aim of recapturing Saracen spaces, requires acknowledgement of how they are separate from Christian ones in terms of both geography and cultural or political control. Passageways are also spaces of transition and connection between areas, permitting the interchange of ideologies and

⁴¹ Simmel, ‘Bridge and Door’, p. 5.

providing an access point for conquest of space. Finally, these passageways are spaces in which encounters occur, where battles are fought for control of both the passageway and the city, castle, or sanctum beyond.

BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP

Bridges are one of the most common architectural features in the prose romances' crusading journeys. They connect places and acknowledge both the shape of the natural landscape and our will to alter it, considered by Georg Simmel as symbolising the 'extension of our volitional sphere over space'.⁴² The gaps that the bridges of the prose romances span are physical, including river banks and cities, but they are also metaphorical; they cross ideological boundaries alongside geographical ones, simultaneously connecting the Christian and Saracen worlds and controlling access between them.

The Bridge of Mantryble in *Charles the Grete* is a connective space that offers the crusaders access to the heart of Saracen lands, but one through which access is restricted. It is an exotic and threatening Saracen space, yet one that can be converted through combat. Charlemagne's French peers first find the bridge whilst journeying to deliver a message to Admiral Balan, following a confrontation during which they 'put to deth' (*Charles*, 103.6) a group of Saracen kings. The bridge is presented as a necessary link between geographical and political worlds: 'ye shal vnderstonde that beyonde that brydge is Aygre more, where we shal fynde thadmyral' (103.28–29). It spans a river that 'renneth so Inpytuously as a quarel out of an arbalaste' (104.11–12), providing both physical use as a passageway and cultural importance as a route into the heart of Saracen Iberia. A much later point in the text sees Richard, the first of the peers

⁴² Simmel, 'Bridge and Door', p. 6.

to escape Saracen capture, attempt to cross this divide without the aid of the bridge, but he is able to do so only through miraculous means: at the river banks, Richard ‘recommaunded hym self to our lord’ (157.29–30) and ‘god sente a whyte herte which passed tofore rycharde’ (158.1–2) to ford the river. The water here is far from the babbling brook of the forest of romance.⁴³ It represents a divide between ideological and religious spheres of influence and a liminal zone that cannot be crossed without control of the bridge space or a literal miracle.

Like other bridge spaces in the prose romances, the Bridge of Mantryble is as much a constrictive space as a constructive one. It enables contact between cultural and religious spheres, but those who control the space can restrict this contact. From its very introduction, the space is presented as martial and inaccessible. The arches supporting the bridge are ‘soulded wyth leed and cyment, & with grete barres of yron’ (103.33–34), and it is broad enough that ‘xx knyghtes may goo arme in arme at their ease’ (104.3–4). The language in this introductory passage picks out materials of strength or battle: iron, lead, and cement. This description is echoed in the bridge’s defences, which include strong walls, many ‘grete towres’, and a drawbridge with ‘ten grete chaynes of yron’ (103.34–104.6). The description of the bridge keeper, Galafre, emphasises many of these same martial qualities; he is ferocious and othered, defining this space as an obstacle that must be overcome through combat. He holds a ‘grete axe of stele for to destroye them that wyl doo ayest hys wylle’ (104.17–18) and is, as Charlemagne later describes, a large part of the reason they may not pass:

The portyer that kepeth thys plase is a paynym hydous and grete, massyf, stronge and felonous, whyche better resembleth the deuyl than ony man or persone. he is blacke as pytche boyled, & hath x thousand knyghtes in his companye. Wherefore I wote wel that by

⁴³ Whilst forest streams conjure up idyllic images, Saunders notes that these brooks and streams can serve as divisions within forest landscapes. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance*, pp. 74–75.

force we may not passe.

(*Charles*, 165.14–19)

Galafre is as much an obstacle as the ‘barryers of yron fast locked’ (165.13). He is a monstrous giant and ‘better a deuyll than a resonable persone (167.21), occupying the space between cultural boundaries just as his own body challenges the boundaries of the human form.⁴⁴ Galafre’s body must be overcome and forced from the bridge space for the crusaders to gain access into the Saracen world, and what begins as a single combat encounter builds to a full battle across the bridge where the ‘brydge of mantryble was taken and conquerd’ (171.20) only upon Galafre’s death. More than a liminal space, this bridge is an encounter zone between cultural and religious spheres of influence.

Elsewhere in the prose romances, bridges are spaces between cultural worlds. They control access, and the faction or religious group controlling a bridge thus has the capacity to define the ideological boundaries of their own space. In the siege of Antioch, in *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, the numerous bridges in and out of the city are likewise well held by men defending with ‘bowes and arabalestres the entree of the brygge’ (*Godeffroy*, 133.7). For crusaders to access Antioch, they must control the bridge spaces and reshape the world around them to suit their needs:

Our barons conseyllled them to gydre, and concluded that they wold make a brygge in somme maner by whiche they myght passe without daunger of them of the toun / they fonde shippes in the laye, and aboute the ryuer they toke and ioyned them to gydre, and sette plankes on them, and nayled them in suche wyse that thre or four men myght passe on a front / this brigge dyde moche ease to alle thoost.

(*Godeffroy*, 141.2–8)

As well as creating a new bridge, the crusaders must protect their own encampment by destroying one they cannot control. After failing to break the stonework, the crusaders

⁴⁴ As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen reminds us, giants of medieval romance are uncanny figures, existing ‘at that moment when the boundaries of the body are being culturally demarcated’. Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. xiii–xv.

resort to cruder means of control: ‘they toke an honderd men and more, and stopped the gate ouer the brydge’ (142. 26–27) with great rocks and stones. These two actions see the crusaders reassert spatial control of the area around Agrymore, redirecting any fighting into Christian-controlled spaces such as the bridge of ships itself. Elsewhere in *Godeffroy*, bridges are tactically important for crusading progression. For control of another, the crusaders send ‘the brother of the duc for to take the brigge / to thende that they of the toun shold not sease ne take it’ (74.29–30). This action is carefully planned, taking ‘/v/ honderd [500] men what knyghtes as other wel armed’ (75.1) to accomplish. However, they shortly see that ‘alle the cyte was meued and armed for to come on them’ (75.2–3), and a fight ensues over control of the space. The particular importance of this bridge is twofold, both as a tactical advantage in the forthcoming battle, and in its importance as the chokepoint that provides entrance to the further enclosed space of the city.

In *Valentine and Orson*, the prison tower in which Brandyffer keeps his daughter is described with emphasis upon the architecture’s capacity to contain, in the middle of a castle and surrounded by ‘depe dytches full of rennyng water’, with ‘a double gate of yron strong and thycke’ (*Valentine*, 230.5–6). However, the bridge leading to this tower is depicted in the same manner: it is a ‘brydge composed so subtylly that there myght passe byt one man at ones’ (230.8–9). The bridge in this instance is a key component of the prison, and one that serves to allow access to the space while also further isolating it: ‘if twayne would haue passed they should fall bothe in to the rennyng water and there be drowned’ (230.9–10). This structure needs no Galafre, no monstrous keeper, to deny access to the space beyond. It achieves this denial through architectural alone, demonstrating the power embodied by architectural structures in these texts. Elsewhere, Valentine’s first sight of the Tower of Ynde,

already discussed, comes as he passes across ‘a bridge he wende for to haue bene within the cytie’ (239.30–31), gaining knowledge of and access to politically- and religiously-controlled spaces through the liminal bridge space.

Bridges are the sites of combat encounters throughout Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, but in the parts of the narrative that treat crusade centrally they take on an additional role as connections between religious spheres. The culmination of the Roman War crusade, in which Arthur battles a host of Saracen kings including ‘the Kyng of Tars, and of Turké’, and the ‘Sowdon of Surré’ (*Morte*, 151.5–7), rests upon the capture of a single bridge at Urbyne. The winning of Urbyne marks the last battle described in any detail during the campaign, and the key turning point is the capture of the bridge:

there yssued oute of that cité many hundretthis and skyrmysshed wyth
oure foreryders as hem beste semed. Than broke oute oure
buysshemente and the brydge wynnys, and so rode unto theire
borowys with baners up dysplayed.

(*Morte*, 186.22–25)

From this point, Arthur can see clearly that ‘the cité is wonne’ (186.30). The text then shifts pace, noting only that Arthur ‘wynnys towrys and townys full hyghe’ (187.15) without giving the detail of these encounters as was the case before Urbyne. Even in encounters which are not crusades, such as the Book of Launcelot du Lake, bridges are significant spaces that represent transitions and barriers between ideological spheres. Launcelot’s adventure takes him across a guarded bridge, a political space requiring ‘lycence’ (206.25) to cross and one upon which martial action has social and political consequences; Launcelot is warned that ‘a worse dede duddyst thou nefver for thyself’ (206.34) in slaying the porter on the bridge, and that further unhappy challenges await. Notably in *Le Morte Darthur*, Malory omits from his narrative a bridge found in one of his sources, which has more otherworldly than political implications. Launcelot’s later exploits in Malory’s ‘Knight of the Cart’ episode omit material from the Prose *Lancelot*

in which Launcelot traverses a magical bridge made of a giant, gleaming sword.⁴⁵

Malory's interpretation of this episode removes the sword bridge entirely, an act of cutting and condensing that, alongside Malory's addition of the detail that this takes place near Westminster, makes his narrative more political and realistic.⁴⁶

A GATEWAY BETWEEN WORLDS

Gateways, like bridges, can both permit and deny transition between other, religiously-charged spaces. They are obstacles to be overcome, often encountered in the Saracen East as entrance points into important castles or cities. Structurally, they are secure and strong, but they also represent breach points to a closed space and chokepoints.

Gateways would have been one of the most familiar structures to any reading audience, and they held social significance to the medieval readership in a variety of ways. As Matthew Johnson suggests, discussing Western European medieval gateways, the act of opening and closing gateways is one that carried 'massive political and historical meaning' in terms of socially segmenting areas.⁴⁷ In particular, he suggests that castle gates had a social status, and that only those worthy of the space would enter through the large, frontal gateway.⁴⁸ In late medieval cities, gateways are also as much a part of the social and cultural rhythms of life as night and day, denying entry and enforcing a quarantine upon a given area.⁴⁹ The gateways of romance often lead to cities, and those

⁴⁵ This episode comes from the Vulgate *Lancelot* and Chrétien de Troyes's earlier *Le chevalier de la charrette*, to which the Vulgate owes its origins. Norris, *Malory's Library*, p. 119. See also Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance*, p. 75.

⁴⁶ Of particular note in grounding the text in the realistic is Malory's use of geographical place names during this episode; when Guinevere is kidnapped, Westminster is specifically mentioned in determining the location. See Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, pp. 191–95.

⁴⁷ Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 71.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ In Jean Verdon's discussion of such social rhythms, he notes that French cities such as Dijon had, by the early fifteenth century, begun to create impromptu gateways using 'chains to block certain streets', with keys 'in the keeping of the most prominent local bourgeois'. See Jean Verdon, (trans. George Holoch), *Night in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2002), p. 81.

of the prose romances often come in sets or sequences. *Huon of Burdeux* and *Godeffroy of Boloyn*e demonstrate cities with sequential or alternative entrances, and texts such as *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon* demonstrate how internal gateways can divide a city into segments. These gateway formations are, like the bridges of the prose romances, spaces of transition and restriction as well as encounter zones. They control the flow of combat and emphasise to the Christian reader the importance of continually breaking through Saracen defences to reclaim space.

In *Aymon*, Reynaud's campaign to recapture Jerusalem culminates in a series of encounters in and around the gates that segment the city. When routed, the Saracen Admiral organising the defence retreats 'toward the cyte as a man discomfyted & overthrown / and drewe to the gate foere for to have gon in to it' (*Aymon*, 517.6–8). He saves himself by riding into the city, seeking to close the gate as 'the moste parte of his men were there slayn' (517.14) holding it. Reynaud arms himself with a 'grete pece of tymbre' (517.17), gives chase, and holds the gate open to re-establish Christian control of the space: he 'sawe the gate open, wherof he was glad; soo toke he thenne his beme & put it vnder the port colisse / soo that it might not be lete down/ nor the gate cowed not be shet nother' (518.5–9). Whilst crusader control of the gateway is significant, so too is the progress that Reynaud's forces make in securing the city. Delegating the job of 'kep[ing] well this passage' (519.1) to others, Reynaud progresses further into the city: he 'went vnto a nother gate, whiche he founde wel garnysshed wyth panymys' (519.6–7). Again, Reynaud forces the gate open in a repeated sequence that represents the crusading journey as long, arduous, and punctuated by architectural conquests. The final gate of Jerusalem is at the tower in which King Thomas is held. When physical assault through the tower windows proves impossible, Reynaud turns to the passageway into the tower as a negotiation point. Ultimately, the Saracen Admiral's freedom is

bought; he ‘opened the gate / and wente oute’ (523.10), as this final gate, unlike the others won by conquest, is unlocked through diplomatic means.

In *Huon of Burdeux*, the sequence of gateways that guard the entrance to Saracen Babylon fulfils a similar role in peppering Huon’s crusading journey with architectural obstacles. Furthermore, these gates are defined by the religious alignment of their owners; they are Saracen spaces, requiring proof of one’s faith to pass through. The multiple gates are first described by the Saracen giant that Huon battles shortly before entry into the city, another ‘Galafre’. He offers his signet ring, which will permit passage into the city where ‘thou shalt fynde .iiii. gates’ (*Huon*, 106.22). At each gate, if it is known that Huon is a French, Christian man, he shall suffer the removal of part of his body. At the first, ‘one of thy handes’, and at the second ‘thy other’, ‘at the thyrd gate one of thy fete’, and at the fourth ‘the other fote’ (106.24–27). Anyone thus presented before the Admiral without hands and feet will have their ‘hede stryken of’ (106.28–29), presumably due to the overwhelming proof of their Christian status. As is quite characteristic of Huon, who bumbles haphazardly through much of his crusading journey, he arrives at the city and subsequently forgets ‘the gyauntes ryng on his arme’ (113.19). Whilst Huon passes the first gate by deceiving the porters into thinking he is Saracen, he reveals the ring for the second and third gates as a ‘token that I may passe and go where as me lyst’ (114.24). At the fourth and final gate, Huon reveals that he is ‘a messenger sent fro noble kyng Charlemayne’ (115.28–29), and that, aided by the Giant’s ring, he shall pass through ‘whether thou wylt or not’ (115.29–30). These gates segment the city into obstacles Huon must overcome and demonstrate the various non-violent means by which architectural spaces can be taken: by deceit at the first gate, by diplomacy at the second and third, and by threat at the fourth. When Huon finally brings battle to the city, however, he does so in a way that completely bypasses the

architectural strength of the grand gateway system. Huon instead summons Oberon, his King of the faeries, who appears with his army in the middle of Babylon to ‘slee all suche as wolde not beleue of Ihesu Cryst’ (152.24–25). Like tower spaces, gateways in *Huon* cannot be taken by force, but they can be navigated or bypassed by other means to gain access to the space beyond.

Like bridges, gateways restrict crusader access to the Saracen East as much as they enable it, because those who control the space can close or open it at will. Constantinople is sometimes considered in the same way for its position as the furthest point of Christendom and a staging point before the Saracen East. As Nora Berend examines, some prevailing late medieval European thought also placed Hungary as the ‘gate of Christendom’; while we cannot speak accurately of a kingdom’s “borders” at this point, the notion of precise boundaries was one that would have been familiar to medieval people on a smaller scale.⁵⁰ The prose romances’ distinction between Christendom and the East is defined more by culture and religion than clear geographical lines, and readers would therefore be familiar with the idea of a divide even if they could not draw a clear line between nations or communities. In *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, the crusaders travel along this divide between Christendom and the East, along the coast of the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean and through what we now know as Eastern Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East. They stop in Constantinople, which is ‘deuyded fro thyse two londes; Constantinoble is in europe: That other part is nycene, whiche is in asye’ (*Godeffroy*, 73.27–28); Along this route, the crusaders’ behaviour is ambiguous at best: they liberate the last remaining Christian city of a Saracen land from the ‘puyssaunce of the turkes’ (125.11), but they deceive

⁵⁰ Nora Berend, ‘Hungary, “the Gate of Christendom”’, in *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*, ed. by David Abulafia and Nora Berend (Hants: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 195–215 (pp. 196–201).

and are deceived by various forces, and they rob and kill the Hungarian hosts by whom they are ‘receyued debonayrly’ (59.26). Whilst Constantinople is the gateway into the East here, there is no clear alignment between the geographical separation of Christian West and Saracen East (definable here only through a body of water) and the moral behaviour of Christians and Saracens across these territories. Both literal and metaphorical gateways, such as Constantinople, are therefore significant in their capacity to both connect and separate ideologically-charged spaces. Gateways and bridges are liminal spaces that, in the prose romances, are important means of conveying the Crusaders further into the East and protecting them along the way.

THE CORNERSTONES OF CRUSADE: CITIES

Cities in the prose romances are crusading goals, each significant in spatial terms because of its biblical and/or crusading history. The endpoints of these romances—most often the centres of Saracen power and of Christian significance—are situated in cities rather than castles or fortresses.⁵¹ Conquering cities therefore presents serious military and psychological challenges for the crusading protagonists, beyond those of other structures.⁵² As well as Jerusalem at its end, *Godeffroy of Boloyne* features another major city of Antioch, which is located near the modern-day border between Syria and Turkey, between the ideological spheres of Christendom and the East. This city is partway through the crusade, and a significant marker of progress that the crusaders

⁵¹ On how cities, rather than castles, served as power-bases in the Middle East, see Donald Whitcomb, ‘The Walls of Early Islamic Ayla: Defence or Symbol?’ in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. by Hugh Kennedy (Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 61–74 (pp. 73–74). However, a move towards urbanising adventures can also be found in English texts. Henry Lovelich’s early fifteenth-century English translation of the *Estoire del Saint Graal* refocuses the Grail Quest away from the open field of adventure in the countryside and towards cities such as London. See Radulescu, *Romance and Its Contexts*, pp. 93–97.

⁵² France, ‘Fortifications East and West’, p. 284.

gain by controlling the surrounding space. They create and obstruct bridges, but they also construct a fortress that effectively stakes crusader claims upon the surrounding area. This fortress is a reconversion of the land itself, as the stones used to build it are taken from Turkish graves in the area:

There had the Turkes buried by nyght the dede men that had ben
slayn in the bataylle to fore / whan the peple afoote knewe this, they
ranne, And there vnburyed them
[...]
the barons commanded that the fortresse shold be made, & adressyd
moch hye and stronge, hastely. It was made of such stones as they
drewe out of the tombes & sepultures of the turkes.
(*Godeffroy*, 162.22–25 and 163.7–10)

By constructing a fortress to besiege Antioch from the very tombstones of the Turks who defended it, the crusaders re-establish ideological control of the area around the city. In reclaiming the stone from recent Turkish graves, the crusaders disrupt both chivalric and spiritual rituals to enforce their own version of chivalric order upon the Saracen opponents.

Antioch is a significant marker of crusading progress in *Godeffroy*, but Jerusalem and Constantinople, as one might expect, are the two most significant cities in the prose romance narratives and in fifteenth-century crusading discourse. *Godeffroy of Boloyne* ends with the capture of Jerusalem, and so too does *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*. Jerusalem also features prominently in *Paris and Vienne*, alongside Babylon, which is also the endpoint of *Huon of Burdeux*. The city has religious significance, but it would not have held the same contemporary relevance as Constantinople and Jerusalem for late medieval readers.⁵³ Constantinople features throughout the central

⁵³ Babylon's Old Testament significance is noteworthy given this chapter's earlier consideration of towers. The city housed the Tower of Babel, which represented mankind as collected, without religious or linguistic divides. The prose romances are inherently concerned with this notion of communities, particularly in reference to separating Christendom from the Eastern 'Other'. Babel also has a potential further significance in these texts. In *Charles the Grete*, Floripas's tower is said to have been built by the 'son of mathusale', which the EETS edition glosses as 'built by Methusaleh [sic] himself (p. 94). There

plots of the texts, as the meeting point in *Godeffroy of Boloyne* and a place of rest in *Fourre Sonnes*; the emperor of the city is Charles's ally in *Charles the Grete*, and Pepin's close family in *Valentine and Orson*.

CONSTANTINOPLE

Constantinople's centrality to fifteenth-century English crusading concerns cannot be overstated, following its capture in 1453 by the Ottoman Empire. Whilst Constantinople was not the most Westward incursion of the Ottoman Empire into Europe, the fall of the city became a rally point in the following decades for crusading desires across Western Europe.⁵⁴ Caxton's prologue to *Godeffroy* argues that the 'the turkes had conquerd vpon Cristendom' (*Godeffroy*, 3.22) before, reaching the gates of the city. Now, and for the first time, they have 'goten that Imperial Cyte, Constantynople [...] to the grete dommage and hurte of alle Cristendom' (3.25–27). Constantinople also features elsewhere in Caxton's printing. His *Cronycles of Englonde* was first printed in 1480 and was reprinted on several occasions including by Wynkyn de Worde in 1528, making explicit the importance of the city and its capture:

About this tyme the cite of Constantynople / whiche was the imperyal cite of all grece was taken by the Turkes infydeles / whiche was betrayed as some holde opynyon / & the emperour taken & slayne / and the ryall chirche of saynt Sophia robbed & spoyled / & the relykes & ymages & the rode drawn aboute & gretes / whiche was

is no biblical reference to either of these figures being involved in constructing towers, and the misconception may be born of Western European church teaching through wall painting. C. R. Dodwell suggests that figure painting arrived in England through Christianity as a means of education. The teachings of a painting were far easier to understand than those of sermons, and Dodwell highlights evidence that many of these paintings would have been arranged thematically. If biblical verses were painted on church walls as a teaching aid, and if the Book of Genesis was painted as a group, then Methuselah would likely be in close physical proximity with the Tower of Babel. This, of course, is a notion that depends upon many variables, and one that warrants further study. For further information on church wall painting, see C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 84–85 and 92.

⁵⁴ Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, p. 84; Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 306–07; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, Vol. II, p. 143.

done in despyte of the chrysten fayth / & soone after all chrysten fayth
in Grece perysshed & ceased.⁵⁵

This description bears striking resemblance to that in Caxton's prologue, both to the demonization of the Turks and to the attempt to encourage a new crusade against the Ottoman Empire. As K. E. Fleming notes, contemporary Christian views of the capture of Constantinople regarded it as an 'enslavement' and destruction of the 'definitive bastion of Christianity'.⁵⁶ The prose romances show the city as ultimately Christian, drawing upon earlier forms of recovery literature in the way they either feature the recapture centrally or operate within an imagined world in which the city is still a part of Christendom.⁵⁷

Constantinople's importance to Christendom is foregrounded across the prose romances, and the city often features as a subsidiary crusading target. In *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, the historic importance of the city is recognised early in the text. The Eastern Prince Belphet 'conquerd fro the lystes of surye, vnto the see called the braas of seynt george' (34.20–21), or until the water dividing Constantinople. When the Church calls the crusade for Jerusalem, which has been 'delyuered to [Christ's] enemyes' (43.18), the key figures of the crusade go their own ways, but meet at Constantinople and treat the city as a gateway between the Eastern and Western worlds. When Peter's army is directed 'strayt forth to constantynoble' (54.22), they join there with Walter's army before proceeding across 'the braas of seynt george' and into 'the fyrst partye of Asye (55.15–17) and beyond into the East. As the French barons cross the water, they 'there

⁵⁵ Ranulf Higden, *The Cronycles of Englonde with the dedes of popes and emperours, and also the descripcyon of Englonde* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1528), part .vii., Folio lvi, v. Reproduction of the original in the British Library, available at EEBO <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99844302>.

⁵⁶ K. E. Fleming, 'Constantinople: From Christianity to Islam', *The Classical World*, 71.1 (2003), 69–78 (p. 69).

⁵⁷ On 'recovery' literature, see Manion, *Narrating the Crusades*; Norako, 'Sir Isumbras and the Fantasy of Crusade'; Tyerman, *God's War*, p. 827.

soiourned..., & abode the comyng of the other barons' (83.28–29). The city is an assembly point, from which the crusaders might unite and strike as one against the East. This is made possible by the geographical positioning of the space, and the text goes to considerable effort to ensure the reader understands 'how the cyte of constantinoble stondeth' (73.18–19) is a gateway. With a sea dividing Europe and Asia, the city both provides and obstructs access into the Saracen East.

Godeffroy of Boloyne demonstrates that Constantinople is a gateway to the East, but also a city with religious and cultural significance in its own right. Constantinople is 'lyke a tryangle (73.31), where each of its sides holds a location of religious significance. On the first side 'standeth a chirche of seynt george' (73.33), which serves now as the seat of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Records of the Patriarchate during the period of 1453–1600 are scarce, though the mention of this Church may indicate that it was significant to Orthodox Christianity following the 1453 conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque.⁵⁸ This conquest, aided in part by the symbolic repurposing of Hagia Sophia, was widely depicted as the culmination of years of Christian decline and Islamic success.⁵⁹ In *Godeffroy*, the wall beyond this church extends to 'the porte aire' (74.3), or the golden gates of the city. The gate is significant as a space of transition, but also one that demonstrates the same gilded exoticism with which Christendom associated the Saracen East.⁶⁰ The third wall extends 'fro that yate vnto the palays of Blacquerne' (74.3–4), the seat of the Emperor, who features as a central character in both *Godeffroy of Boloyne* and *Valentine and Orson*. Constantinople's significance in

⁵⁸ The significance of the Hagia Sophia as a religious space is discussed at a later point in this chapter. For further information on the Patriarchate of Constantinople, see G. Georgiades Arnakis, 'The Greek Church of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire', *The Journal of Modern History*, 24.3 (1952), 235–50, (p. 241).

⁵⁹ Bornstein, 'William Caxton's Chivalric Romances', pp. 8–9; Fleming, 'Constantinople', p. 71.

⁶⁰ Discussion of exoticism through aesthetics, and its use in the prose romances as a means of heightening fear over the advancing Other, is the subject of this chapter's discussion on aesthetics in architecture. See also Freedman, 'Locating the Exotic', p. 23.

this description is multifarious: as a city of religious significance still integral to the imagined and aspirational construction of Christendom, and as the seat of a great chivalric and imperial power. In *Valentine and Orson*, Constantinople exists always within Christendom, and the two titular heroes descend from both the Carolingian and Byzantine empires. Whilst the crusading narrative of this romance is often more concerned with unnamed, distant Saracen castles and fortresses, Constantinople still serves as the gateway into Saracen lands. The city is besieged by Saracens, but serves as an indisputable bastion of Christianity throughout:

Kyng Pepyn and the Emperoure of Grece that were besyeged within
Constantinoble by the false enemyes of our fayth.

(*Valentine*, 194.29–31)

The Emperor of Greece and Pepin, the French king, are united in the siege here, and in the subsequent breaking of it. The unification of two notable Christian empires throughout this text, here centred in Constantinople, foregrounds the city as a bastion against the Saracen East and a gateway to this other world.⁶¹

JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is omnipresent in late medieval crusading literature. During the active crusading of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries it features centrally in crusading discourse as the ultimate crusading goal.⁶² Even in the later medieval period, when crusading interest shifted focus to the southern and eastern borders of Christendom, Jerusalem remained relevant as a marker of the overarching goals of

⁶¹ Donald M. Nicol considers Western Christianity in Byzantium, particularly during the fourteenth century, to suggest that perceptions of difference—even difference within Christendom—was partially responsible in sewing divisions between communities in Eastern Europe. See Donald M. Nicol, *Church and Society in the Last Centuries of Byzantium: The Birkbeck Lectures, 1977* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 68–97.

⁶² Housley, *The Later Crusades*, pp. 7–48.

crusade.⁶³ In the fifteenth century, the city was likewise regarded as a marker of all that had been lost to the Ottoman Turks. As Norman Housley notes, in June 1456—following the loss of Constantinople—Pope Calixtus III issued a general call to recover not just Constantinople but the Holy Land too.⁶⁴ Oleg Grabar posits that medieval thinking differentiated the physical space of Jerusalem and the ‘visionary’ space, suggesting that the city’s space is constructed as separate from its geography and that it has ‘always existed elsewhere than on its own territory’ in the Western medieval mind.⁶⁵ This notion aligns the city with the construction of individual spaces as seen in the prose romances, where inner, constructed space—which may be aligned with a religious or political ideology—is as valuable as a building’s physical presence. The symbolic importance of Jerusalem can also be seen in the way that it is placed at the centre of medieval *mappa mundi*.⁶⁶ The city is most commonly the endpoint for pilgrimages and crusades, both real and fictional, as an idealised beacon of Christendom in the Holy Land.⁶⁷

Of the crusading prose romances, Jerusalem features most prominently in *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, subtitled as *The Siege and Conqueste of Jerusalem*. The opening of the text details how the ‘holy cyte of Iherusalem’ (*Godeffroy*, 23.35) was captured by the Caliph of Egypt, long before the narrative begins. The Caliph was a man of extreme cruelty towards Christians, and one who ‘caste down to the grounde the chyrche of the sepulcre of our lorde Ihesu Cryste’ (24.8–9). The binaries established early in this text would not have been unfamiliar to fifteenth-century English readers, and they set up the

⁶³ Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*, pp. 57–59.

⁶⁴ Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat*, p. 27.

⁶⁵ Oleg Grabar, *Jerusalem: Constructing the Study of Islamic Art, Volume IV* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), pp. 173–85.

⁶⁶ Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East: The “Travels” of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 4.

⁶⁷ Carol Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), p. 17.

central religious conflict in terms already relevant to the readership: as between Christians and the Turks, who ‘toke the holy cyte of Iherusalem’ (31.18) and punished the people within. These are the same ‘myscreantes or Turkes’ (*Morte*, 940.15) that Malory’s knights crusade against at the closing of *Le Morte Darthur*, journeying ‘into the Holy Lande’ (940.11) of Jerusalem. David Benson argues that Malory’s ‘sentimental Christianity’ at the end of the *Morte* is most notable in the deaths of Lancelot and Guinevere.⁶⁸ However, the martial form of Christianity that features in the text’s final few lines most clearly represents sentimentality for a nostalgic, imagined past in which the Holy Land is part of Christendom.⁶⁹

In the prose romances, the Turks are described as ‘a peple moche rude & without ordynaunce’ (*Godeffroy*, 29.1–2), coming from ‘a contre towards the Eest whiche is in surye’ (29.1). Representative of the Ottoman Empire’s sprawling conquests by the late fifteenth century, this Turkish Other has captured Jerusalem and the Holy Land and stands, therefore, in direct opposition to Christendom. The finale of *Godeffroy* is the culmination of the siege, achieved through visceral and systematic slaughter: ‘There myght no prayers ne cryeng of mercy auaylle. They slewe so many in the stretes / that there were heeps of dede bodyes’ (*Godeffroy*, 273.6–8). Ten thousand Turks are slain ‘within the closyng of the temple’ (274.30–31) alone, locating the very heart of this violent act within a space of great political and religious significance.

Although *Godeffroy* offers the clearest example, Jerusalem is also the end point of crusades across a number of other prose romances. In *Paris and Vienne*, Paris resolves ‘to goo in to that contrey’ (*Paris*, 59.9–10) to Jerusalem, though the city is firmly Saracen. In Jerusalem, he must ‘speke the langage of moores’ (59.11), yet the

⁶⁸ C. David Benson, ‘The Ending of the *Morte Darthur*’, in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, [1996] 2000), pp. 221–38 (pp. 235–36).

⁶⁹ As Chapter One has explored, these final lines are more likely to be in Caxton’s hand than Malory’s, especially given how they parallel Caxton’s crusading discourse in his prologues and epilogues.

city does not cause his Christian faith to falter. Rather, upon visiting ‘the holy sayntuaries’ and completing his journey, he becomes yet more devoted: he was ‘so deuoute that it was meruaylle’ (59.23–24). Jerusalem, in both *Godeffroy of Boloyne* and *Paris and Vienne*, is a space with enduring Christian value. Even texts like *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon* or *Le Morte Darthur*, which do not treat crusade as their central narrative, return to Jerusalem at the end. Reynaud makes ‘his way towarde the holy londe’ (*Aymon*, 494.24) in the finale of *Aymon*, and the few remaining knights of the Arthurian community journey ‘into the Holy Lande’ (*Morte*, 940.11) in the *Morte*’s final lines. *Charles the Grete*, which focuses on the closer threat of Muslim Iberia, also highlights the significance of Jerusalem even in the eyes of Saracen ‘Others’: Fierabras, when first introduced as a Saracen threat, claims to ‘holde Iherusalem that fayre cyte, and the sepulcre in which your god rested’ (*Charles*, 53.1–2). Jerusalem is omnipresent across the genre, either as a final crusading goal that must be recaptured or as a city of such spiritual and cultural importance that any texts concerned with the Christian-Saracen conflict—whether fictional, historical, or contemporary—pay deference to its significance.

As discussed in Chapter One, the paratexts accompanying the prose romances also emphasise the need to recapture Jerusalem and Constantinople, encouraging readers to follow in the footsteps of crusading heroes.⁷⁰ In the prologue to *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, Caxton calls for a crusade to ‘recouere the holy Cyte of Iherusalem’ (3.33), encouraging the reader to retrace Godfrey’s footsteps. In the epilogue, he reminds the reader that he has entitled this narrative the ‘laste siege and conquest of Iherusalem’ (311.23–24), pointedly advising that it should serve as example of how ‘Cristen people

⁷⁰ As Michael Markowski has noted, references to pilgrimage and crusade are frequently conflated in late medieval literature, and the term *crucesignatus* was general enough to cover both types of religiously-significant and martially-straining journeys. Markowski, ‘Crucesignatus’, p. 158.

one vnyed in a veray peas / myght empryse to goo theder in pylgremage with strong honde for to expelle the sarasyns and the turkes' (311.34–36). Even elsewhere in his printed material, such as *Declamation of Noblesse*, Caxton writes in his epilogue of the Earl of Worcester, who is a 'vertuous and wel-disposed lord' because of his 'pylgremage unto Jherusalem'.⁷¹ He also prints *Le Morte Darthur* purportedly in the hope that readers might emulate its moral values and 'doo after the good and leve the evyl' (Prologue: *Morte*, p. 856). While this phrase can be read against the wide spectrum of good and evil in the *Morte*, the final note of the text, upon which the reader is left to contemplate, is that of a return to the Holy Land as a final stand of Arthurian chivalry. As Chapter One has further discussed, this final crusading passage, alongside some of the other prominent crusading moments in the Roman War, may have been Caxton's own work. That the printed *Morte* is bookended by didacticism and crusading impulses, much of which can be attributed to Caxton rather than Malory, suggests that it can be read as a further instance of the prose romances encouraging crusade as a response to contemporary social concerns.

AESTHETIC ARCHITECTURE: DESCRIPTION OF SARACEN SPACE

Aesthetic descriptions sometimes contribute to the ideological importance of these architectural spaces. The English Charlemagne prose romances, in particular, depict towers and bridges with decoration that emphasises the exoticism and alterity of Saracen culture.⁷² *Charles the Grete* and *Huon of Burdeux* here differ from earlier English Charlemagne romances, with which the late fifteenth-century readership may

⁷¹ Blake, *Caxton's Own Prose*, p. 125.

⁷² For discussion of the East as exotic and distant to the medieval English reader, Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 74–75; and Freedman, 'Locating the Exotic', pp. 23–3.

have been familiar, through their focus on Saracen exoticism by means of architecture. Those earlier English Charlemagne romances that do consider architectural structures, like *The Sege of Melayne*, are centred around more proximate places, like the city of Milan, rather than more distant, Eastern sites.⁷³ *Melayne* is also a text organised around French defeat rather than victory, along with others such as *The Song of Roland* (c. 1400), based on a lost version of the *Chanson de Roland* believed to have been composed around the time of the First Crusade.⁷⁴ The Charlemagne narratives most familiar to late medieval English readers prior to Caxton would have been ones focused on nearby threats, such as in Iberia, rather than crusades further east to Babylon.⁷⁵ Charlemagne and his peers in *Charles* and *Huon* offer a new perspective: emphasising crusading victory, and focusing on the capture of spaces aesthetically marked as Saracen and ‘Other’.

The Bridge of Mantryble, in *Charles the Grete*, features aesthetic description that emphasises its martial value and its cultural alterity. It is a structure of strategic importance, but also one that is similar to a castle or bastion: its arches are described in terms of their construction, ‘soulded wyth leed and cyment’ (*Charles*, 103.33), and continual reference is made to materials of war: iron and steel in particular. However, the same descriptive choices also represent the respect afforded to Saracen art and culture in *Charles the Grete* and the prose romances more widely. This respect creates a tension between what is familiar and ‘other’ to the reader, emphasised by the bridge’s

⁷³ As Dieter Mehl notes, this poem may have even originated in England. Mehl, *Middle English Romances*, pp. 152–53.

⁷⁴ See Janet M. Cowen, ‘The English Charlemagne Romances’, in *Roland and Charlemagne in Europe: Essays on the Reception and Transformation of a Legend*, ed. by Karen Pratt (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1996), pp. 149–68 (pp. 151–52).

⁷⁵ As Marianne Ailes and Phillipa Hardman note, there were Middle English adaptations of successful Charlemagne romances during the Hundred Years War, and that these might be seen as ‘a form of cultural appropriation’ that used the bloodline of Edward III as an English claim to France, and thereby to France’s glories. Ailes and Hardman, ‘How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?’, pp. 43–44.

place between these two ideological spheres. Saracen architecture is unfamiliar in culture, yet impressive and desirable, much like the conflicts found in the figure of the giant.⁷⁶ The visual impact of the bridge is striking to the reader and characters alike: ‘Duc naymes was the fyrst that wente & behelde the brydge of mantryble, whyche was meruayllous, as ye shal here’ (103.25–27). It is described as sitting upon ‘xxx arches of marble’ (103.31–32), and containing ‘grete towres wyth fayr pylers rychely ordeyned’ (103.34–104.1). This tower is at once strategically and visually impressive; a ‘meruayllous’ fortification, with pillars that are as ‘fayre’ as they are strong. The author draws attention to how the elements of this structure are ‘rychely’ created, suggesting that the aesthetic qualities of the bridge are wrought into the very structural elements that define its purpose. In the middle, there is also ‘a toure of marble so stronge that it may not be beten doon’ (165.11–12), emphasising that the visual splendour of the bridge does not detract from its martial purpose.

The area around the Bridge of Mantryble is depicted as similarly splendid. For example, the construct overlooking the bridge is a further testament to the affluence and power of the Eastern ‘Other’:

And aboue on hye is an egle of golde moche replendysshaunte and
shynyng lyke the sonne, that it semeth that it were a flame of fyre,
whyche is seen a large myle ferre.

(*Charles*, 104.6–9)

The eagle is a beacon of light and a symbol of the overtly exotic portrayal of Saracen culture and aesthetics. This portrayal continues once the peers cross the bridge and are greeted in Agrymore by the sight of ‘fawcons and other byrdes of proye vpon the perches, grete oxen and buefs slayn and flayn, fayre hangyng, and grete swyn strangled’

⁷⁶ Cohen, *Of Giants*, pp. 159–62.

(106.33–107.3). This is an opulent scene, and one that a fifteenth-century reader would associate with not only lavish feasting but also the hunting sport that made such a stockpile possible.⁷⁷ The use of ‘fayre’ again, directly after the encounter on the bridge, further reinforces that this sight is one of splendour. The insight it offers into the Saracen world allows the readership to see a cultured and lavish enemy, and one with similar social and cultural standards to that of their own.

AESTHETIC TOWERS

Towers are visible beacons against the landscape, and their aesthetic design in the prose romances reflects their status as ideological bastions. Floripas’s tower and garden, in *Charles the Grete*, is described with detail that emphasises both its alterity and its familiarity to a Christian reader, reflecting the transition of the space from Saracen to Christian. Where the Bridge of Mantryble’s aesthetic description focuses on general exoticism and resplendence, Floripas’s tower is described in far more specific terms, with reference to the sciences and arts as well as Edenic imagery. The precise nature of this imagery is complicated by how Christianity and Islam are in close theological proximity in the Middle Ages and close geographical proximity in the Iberian Peninsula.⁷⁸ The description of the tower and garden is extensive:

⁷⁷ Furthermore, later medieval European diets contained far more protein than those of early medieval Europe, as a result of increased availability and variety of meat. While the presence of such meat would not be entirely exceptional, the quantity and variety of meat in this scene suggests a form of opulence unfamiliar to even the wealthiest readers. See Vern Bullough and Cameron Campbell, ‘Female Longevity and Diet in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 55.2 (1980), 317–25 (pp. 319–20); Christopher M. Woolgar, ‘Meat and Dairy Products in Late Medieval England’, in *Food in Medieval England: Diet and Nutrition*, ed. by C. M. Woolgar, D. Serjeantson, and T. Waldron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 88–101 (pp. 91–94).

⁷⁸ Iberian religious control was unstable throughout the early and middle medieval periods, often including the marginalisation of non-dominant religions. John Tolan discusses sources that evidence the subjugation of Muslims in thirteenth-century Castilian society. Evidence also exists suggesting that those Christian scholars who attempted to better understand Islam, such as Abbot Peter the Venerable, found the Iberian Peninsula a vital destination. Julian Weiss also describes the process of ‘accommodationism’ in Iberia, where social and cultural practices were shared across faiths to the point of threatening to nullify the differences between them. See Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*,

she ledde them by an olde gate and secrete, and wythoute knowyng of ony paynym she made them to entre in to hyr chamber, whereof thentre was made meruayllously after the sarasyns werke. Aboute the chyef yate was made by grete scyence the heuen & the sterres, the sonne, the mone, the tyme of somer & of wynter; wodes, montaynes, byrdes, beestes, & fysshe were there paynted of all fygures and lykenesse by meruayllous facyon: & after somme scryptures the sone of mathusale dyd do make it. And thys chambre stood vpon a blacke rocke al enuyrounded wyth the see, and in one of the quarters was a gardyn pretoyre meruayllously fayr wherein floures ne frytes faylled neuer, & there of al maladyes and sekenesses sauf onely the maladye of deth was founden comferte and good helpe. There within grewe mandegloyre.

(*Charles*, 94.1–16)

Floripas's tower is described as being 'al enuyrounded wyth the see', secluded both literally and metaphorically as a Christian refuge deep within the Saracen world. The garden and tower space is a paradise in this Saracen land, marked as other by the flowers and fruits that 'faylled neuer' and by the exotic plants such as 'mandegloyre', or mandrake. In this depiction, *Charles the Grete* presents alterity and specificity; this is not the generic garden of romance that, as V. A. Kolve suggests, provides in its generality a recognisable theatre of action for the narrative.⁷⁹ Ad Putter considers a similar garden in *Walewein*, located in a different, yet similarly exoticised, East: 'far-away in distant India'.⁸⁰ He argues that the localisation of details such as topography and specific flora allows the medieval readership to interpret the text as a factually accurate representation of an unfamiliar world.⁸¹ Whilst Iberia is geographically closer

pp. 174–93; James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 33–39; Weiss, 'Remembering Spain in the Medieval European Epic', p. 70.

⁷⁹ In structure, this garden is similar to the tower and garden in Chaucer's *The Knights' Tale*, noting that the prison tower and beautiful garden in this tale 'share a common wall' and are thus intimately connected. However, in purpose, Chaucer's tower and garden spaces are organisational points in the narrative, selected to quickly paint a scene without the need for lengthy description. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, pp. 85–157 (p. 87).

⁸⁰ Ad Putter, 'Walewein in the Otherworld and the Land of Prester John', in *Originality and Tradition in the Middle Dutch Roman van Walewein*, ed. by B. Besamusca and E. Kooper (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999, repr. 2003), pp. 79–99 (pp. 92–3).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

to the English readership than India, it remains socially and spiritually distant in this text as exemplified through this garden.

Although the garden demonstrates alterity and specificity as compared to other gardens of romance, the whole structure is equally reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. Inside the boundaries of the garden and tower the Christians find sustenance ‘of good vytaylle and delycyous metes’ (95.17–18), although they are clothed with ‘mantels ryche of sylke & golde broudred’ (95.23). The men are safe and provided for, in a place where there is ‘founden comferte and good helpe’ (94.15–16) for all maladies. The tower and garden space are as one here, a space of religious and political power for the crusading plot and yet a space of safety too. This tower begins as Saracen before becoming a Christian space, and the visual imagery associated with the structure reflects this change through its familiarity. The space is marked apart from other gardens of romance, but is not so ‘other’ that it cannot be converted.

Huon of Burdeux features a similar example: the Tower of Dunother. The description of this tower conflates military architecture and gilded finish, akin to the Bridge of Mantryble’s suggestions of Eastern strength and exoticism, to demonstrate a tower space that is accessible to Huon but more exotic than a reader might expect. Huon encounters the tower directly after winning a major battle and striking a key blow against the Saracen East in which there were ‘many that were crystenyd’ (*Huon*, 95.5). By contrast with other towers, this tower does not feature an encounter in which space is reclaimed for Christian purposes. However, Huon’s actions do win him the treasures within (including a suit of armour and the signet ring discussed earlier in this chapter) which prove vital in infiltrating Babylon at the end of his journey. The aesthetic description of this tower also occurs just prior to combat within the space, between Huon and the giant who inhabits the tower. As Huon ‘came to the gate of the castell of

Dunoster. than he saw .ii. men of brasse' (98.18–19) standing on either side. These brass figures are no mere statues; Huon notes that they 'without seasynge bet with there flaylles', and they are evidently animate enough to prevent his entry 'without deth' (98.20–22). Huon's means of entry into the tower is unconventional, both in his action and in the description of the structure.

As Huon demonstrates later in the text through his entry to Babylon, and as I have argued in discussing gateways, a more deceptive approach is required than brazen combat. He sees 'nere to a pyller of marbell a basyn of gold fast tyed with a cheyne' (98.27–28), which he strikes to catch the attention of Sebylle, a damsel imprisoned within the tower. She 'openyd a wycket there issuyd suche a wynde that it causeth ye two men with there flaylles to stonde styll' (99.22–24), which also allows Huon access to the tower. The great, animated men of brass that guard the gateway, the marble pillar like those of the Bridge of Mantryble in *Charles the Grete*, and the gilded basin that appears so out of place, each contribute towards drawing the reader's attention away from the defensive capabilities of the structure and towards its exotic nature. The rich decorations are a marker of cultural and artistic prowess in the Saracen world, and this prowess is redoubled by the treasures Huon receives within. The armour is a 'ryche harnes' (105.14), enchanted to render the user invulnerable if neither he nor his parents have sinned, and the ring that grants access through the multi-stage gateways of Babylon is made of fine gold.

Structures like the Tower of Dunother, the Bridge of Mantryble, and Floripas's tower reinforce to the fifteenth-century reader that the Saracen East and the Ottoman Empire should be viewed as threats that are socially, culturally, and ideologically impressive. These depictions, like Caxton's paratextual calls for crusade, impress upon the reader the real urgency of a new crusade. They might even be read as showcasing

the strength and extent of the power which Christendom could—and, as the texts seek to demonstrate, *can* and *will*—overthrow. Each instance of aesthetic architectural description occurs just prior to a combat encounter that plays a significant role in each respective narrative, linking together aesthetic exoticism and the crusade against the Saracen East. In *Charles the Grete*, the encounters in which Charlemagne seeks to reclaim the whole of Iberia are grand sieges and fierce melees that result in the capture of Saracen spaces with militaristic and cultural value to Christendom. In *Huon of Burdeux*, in which Huon's own penitential task brings about his desire to challenge the Saracen East, the combat focuses not on the space but the artefacts it contains and how they might help Huon's journey progress. The exoticism written onto the Saracen architecture of these texts supplements their value as ideologically-contested spaces. It marks these spaces out in the text as key locations towards achieving the texts' crusading goals in the same way that Caxton's prologues and epilogues seek to highlight Jerusalem and Constantinople as important spaces.

CONCLUSION: SPACES OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL POWER

This chapter has considered how the prose romances negotiate the physical places of crusading journeys and the religious and ideological significance those spaces can have. As Soja's and Lefebvre's notions of 'lived' or 'third' spaces demonstrate, spaces like towers, bridges, and cities in the prose romances take on and project a set of ideological beliefs shaped by their occupants.⁸² All of these spaces, and others, change hands between Christians and Saracens as sites of both conflict and cultural exchange.⁸³ They

⁸² Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 11, 73 and 84–5; Soja, *Thirdspace*.

⁸³ On cultural exchange, see Heffernan, *The Orient in Chaucer* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 1–3.

offer repeated demonstrations that crusading success hinges upon the capture of space for Christian ideological purposes. Furthermore, the paratextual comments that frame the prose romances draw parallels between how these spaces are ideologically contested and how significant spaces like Constantinople and Jerusalem were, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, important sites of conflict.

Notably, many of the spaces in the prose romances coded by the cultural and religious identities of Christian and Saracen are not actual sites of worship. Neither churches nor mosques feature heavily, and the only spaces of real religious significance are Constantinople and Jerusalem. In *Charles the Grete*, religious buildings feature at the end of the text, but only after the crusading plot has been entirely resolved. Once Iberia is under French control, Charlemagne vows to ‘lede forth a contemplatyf lyf’ (*Charles*, 202.1–2) but is called into action again by a vision. After a final foray into Spain and the capture of Pampeluna, he marks the space not as French but as Christian, by ordering the construction of churches. Across Iberia, ‘many were baptysed, and chyrcches were ordeyned’ (204.16–17). Some of these are related in great detail, such as the Church of Saint James, ‘in the place where-as he [Charles] had founde the body of hym’ (207.30–31), whereas many others are merely listed. *Charles the Grete* demonstrates the power and potential of ideological spaces throughout, as is evidenced by the lengthy depictions of encounters at the Bridge of Mantryble and Floripas’s Tower. However, the text does not feature actual spaces of worship until the crusade is over. Instead, the architecture throughout is infused with religious significance; the narratives themselves are underpinned by the constant reminder—reinforced through Caxton’s paratexts—that Jerusalem and Constantinople have such intrinsic importance to the faith that their recapture trumps all other conceptualisations of religious space.

To Caxton's readership, places such as Constantinople and Jerusalem were at the forefront of the contemporary socio-political concern for their historical and cultural relevance as Christian cities. Specific buildings and spaces exemplify these concerns in real terms, such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The cultural resonance of this conversion echoes across the prose romances, and this architectural conversion played a real role in establishing cultural identity. Robert Ousterhout notes that the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque contributed significantly to an increase in scale and design in later mosque design.⁸⁴ More widely, he argues that this Ottoman appropriation of past culture and architecture is based on the historical founding of Constantinople, and a desire to situate the Ottoman Empire as the rightful heirs to the Roman and Byzantine Empires.⁸⁵ Though the building was originally an Orthodox Christian church, its repurposing can also be read as a contextual background to these texts in aesthetic terms. The building made use of marble and gold in a manner that we see reflected across the architecture of the prose romances;⁸⁶ that same gilded, marble architecture in the prose romances is representative of spaces that are Saracen but that will become Christian: the Bridge of Mantryble in *Charles the Grete* and outside the Tower of Dunother in *Huon of Burdeux*.

There are a multitude of ways in which space can be reconsidered in the prose romances in light of the religious tensions of the mid-to-late fifteenth century.⁸⁷ These texts promote a culture of fear of and respect for the Eastern Other, through the physical descriptions of the Saracen world as much as through the Saracens encountered. In

⁸⁴ Ousterhout, 'Appropriation of the Past', p. 170.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁸⁶ For further information on the building's aesthetic qualities, see Bissera V. Pentcheva, 'Hagia Sophia and Multisensory Aesthetics', *Gesta*, 50.2 (2011), 93–111 (p. 95); and Grinnell, 'The Theoretical Attitude towards Space in the Middle Ages', pp. 142–43.

⁸⁷ For discussion of the Ottoman Empire's considerable expansion during the fifteenth century, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire 1300–1481* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1990), pp. 145–251; Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey – Vol. 1: Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, 1280–1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 55–111.

presenting these arguments regarding political, religious and cultural othering, this chapter has considered space in this figurative sense, emphasising—as the prose romances do—the significance of the occupants and the ideological views they hold. Simmel’s and Lefebvre’s theories of social ownership of space illuminate how, in the prose romances, controlling the cultural alignment of a space is as important as controlling its physical walls.⁸⁸ Each tower, passageway, bridge, gateway, and city is both a physical challenge to the crusaders and a symbol of their progress; capturing spaces along the way models the success that crusaders see in the Holy Land as well as reinforcing the ethical narrative of crusade as justifiable, and justified, reconquest.

⁸⁸ Simmel, ‘Bridge and Door’; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

CHAPTER FOUR: APPROACHING THE SUPERNATURAL

The supernatural, while assuming various guises, is one of the most recognisable features of medieval romance.¹ As an umbrella term, the ‘supernatural’ can include anything from spiritual and divine influence, to otherworldly sorcerers with unholy powers, to enchanted weapons and jewellery. In its most common form in English romance, the supernatural is ‘magic’. The prose romances, however, represent supernatural people, phenomena, and items in a way that bring them closer to miraculous than magical, because the distinction between good and bad depends on whether the supernatural is used in the service of Christian good. Those supernatural elements acting for the Christian good, such as miracles and relics, are legitimised through divine connection. Those authored by Saracen nigromancers and enchanters are ‘magic’, and constructed as illicit because they work against the crusade and its divine authority.² In many cases, the prose romances continue the romance tradition of the supernatural testing knights that encounter it.³ However, these crusading texts value a knight’s morality above other chivalric standards, and their supernatural phenomena specifically test a knight’s Christian virtues.⁴ *Le Morte Darthur* is no exception in this

¹ Raluca L. Radulescu, ‘Genre and Classification’, in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. by Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 31–48 (p. 31); Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 33; John Stevens, *Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1973); K. S. Whetter, *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 61–64; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*; Michelle Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance: From Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); Heng, *Empire of Magic*; Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010).

² Corinne Saunders refers to ‘licit and illicit magic’ when discussing the huge variety of types of magic in romance. This chapter examines the representation of the supernatural as both a positive and negative force, suggesting that the religious, martial narratives of the prose romances encourage a reading that defines types of magic by whether or not they are appropriate for Christian use. See Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural* p. 7.

³ Cooper further suggests that romance encounters involving magic often show protagonist knights overcoming the supernatural, rather than utilising it, as a means of proving their knightly and earthly qualities. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 137–45. Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, p. 19.

⁴ Michelle Sweeney further argues that magic introduced ‘a moral but socially-influenced system of evaluation into the romances’ that could be read alongside other forms of moral authority such as Catholic dogma. Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, p. 169.

regard, and the Grail Quest in particular, which is more spiritually-focused than Malory's other Tales, features supernatural items and phenomena which are legitimised through the Grail's divine connection and that test the Grail seekers' Christian virtues. Elsewhere in the *Morte*, in more secular-focused Tales, characters like Morgan and Merlin operate beyond the court in a manner similar to the dwarfs that feature in other prose romances, granting Christian access to powerful, problematic magic.

I use 'supernatural' in this chapter to encompass everything from magical enchantments to literal miracles, and everything from that which is explicitly evil to that which is clearly legitimised through the will of God. Many, but not all, of these phenomena might safely be classified as 'magic', a term which covers a wide range of uses in medieval society.⁵ However, the religious significance with which the prose romances imbue supernatural phenomena renders this definition overly simplistic. Richard Kieckhefer suggests that magic's broadness and vagueness makes precise definition difficult, particularly when distinguishing between actual magic, religious ritual, and science or medicine.⁶ Michelle Sweeney suggests that magic in romance functions to reveal characters' morality and identity, to explore social and political concerns, and to create scenarios that cannot be resolved by one set of moral guidelines alone.⁷ This is a useful starting definition for magic in romance, but not one that applies to the prose romances because it too readily conflates licit and illicit phenomena present in the prose romances and the extent to which the legitimacy of magic is dependent on

⁵ Karen Jolly, 'Medieval Magic: Definitions, Beliefs, Practices', in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages*, ed. by Catharina Raudvere and Edward Peters (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 1–72 (pp. 3–4). On 'white magic' and the connection between healing magic and natural science, see Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 118–24; Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, repr. 2000), pp. 64–68. On the recurrence of certain magical items creating certain audience expectations, see Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 138; Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, pp. 18–19.

⁶ As Kieckhefer further notes, there was already an 'identifiable class of magicians' among late medieval priests, physicians, folk-healers and diviners. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, pp. 8–9.

⁷ Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, pp. 11–20 (p. 13).

its capacity to further crusading aims. John Stevens distinguishes four types of ‘marvel’: ‘the magic’, alongside ‘the exotic’, ‘the mysterious’, and ‘the miraculous’.⁸ However, these categories do not cleanly fit the prose romances either, where the Saracen East is presented as exotic and mysterious even without supernatural elements, and where the crusade narratives frequently and intentionally blur the distinction between ‘magical’ and ‘miraculous’.

There is much to be gained from Sweeney’s consideration of romance magic as a means of testing morality, as well as Stevens’s distinctions between miraculous and magical marvel. Jacques Le Goff distinguishes these categories further, defining the strictly magical as ‘the marvellous *controlled by man*’ and the miraculous as ‘the marvellous *controlled by God*’.⁹ By these criteria, the supernatural in earlier English romance is largely magical: it is created by humans and tests knights according to their chivalric ethical code. By contrast, the supernatural in the prose romances is more miraculous than magical: supernatural items determine a knight’s chivalric standing by evaluating his sinfulness, or lack thereof, against his Saracen foes.¹⁰ Magic and marvel are dangerous in the prose romances, and the texts more commonly associate them with Saracens than crusaders. Supernatural acts that do benefit the crusaders or advance the Christian cause are instead associated with God, or with proving a knight’s Christian virtues, thus legitimising them through their benefit to the crusade.

This chapter begins by examining the types of magic in late medieval English romance, to demonstrate that these various representations each engaged with a broad

⁸ Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, pp. 99–102.

⁹ Quotations here are taken from Stevens. Jacques Le Goff expresses a similar view of miracle, stating that ‘Christian marvels are embodied in miracles’ and that the supernatural element is limited, in part, because a miracle has a single author: God. See Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 101; Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: University of Chicago Press, 1985, repr. 1992), p. 35.

¹⁰ Using these definitions, John Finlayson has also argued that the marvellous is far less ubiquitous in romance than critics have conventionally suggested. See John Finlayson, ‘The Marvellous in Middle English Romance’, *The Chaucer Review*, 33.4 (1999), 363–408 (pp. 374–75).

cultural imagination defined by Christian faith and belief in the supernatural. It then features two major sections. The first major section initially discusses how the prose romances show a shift towards representing the supernatural as miraculous, where earlier English romances treated it as more strictly magical. This section considers magical items in earlier English romance and in the prose romances. It then considers examples of miracles in the prose romances and examples of Saracen enchantment and nigromancy to demonstrate that supernatural phenomena in the prose romances are legitimised by the extent to which they benefit crusading narratives. The second major section in this chapter is centred around *Le Morte Darthur*. It begins by examining how the form of supernatural testing common to romance is, in the *Morte Darthur*, focused on testing knights' religious virtues above other manifestations of chivalric ethics, such as good conduct. This section goes on to consider those few characters in the *Morte* that directly wield magical power, drawing parallels between these and various nigromancers, enchanters, and dwarfs elsewhere in the prose romances. I suggest, in this section, that the presentation of these characters, and the power they wield, can be aligned with representations in the other prose romances.

MAGIC IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND IN EARLIER ENGLISH ROMANCE

Magic was a core part of the cultural imagination of late medieval England, reflected in its ubiquity in romance. Readers of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century prose romances would likely have been familiar with representations of magic in verse romances composed earlier (but still circulating) as well as in contemporary cultural understandings of natural sciences, medicine, astrology, and theology.

Such fields encompass types of 'white' or 'natural' magic: a form of the supernatural defined by its capacity to heal and protect, or as a marvel of the natural

world and human craftsmanship within it.¹¹ Healing balms, ritual talismans, astrological predictions, and technological developments all skirted a fine line between natural science and magical marvel, and they were a part of the common tradition of medieval magic from the twelfth century onwards.¹² As Sweeney suggests, their presence in romance provides the key to exploring the real world through the lens of romance.¹³ Medieval writers could only partially explain phenomena such as medicinal healing in terms of science, and when they gained new information about the natural world it frequently supplemented, rather than supplanted, existing ideas of natural magic.¹⁴ As Cooper notes, ‘as more and more things were explained, the marvellous expanded its frontiers to match’.¹⁵ Some similar depictions of natural magic also originated from translations of Arabic texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, suggesting a connection between the scientific principles such as astrology that underpinned both Western European and Arabic scientific development.¹⁶ In England, the reality of ‘white’ or ‘natural’ magic in day-to-day life—through medicine and natural sciences—meant that discussion of the marvellous was ubiquitous in both fiction and non-fiction alike, throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁷ In the prose romances, part of the move in re-associating the supernatural with the miraculous rather than the marvellous sees ‘white’ magic disassociated from the natural world and re-associated with its capacity to advance the Christian, crusading cause.

¹¹ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 117–18.

¹² Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, pp. 56–94. See also Robert Bartlett, *The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 20–23.

¹³ Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, p. 169.

¹⁴ Richard Kieckhefer suggests the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder as an example of this phenomenon. Pliny does not generally attribute the curative powers of his remedies to magic (despite seemingly inventing some impossible ingredients), but ‘they are the sort that later writers would cite in discussing natural magic’. See Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p. 22.

¹⁵ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 140.

¹⁶ Richard Kieckhefer, ‘The Specific Rationality of Medieval Magic’, *The American Historical Review*, 99.3 (1994), 813–36 (pp. 818–20); Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 117.

¹⁷ John Finlayson, ‘The Marvellous in Middle English Romance’, *The Chaucer Review*, 33.4 (1999), 363–408 (pp. 374–75).

Other common representations of magic in romance are folkloric in origin, where magical swords and rings link the real world with fairy otherworlds.¹⁸ Otherworlds in romance provide a secluded space away from the court where supernatural marvel can take place.¹⁹ Associating these places with fairies gives licence to the magic within them and ensures that anything explicitly magical can be kept contained.²⁰ As Jeff Rider notes, the boundaries that separate otherworlds from the real world in earlier English romance can take both physical and figurative forms.²¹ For example, Orfeo in *Sir Orfeo* enters a cave and travels ‘thre mile other mo’ within it to ‘com into a fair cuntray’ which is the land of the fairies.²² The reader may infer that the border between these two worlds is distinct and yet natural. The fairy castle of this otherworld is imbued with what Laura Hibbard refers to as ‘conscious artistry’, which draws attention to its marvel and alterity.²³ Its outer walls glow ‘clere and schine as cristal’, and even the least attractive pillar is made ‘of burnist gold’ (*Orfeo*, ll. 358 and 368). Fairy marvels and otherworlds are wish-fulfilment and an escape from the chivalric world into another, offering impossible pleasures but also perilous dangers.²⁴

¹⁸ Michelle Sweeney describes this as ‘a pool of well-known and accepted magical artillery’, and suggests that the frequency with which some items are found (such as protective rings) indicates that romance audiences would be intimately familiar with the motifs. Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, p. 18.

¹⁹ Byrne, *Otherworlds*, pp. 1–2.

²⁰ While some early modern texts were created in a cultural climate that assumed the existence of fairies, late medieval texts were primarily authored by clerics, for whom a belief in fairies and demons was heretical for its roots in Celtic and Germanic folklore. Richard Firth Green, *Elf Queens and Holy Friars: Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 12–16; Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 7; Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 179–81; James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 9–38.

²¹ Jeff Rider, ‘The Other Worlds of Romance’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 115–31 (pp. 116–17).

²² ‘Sir Orfeo’, in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Anne Laskaya & Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 26–41, ll. 350–51.

²³ Laura Hibbard, *Mediæval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 195. Notably, the parallels between the real world and the Otherworld have led some critics, such as Dominique Battles, to read the text as a story of political and military conquest that can be used to interrogate notions of Englishness. See Dominique Battles, ‘Sir Orfeo and English Identity’, *Studies in Philology*, 107.2 (2010), 179–211 (pp. 179–80).

²⁴ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 206; Byrne, *Otherworlds*.

Romance magic is therefore situated in places that are geographically and ideologically distant from the chivalric court. While earlier English romance uses fairy otherworlds as this space, the prose romances locate magic more precisely in the Saracen East. The East is an ‘other’ space that is geographically and culturally distant enough from English and French Christendom to play home to magic that cannot be considered divinely licit. Even the one true otherworld in the prose romances—Oberon’s magical realm of Mommur in *Huon of Burdeux*—can be located precisely in the real world: Oberon refers to it as ‘.iii. C. leges fro hense’ [300 leagues from here] (*Huon*, 74.6). Similarly, the Roman War in Malory’s *Morte Darthur* is unusually geographically specific, as compared to much of the rest of the text, and it contains a great many othered figures in the forms of Saracens and giants. Where the fairy otherworlds of earlier romance are marked by their excess and by aesthetic qualities, so too are spaces of the East described in terms of visual splendour, as the previous chapter has explored in architectural descriptions of the East like the ‘egle of golde’ that sits above the Bridge of Mantryble in *Charles the Grete* (104.6). These realms are not the ‘thoroughly inassimilable’ otherworlds of verse romance, but real worlds that are wholly assimilable and assailable.²⁵

Some late medieval texts locate this alternate, geographical space even more precisely within the real world. The magician in Chaucer’s ‘Franklin’s Tale’ gets his power from his ‘tables Tolletanes’,²⁶ or his astronomical tables from Toledo, and Pacolet in *Valentine and Orson* is an enchanter, who ‘at the scole of tollette had lerned so mucche of the arte of Nygromancye’ (*Valentine*, 142.16–18). Toledo is repeatedly associated with magic in late medieval literature and culture, as the city was said to

²⁵ Byrne, *Otherworlds*, p. 25.

²⁶ Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The Franklin’s Tale’, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 184, l. 1241.

house Europe's premier school of nigromancy in the late Middle Ages.²⁷ It was also a geopolitically important city, at the forefront of Castile's power during the Iberian religious conflicts of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. Claims of the city's connections to nigromancy circulated in England after the Papacy received a doomsday letter in 1184, purportedly sent by the astrologers and nigromancers of Toledo, resulting in a common rumour surrounding the city's university and its dark teachings.²⁸ Many twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholars linked such claims with the geographical location of the city, as a meeting place of Christian and Saracen culture and knowledge.²⁹ Toledo is an example of how geography contributes to the representation of magic which, in the English prose romances, was more closely associated with real world spaces of religious alterity than imagined fairy spaces. The prose romances further this shift, locating magic more precisely in the Saracen East and denigrating illicit magic such as nigromancy because of its association with Saracens and distance from Christian miracle.

Late medieval views of the various aforementioned types of magic were all informed by the Church's changing attitudes towards the supernatural. In earlier medieval Christianity, conflict between Christians and pagans was based on opposing views of magic, where both parties associated magic with demons but only Christians viewed these demons as malevolent.³⁰ Saunders suggests that magic was drawn into

²⁷ Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 23, 30 and 47. O'Callaghan notes on these pages, amongst others, Toledo's significance as a meeting point and city of power.

²⁸ M. Gaster, 'The Letter of Toledo', *Folklore*, 13.2 (1902), 115–34 (pp. 115–20). Gaster further notes that some legends even tell of the devil himself teaching in Toledo, taking the souls of his scholars as payment for his services.

²⁹ Both William of Malmesbury and Ralph of Coggeshall wrote that the city's reputation for dark arts could be linked both with the Saracen scholars and the Jewish population. See C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 161–64.

³⁰ Richard Kieckhefer expands upon this distinction, suggesting that the difference is in the representation of demons. For pagans, these were 'neutral spirits' that could be either good or evil, but for Christians, demons were spirits that had 'turned wholly to evil'. For the purposes of this summary, only the Christian definition is relevant to the texts in question. See Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, pp. 36–38.

‘the wider conflict between good and evil’ in early Christian culture, which led to the Church in early medieval Europe being ‘deeply suspicious’ of the pagan associations with magic.³¹ Valerie Flint proposes that this is because religion requires a deep reverence and trust of ‘powers superior’, whilst magic implies a desire to ‘subordinate and to command’ such powers.³² The distinction is important to the prose romances, which move the supernatural away from being wholly magical and towards being miraculous – away from that which is controlled by man and towards that which is controlled by God alone.³³ Church suspicion of magic had faded somewhat by the late medieval period. Le Goff suggests that the ‘marvellous had become less threatening’ to the Church by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, because the Church felt that it could ‘tame’ the marvellous to its own advantage.³⁴ A medieval audience would have questioned not the existence of magic but rather ‘the extent of its powers and whether it is licit’.³⁵ Their acceptance of miracles would come even more easily from the knowledge that miracles could be authored by God alone. However, this leads, at points, to ‘uneasy questions’ over the mixture of the magic and Christian theology and the possibility of redemption.³⁶ Even in the fourteenth century and beyond, romance writers needed to represent magic carefully, given that the topic was still controversial and that

³¹ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 4.

³² Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 8.

³³ Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 101.

³⁴ Le Goff does not offer a lengthy justification, but agrees with Erich Köhler’s view, in *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in der höfischen Epik*, that the ‘lower and middle ranks of the nobility’ found the magic of courtly romance to be a suitable ‘alternative culture’ to that of the Church. See Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p. 29.

³⁵ Quotation from Corinne Saunders, who suggests that the bible’s treatment of magic is ‘multifaceted’, and draws distinctions between magic and miracle. Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 36. For further distinction, see Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 101.

³⁶ Saunders notes in particular that many ‘licit’ forms of the supernatural, such as miracle, have ‘illicit’ counterparts, such as the temptations of the devil. See Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 207–08.

they were writing during a period in which institutionalised religion was not separate from peoples' worldviews.³⁷

FROM MAGIC TO MIRACLE

The prose romances represent the supernatural in religiously-defined terms, as miraculous and demonic, rather than in secular terms, as magical or marvellous. They continue the traditions common to earlier English romance in which supernatural objects evaluate a knight and demonstrate his inherent chivalric values, but they adapt them to focus on the knight's Christian virtues and the extent to which he has God's support in his endeavours. Alongside supernatural items, the prose romances show instances of powerful supernatural phenomena. These, too, are framed in religious language, as divinely-ordained miracles and as instances of wicked Saracen enchantment.

SUPERNATURAL ITEMS IN ROMANCE: FROM MAGICAL TO MIRACULOUS

Common magical objects like swords, rings, and balms are purported to help knights along their adventures by sustaining or healing them. In actuality, as Helen Cooper notes, the magic of these objects is often 'not important in itself, but for what it reveals' about a knight's own prowess.³⁸ These supernatural items test and evaluate knights in

³⁷ As Chapter One has explored, much of Caxton's printing was made viable by the income generated from ecclesiastical texts and indulgences, which also directly benefitted the Church. The movement in the prose romances from supernatural that is magical to supernatural that is miraculous does not reflect a return to any kind of official ecclesiastical values in Caxton's textual selection. Rather, it sits instead as part of a broader cultural interest in crusade in late fifteenth-century England. On Caxton's printing and Church connections, see Vincent Gillespie, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain, 1476–1558*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 1–9 (p. 7); Painter, *William Caxton*, p. 168; Boffey, 'From Manuscript to Print: Continuity and Change', p. 23; Boffey, *Manuscript and Print in London*, pp. 68–69.

³⁸ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 143.

terms of the social concerns important to a late medieval audience, such as good manners and right conduct.³⁹ Examples of these items are common across earlier English romances and the later prose romances. In both cases, the items evaluate knights' manners and conduct, although those in the prose romances place more importance on a knight's morality as defined by Christian virtue and sin.

Magical rings have the power to protect the knightly body from combat and from moral perversion. However, these items more frequently reveal a knight's innate qualities. In earlier English romances, their power is primarily natural, stemming from the stones they contain rather than the distinctly human process of forging.⁴⁰ In the thirteenth-century *King Horn*, Rimenhild grants the eponymous knight a protective ring that ensures he may not be harmed in battle:

The stones beoth suche grace
That thu ne schalt in none place
Of none dundes beon ofdrad
Ne on bataille beon amad'.

(*King Horn*, ll. 575–78)⁴¹

This protection allows for Horn's relatively-unchallenged narrative progression in a text greatly reduced from its sources.⁴² However, it does not play an active part in his victories: Horn 'lokede on the ringe / And thoghte on Rimenilde' (ll. 617–18) as he kills

³⁹ Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 24. Riddy also suggests that romance foregrounds the importance of British history and claims to the next world.

⁴⁰ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 124–25; Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 101.

⁴¹ 'King Horn', in *Four Romances of England*, ed. by Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, & Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), pp. 17–56, ll. 575–78. For further discussion of this ring, see also Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 125.

⁴² Mehl notes that *King Horn* is greatly reduced from its French sources, and he suggests that the English author is more concerned with advancing the plot than exploring the descriptive details of the story. The magic ring essentially guarantees Horn's success in any combat encounter, thereby removing the need for lengthy descriptions of his ultimately-inconsequential fights. Michelle Sweeney argues that magical items like this 'saved romance writers the need for lengthy explanations', resulting in the sort of brevity found in *King Horn*. See Mehl, *Middle English Romances*, pp. 48–50; Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, p. 18.

one hundred men, but the text does not suggest that the item actually helps. In *Bevis of Hampton* (c. 1300), Josian wears a similar ring to protect her chastity:

Al the while I were this ring,
Thei I be weddid to Iuor the kyng,
To ligge bi him—I schall not gabbe—
Likyng on me he schal none habbe.

(*Bevis*, ll. 1920–24)⁴³

Despite the ring's apparent protection, Josian protects her chastity via her own initiative and agency through several forced marriages, where the ring provides little tangible help. In *Floris and Blancheflour* (c. 1250), Floris receives a protective ring mired in a mixture of man-made and natural imagery: with it, 'Ne fir the brenne, ne drenchen in se, / Ne iren ne stel schal derie thee' (*Floris*, ll. 377–78).⁴⁴ However, when Floris and Blancheflour each refuse the magical protection, because it cannot save them both, a powerful onlooker releases them instead.

Cooper considers protective rings as part of her argument that magic's ineffective nature in romance serves to highlight the protagonists' human prowess.⁴⁵ She suggests that the ring in *King Horn* functions 'most effectively as symbol and least effectively as magic'; more important to the text, she suggests, is that Horn establishes his 'chivalric credentials' without the assistance of magic rings.⁴⁶ A similar situation occurs in *Huon of Burdeux*, although the ring Huon is given affords an entirely different type of protection much more appropriate to the crusading context. While wearing it,

⁴³ Quotation, as in Chapter Two, taken from the Naples version. The Cambridge version of *Bevis* shortens this passage and reframes the object as a girdle around her waist. For comparison between editions, see *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows, p. 115.

⁴⁴ Floris and Blancheflour', in *Sentimental and Humorous Romances*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications), ll. 613–17. Henceforth *Floris*.

⁴⁵ Cooper also draws upon the example of Malory's Arthur and his combat with Accolon. Excalibur's scabbard is a powerful supernatural item that receives no textual attention until it is in the hands of an enemy and forcing Arthur to prove his worth against it, rather than with it. See Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 137–45.

⁴⁶ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 153–56.

Huon can pass freely through Saracen lands and into the heart of Babylon, ‘for yf thou haddst slayne .v. C. men there shalbe none so hardy to touche the nor to do the any yll yf thou hast this ryng vpon the’ (*Huon*, 107.5–7). As the previous chapter on architecture has already mentioned, Huon uses the ring to bypass some of these gates and charms or threatens his way through others. In this instance, the power of the ring is not magical, but it does grant access to the East. Its purpose is to reassure the reader of the knight’s own prowess as a crusader, but it also reveals Huon’s arrogance and carelessness.

Magical girdles are also common throughout late medieval romance, offering bodily and spiritual protection that is not always necessary. As Helen Cooper highlights, the girdle of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* also provides Gawain with no supernatural assistance. Instead, it becomes a symbol of his inability to advance, and its lack of protection shows that his personal and chivalric growth cannot be achieved through supernatural means.⁴⁷ Gawain is given the girdle, thinking that the wearer ‘myȝt not be slayn for slyȝt vpon erþe’ (l. 1854). Yet the moment in which this magic comes to his aid never materialises.⁴⁸ The Green Knight spares Gawain’s life, but as in *Floris and Blancheflour*, this release comes from the Green Knight’s mercy rather than any action on the part of the girdle.⁴⁹ The magical object of *Sir Gawain* is ultimately less important to the narrative than that which it tests: Gawain’s worthiness. Even the Green Knight himself loses much of his supernatural status when explanations are offered at the end of the poem.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Helen Cooper, ‘The Supernatural’, in *A Companion to the Gawain Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer & Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 277–91 (p. 291).

⁴⁸ ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’, ed. by J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, rev. by Norman Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925, repr. 1967).

⁴⁹ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, pp. 137–72 (p. 142).

A similar protective girdle features across the ‘Fierabras’ English Charlemagne romances, including *Sir Ferumbras*, *The Sowdone of Babylone*, and Caxton’s prose *Charles the Grete*.⁵¹ In all narrative versions, this girdle sustains the Christian knights when they are besieged by Saracens and unable to fight:

I have a girdil in my forcere,
Whoso girde hem therwith aboute,
Hunger ner thirste shal him never dere
Though he were sefen yere withoute.

(*Sowdone*, ll. 2303–06)

The girdle sustains the peers throughout the siege, and the Saracens attempt to steal it to break the siege, destroying it in the process.⁵² Following its destruction, the Christian knights are forced to raid the Saracen encampment for supplies, and their increasing desperation eventually prompts them to send a messenger to Charlemagne, who arrives to relieve the knights. As Corinne Saunders suggests, the girdle ‘works tangentially’ in this regard.⁵³ Its ultimate purpose is not protecting the peers from the siege but prompting them to counterattack after its destruction. In these crusading narratives, conflict with the Saracens is inevitable and necessary, and the destruction of the girdle becomes an important call to arms that is mirrored in the prose *Charles the Grete*.

Elsewhere in the ‘Fierabras’ romances, the healing balm used in the fight between Fierabras and Oliver is another example of the shift towards magical items in earlier romance becoming miraculous ones in the prose romances.⁵⁴ In *The Sowdone of*

⁵¹ See my discussion of the various English versions of this group the ‘English Charlemagne Romances’ section of Chapter Two. For further information on the group, see Ailes and Hardman, ‘How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?’, pp. 51–52; Hardman and Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England*, pp. 267–345.

⁵² The prose *Charles the Grete* treats this thief differently to the verse romances that come before it, attributing his devious qualities to dark magic rather than mortal skill. The comparison, and the further othering that takes place to vilify the use of nigromancy, is explored in this chapter’s following discussion of Saracen use of dark magic.

⁵³ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 136.

⁵⁴ Ailes and Hardman, ‘How English are the English Charlemagne Romances?’, pp. 51–52.

Babylon, the ‘bottelles of bawme’ that Oliver destroys during the fight are not explicitly religious but a marvellous healing medicine ‘worth an hundred thousand ponde / To a man that were wounded sore’ (*Sowdone*, ll. 1185–96). In the prose *Charles the Grete*, the balm is reimagined as a Christian relic that Fierabras offers to Oliver during the fight:

there been two flagons hangyng on the sadle of my hors whyche ben full of the bawme that I conquered in Iherusalem, & it is the same of whyche your god was enbawmed wyth whan he was taken doun fro the crosse and layed in hys graue. hye the, and goo drynke therof, & I promyse to the that Incontynent thou shalte be hole

(*Charles*, 56.27–33)

Rather than a magical item with natural healing powers, the balm is now a relic with miraculous powers, foregrounding the central religious conflict of this text. Here, the relic has fallen into Saracen hands, and the need to recover it emblemizes the crusading need to recover the Holy Land.⁵⁵ The prose romances continue to show how magical items can reveal a knight’s true potential, but they demonstrate a marked shift towards using this sort of ‘white’ magic to further emphasise divine legitimation of crusading journeys.

OTHER SUPERNATURAL ITEMS IN THE PROSE ROMANCES

In the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century prose romances, supernatural objects continue to test crusaders’ good conduct, in particular helping them to negotiate the boundaries between Christendom and the East and emphasising their Christian virtues above all others. Objects that might be strictly *magical* in earlier English romances are therefore moved closer to the *miraculous* because they conflate the moral virtues of

⁵⁵ On the treatment of relics in the Charlemagne romances, and on parallels with the treatment of space as explored in the previous chapter, see Bly Calkin, ‘Devotional Objects’, pp. 60–66.

chivalry with the Christian vision of a successful crusade. That which makes ‘white’ magic appropriate and licit is no longer its connection to the natural world, as in earlier romance, but its connection to the divine.

Huon of Burdeux contains a plethora of magical items that claim to test Huon’s chivalric prowess but actually evaluate his moral and spiritual suitability and ability to advance the Christian cause. Oberon, the king of the fairy dwarfs, provides several of these items as gifts to Huon. The first gift is a ‘ryche horne of iuorey’ (*Huon*, 77.26) which, when blown, will summon Oberon, who will immediately appear with ‘a .C. thousaunde men of armes for to socoure and ayed the’ (77.30–31). Despite Oberon’s warning that the item must only be used when in great peril, Huon first blows the horn the very next day, simply to confirm that it works. Against Oberon’s chastisement—‘Huon, of god be thou curssyd’ (80.21)—Huon pleads that he acted foolishly having taken ‘to mych drynke out of the cuppe’ (80.26). The situation is comical, but Huon misusing the artefact highlights that good Christian knights should not be too intimately connected with supernatural powers. Oberon is a Christian king, despite his otherworldliness, and instrumental in progressing the Christian cause once he has forgiven Huon. The first time Oberon is correctly summoned, he kills so many ‘paynynms that it was meruayll to se the blode ron downe the stretes lyke a ryuer’ (95.1–2), and the second time, at the Court of Babylon, he ‘slee all suche as wolde not beleue of Ihesu Cryst’ (152.24–25). Even holding a supernatural item like the horn is a test of a knight’s moral and Christian worthiness, and one that Huon comes close to failing by inciting Oberon’s wrath and almost squandering a crucial opportunity for Christian success.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The supernatural nature of Oberon’s horn is not the item itself, but in its ability to notify Oberon that he should summon himself and assist. The later instances where Huon blows the horn correctly, and Oberon’s forces arrive to turn the tide of a battle, feature during this chapter’s later discussion of Oberon, in the subsection on magical dwarves.

The cup from which Huon claims to have drunk too much is Oberon's second gift: a goblet that tests a character's adherence to Christian virtues by filling itself with wine when the holder makes 'the signe of a crosse' (76.15) above it, if he is not of 'deedly synne' (76.21). The goblet also sustains the wielder in some capacity, but this too is entirely dependent on his or her faith. Later on, the goblet provides wine for the four thousand poor, for whom 'euer the cuppe was full' (86.9), to accompany the 'bred, mete, flesshe, & other vyteles' (86.3–4) that Huon provides. There is a strong religious undercurrent here: Huon feeding a vast crowd invites comparison with the Feeding of the Multitude miracles in the Gospels.⁵⁷ At this same feast of four thousand, the goblet empties only at the hands of Duke Macaire, Huon's tyrannical uncle who has 'renounced god' (83.12) and seeks to steal the goblet for himself:

than Huon made the sygne of the crosse ouer the cuppe, and
 inconyent it was full of wyne / he toke ye cuppe to the duke, who
 had grete meruayll thereof, and as sone as the cuppe was in his handes
 it was voyde agayne. 'what!' quod the duke, 'thou has enchanted me.'
 'syr,' quod Huon, 'I am none enchanter / but it is for the synne
 that ye be in / set it downe, for ye are not worthy to holde it'.
(*Huon*, 88.25–33)

Here, Huon must protest that he is 'none enchanter', and that he has no association with secular magic, to distance himself from the magic used by Saracen opponents and to reaffirm that the object's power exists only through God. He is, however, the conduit for this power. Huon is both the subject of its testing and the interpreter of its results throughout the text, reinforcing the divine legitimacy of his own crusading actions. The

⁵⁷ Miri Rubin argues further that an appreciation of Eucharistic symbolism is key to understanding the medieval language of religion that helps us make sense of literary representations of religious acts. See Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1–5.

goblet's supernatural judgement is independent of Huon, and it judges those who use it by the extent of their virtue.⁵⁸

At the end of Huon's journey, Oberon uses the goblet to test the Christian virtues of everyone at Charlemagne's court, including the Emperor himself. Huon, Esclarmonde, and Gerames all drink from the goblet without issue. When it is passed to Charlemagne, however, then 'as soone as it was in his handes it was drye & voyde, and not a drope of wyne therein' (260.20–22). Charlemagne reacts with fury and disbelief, and Oberon's response parallels Huon's earlier discussion with Macaire:

'Felow,' quod ye king, 'ye haue enchauntyd me.' 'Syr,' quod kynge Oberon, 'it is bycause ye are full of synne / for ye cup is of suche dygnyte that none can drynke therof without he be a noble man, & clene without any deedly synne'.

(*Huon*, 260.22–26)

Like Huon, Oberon refuses the title of 'enchanter' (88.31) when using this goblet, emphasising that this object is more miraculous than magical and does not have human or fairy associations. Both Oberon and the goblet come from the East, geographically and spiritually far from Charlemagne's court, and both supernatural entities can evaluate Christian morality more objectively than Huon ever could.

There are other magical items in *Huon* that are not associated with Oberon but which still establish the moral contrast between Christian and Saracen. Upon his journey, Huon encounters Galafer, a Saracen giant, who holds a magical 'ryche harnes' (105.14) of armour, which can render its wearer invulnerable. However, the conditions attached to the use of this item rely heavily on Christian ideas of purity, and chastity,

⁵⁸ The rudderless boats of Malory's *Grail Quest* function similarly, accessible only to those with true virtue and devotion. They are discussed in this chapter's later section on magic in the *Morte Darthur*.

the virtues by which a knight's faith is routinely tested.⁵⁹ The armour defends its user only if he 'be without spot of deedly synne, and also his mother must be without carnall copulasyon with any man except with her husbonde' (105.18–20). The armour first tests knights through this judgement, and when Galafer invites Huon to try it on, he proclaims 'I beleue there can not be found any man that may were this harnes' (105.21–22). Huon successfully equips the armour, and his morality is tested again when Galafer requests that he return the armour, by the same 'courtesye' (106.9) by which he was lent it. Huon's refusal to render it again prompts a battle, in which Huon easily defeats Galafer: as was the case in earlier romances such as *King Horn*, combat is brief when a magical item guarantees martial success. Huon is never punished for his refusal to cede a supernatural advantage, because the item is framed in terms of divine legitimacy for its ability to evaluate a knight's Christian virtue. Huon is not stealing it so much as rightfully reclaiming it from Saracen hands, an action common to crusading narratives. As James Wade has suggested, Huon's repeated breaking of the conditions that come with the gifts, and Oberon's repeated forgiveness of him, suggest that Huon is never truly associated with the taboo of supernatural power at all.⁶⁰ His place in this narrative is as a mortal, and distinctly unmagical, crusader.

In the first continuation of *Huon*, sourced from the *Chanson d'Esclarmonde*, Huon also encounters a variety of supernatural items and phenomena that are framed as miraculous or associated with the divine. One in particular is used to continue the crusading impulses of the initial story. Huon gathers 'the frute of youthe' (436.8–9) – three apples that each restore whoever consumes them to their thirty-year-old self, provided that they are a true Christian. The final two of these apples are given to

⁵⁹ Testing faith through cleanliness and chastity is particularly prevalent during Malory's Grail Quest, as the following subsection discusses. Percival and Galahad, the most successful Grail-seeker, are each tested and judged upon these values throughout the quest.

⁶⁰ Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, pp. 134–36; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 198.

Christian characters later in the narrative: the Abbot of Cluny and Emperor Thierry of Germany. The first, however, is used in an elaborate conversion sequence that sees the Saracen Admiral of Tauris and all of his citizens and armies brought within Christendom. When Huon arrives in Tauris he tells the Admiral of the miracles he has previously encountered, prompting the Admiral's desire for conversion. Huon further encourages the sentiment by offering an apple as a gift, with the warning that the Admiral must 'byleue in our lorde god Iesu chryste' (461.17–18) to profit from the miracle. They organise a grand ceremony:

The admyrall toke the apple and began to ete therof / and as he dyd ete he began to chaung coloure / his here and his berde, ye which were whyght, began to chaunge and waxed yelowe / or the apple was clene eten, he was clene chaungyd, & his beautye and strenthe as he was when he was but .xxx. yerys of age. Then generally all the people that were there with one voyce cryed & requyred to be chrystenyd, wherof the admyrall and Huon were ryght ioyfull, bycause they saw the good wyll of the people was to receyue chrystendome.

(*Huon*, 465.4–12)

The apple has clear Christian significance, but its purpose in this narrative is similar to any other magical item – it has the capacity to pass judgement on the person who wields it, centred around Christian virtues. Its power is both dependent upon belief in God and capable of instilling such belief in others. In terms of scale, this ceremony is one of the most significant conversions in *Huon*, rivalled only by Oberon's earlier mass conversion of Babylon. It stems from a supernatural object that tests the faith of its wielder and is far more spiritual than magical.

Alongside the trappings of chivalry, the prose romances include supernatural objects that can more directly test and inform knights, including animated statues. When Huon assaults Galafer's tower, he encounters a supernatural challenge in the form of two 'men of brasse that without seasyng bet with there flaylles' (98.19–20). In *Valentine and Orson*, the eponymous protagonists encounter a brass head that reveals

truths about the heroes and thus provides a judgement on their worthiness. The brass head has analogues in earlier medieval texts and is a motif that continues throughout the early modern period in works such as Robert Greene's *The Honourable Historie of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay*.⁶¹ In this play, the head is typically broken as part of the performance in an iconoclastic display, often by divine intervention or supernatural destruction.⁶² The head is not destroyed in *Valentine and Orson*, and it passes judgement on the characters who visit it. The head 'declareth vnto her [Clerimonde] the adventures and fortunes that to her and al of them of her generacyon may happen and befall' (*Valentine*, 116.31–32), thus showing its magical abilities in its prophetic insight. When Valentine is able to speak with the head, it reveals to him several great truths of his birth: he is 'sone of the Emperoure of Grece' and he is born of 'Empresse Bellyssant in the forest of Orleauce' (140.31 and 37–38). Although neither of these things were unknown to the reader, the revelations are critical in proving Valentine's authority as a chivalric knight and leader. The head also reveals that the mute Orson can be unmuted by cutting a thread beneath his tongue, offering a further means of civilizing the former wild man.

Not all of these supernatural episodes have parallels in earlier English romance like the episodes of healing balm in 'Fierabras' texts or the magical rings common throughout romance. However, they all continue to incorporate some of the conventions of magic common to English romance including, most notably, supernatural items that evaluate a knight's conduct. These episodes in the prose romances situate this value judgement as one centred around religious morality, to foreground how the crusading journeys undertaken have legitimate divine support. The magical objects Morgan uses,

⁶¹ E. R. Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature and Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 69–71.

⁶² Chloe Porter, *Making and Unmaking in Early Modern English Drama: Spectators, Aesthetics, and Incompletion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 129–54.

in the *Morte Darthur*, similarly evaluate knights' spiritual virtues and chivalric ethics, and are considered in this chapter's later sections on magic in the *Morte Darthur*.

MIRACLES: SUPERNATURAL ACTS OF GOD

In the prose romances' presentation of supernatural phenomena as closer to the miraculous than to the magical, no clearer example exists than instances of actual miracles. Miracles are a wholly legitimate form of the supernatural in the eyes of a Christian readership. As Le Goff suggests, the marvellous element of the supernatural is limited in miracles because they have a single author in God, and their frequency is controlled by the Church as a way of standardising the unpredictable.⁶³ Miracles are most common in those prose romances which feature large-scale crusading journeys into a distant land, such as those of *Charles the Grete* and *Godeffroy of Boloyne*, in which Christian devotion is tested to the limit.⁶⁴

There are two notable miracles in *Godeffroy of Boloyne* that allow the crusaders to make progress against seemingly-impossible odds. The first occurs on the journey to Antioch, after a major battle where the Turks 'fledde away discomfyted' (*Godeffroy*, 110.11–12). However, the crusaders soon find themselves stranded and lost, without adequate supplies:

They trauaylled so long, that at the laste they fonde a contre moche
drye & infertile, without waters / The tyme was moche hoot and

⁶³ The frequency and potency of miracles could also be controlled by the Church. Robert Bartlett also tracks the development of medieval Church thought on the concept of miracle, suggesting that the late medieval period saw a questioning of whether God's actions could be classed as being against the order of nature. He notes that Gervase of Tilbury's 1215 work distinguishes miracles and marvels, where the former is explicitly caused by God, and that Thomas Aquinas further attempts to articulate a separation between miracles and monstrosities as angelic and daemonic magic. See Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, p. 35; Bartlett, *Natural and the Supernatural*, pp. 19–29.

⁶⁴ Though these two texts feature true crusades, miracles can also be found in the prose romances in which the central narrative is the journey of a single hero. Hans Eberhard Mayer and Michael Markowski have argued that early definitions of 'crusader' did not differentiate between a formal member of a crusading army and a pilgrim travelling alone. Both, arguably, require bodily and spiritual devotion during the journey. See Markowski, 'Crucesignatus: its Origins and Early Usage', p. 157.

brennyng, as it falleth ofte in Iuyll / They had so grete thurst / that they wyst not what to doo. The peple on fote specially faylled and faynted, alle for the duste / for the heete / and for thurste / ther deyed wel this same day of mysease fyue honderd men & wymmen.

(*Godeffroy*, 111.14–20)

Though there is nothing directly marvellous about the predicament, the solution is miraculous: ‘our lord beheld them in pyte & made them to adresse in to a valeye, where they fonde a rennyng water, fayr & grete’ (112.3–5). The divine intervention follows no particular request or plea, only the devotion shown throughout the crusade of this text, and it follows a pattern present in other episodes of divine intervention in the prose romances. The crusaders’ successes are followed by misfortune; they are saved by divine intervention, and their faith and crusading vigour are thereby renewed.

This same structure can be found in a later miracle of *Godeffroy*, in which divine intervention provides the assistance necessary to capture Jerusalem. The crusaders besiege the city, but the protracted battle takes its toll and the ‘men began to wexe wery’ (268.22–23) at the successful Turkish defence. When the situation is at its most dire, Godfrey and the crusaders are saved by divine intervention in a distinctly human form:

In moche feble poynt was the conduyt of oure pylgryms. And yf ne had be the debonayrte of oure lord / whiche by myracle comforted them, like as ye shal here. ffro the mount of olyuet appiered a knyht whiche was not knowen ne neuer myght be founden. This knyht began to shake and meue his shelde, whiche was moche cleer and shynyng. And made signe to our peple that they shold now retorne, and come agayne to thassault.

(*Godeffroy*, 269.3–10)

The shining knight who appears to spur on the crusaders is divine intervention represented in human form, and he is suggestive of the image of Christ himself appearing before the crusaders. Though he takes no active part in the battle, he instead uses his shield to create a great light and signal that God’s grace stands with the Christian warriors. Following this ‘miracle’, the crusaders fight with renewed vigour:

‘So grete hardynes was come in to their hertes’ (269.18–19), and the barons and captains ‘put them self alway to fore where the grettest daungiers were’ (269.26–27). All this, the text suggests, is to ‘serue our lord vygorously’ (269.32) as a result of the divine aid given. Miracles give new impetus to the crusade in each of these instances and, like the supernatural items of the prose romances, these acts of God help the knights to fulfil their own inherent potential rather than standing in their stead to secure victory.

In the Iberian crusade of *Charles the Grete*, Charlemagne’s army is also ‘shewed grete myracle’ (*Charles*, 210.6–7) on several occasions, often with increasing intensity. The first miracle comes in three parts, where each episode is just prior to a major battle against the Saracens. In the first instance, the men rest overnight and ‘pyght there theyr speres, euen in the place where as the bodyes of saynt faconde and saynt premytyf rested’ (210.1–3). In unknowingly intruding upon this holy place with their weapons of war, the crusaders unintentionally imbue them with the very religious power for which they are fighting:

For of them that shold deye there and be gloryfyed marters of god &
crowned in heuen, theyr speres on þe morn were founden al grene,
floressed and leued, whyche was a precedent sygne that they whyche
shold deye shold haue the loye in heuen.

(*Charles*, 210.7–11)

The miracle is authored by God, reassuring the reader that the fifty men who die in battle that next day are martyrs for a legitimate crusading cause. The crusaders’ physical demonstration of their devotion here accompanies the miracle, as it does in *Godeffroy of Boloyne*. The miracle in *Charles* also contains natural imagery in the form of the great green vines, from which ‘grewe a grete wode’ (210.14) after the battle; the vines draw upon earlier romance representations of the supernatural that more closely connect positive supernatural phenomena to the natural world than the work of God. The text

also echoes popular hagiographies of the late medieval period, where death, along with bodily suffering or mutilation, can be construed as a form of devotion.⁶⁵

The 'grete myracle' (210.7) of the spears is repeated twice more in the text with an increasing emphasis on religious devotion each time. On the second occasion, the Christian men again 'planted theyr speres in the grounde' (214.5) prior to battle, in a description which retains connections with the natural world. The symbolic, miraculous marking recurs, along with a more explicit connection to religious devotion: the Christian men are not afraid 'to deye for þe crysten faith in mayntenynge the name of god' (214.10–11). When they do die in the coming battle, they too are martyrs for the crusading cause. In the third instance of this miracle, a short while later, the link between supernatural power and the crusade is even further extended. Charlemagne is 'so trustyng in god' (220.4) after the prior miracles that he prays for another and is rewarded with observing the 'sygne of the crosse alle red vpon the sholdres' (220.11–12) of the doomed men. Even when Charlemagne commands these men to skip the battle, he returns to find 'al them that were shette wythin dede' (220.23), and knows that 'they that were marked with the crosse were assygned that day to be receyued in heuen' (220.24–25).

The red cross is the sign of a crusader, or quite literally a 'crucesignatus' (cross-bearer), as noted in documents from after the Third Crusade.⁶⁶ It was a sign recognisable to fifteenth-century readers as a mark of respect and devotion, and one that they could associate with key crusading figures from narratives such as *Richard Coer de*

⁶⁵ The natural image in this recurring miracle draws upon a common motif of hagiography most clearly demonstrated in *Joseph of Arimathi*, which Pynson and de Worde brought into English print in the early sixteenth century. Joseph's planted spear became a tree at Glastonbury, which drew pilgrims throughout the late Middle Ages. See Rev. Walter W. Skeat, 'Preface', in *Joseph of Arimathi*, ed. by Rev. Walter W. Skeat, EETS OS 44 (London: Trübner, 1871).

⁶⁶ Markowski, 'Crucesignatus', pp. 160–64.

Lyon, Guy of Warwick, and Caxton's Godeffroy of Boloyne.⁶⁷ In this instance, it appears on the actual bodies of those displaying bodily devotion to Christendom, and it represents a firm and absolute fate for these men. Though this phrase, 'marked with the crosse', signifies a literal mark in this instance, it is applicable also to the wider group of people who engage in crusade, both within the text and beyond it. To be a 'crucesignatus'—a 'cross-bearer', or a crusader—was to be received in heaven, either through death on crusade or through a life of active devotion.⁶⁸ The three instances of this miracle, where each time a greater level of religious devotion is displayed, can be read alongside Caxton's paratextual calls for crusade as highlighting divine support for war. They also resonate with existing romance motifs in which knights are tested, often physically, by supernatural items and challenges. When this testing is represented as a miracle, where even death is a positive outcome, it reframes the supernatural in a way that complements the crusading goals by framing licit supernatural power as controlled by God, rather than man.

Charlemagne's conquest of Iberia in *Charles the Grete* is motivated by his devotion, and the city conquests themselves are marked by further miracles. The campaign begins as Charlemagne is visited by a vision of St James who declares he has been 'chosen of god' (203.3), and Charlemagne makes use of this connection by praying for assistance when he encounters a siege that cannot be won by the strength of man alone at the city of Pamplona:

'Fayr lord god, my maker, helpe me that am comen in to thys contree for to enhance the crysten fayth, for to establysshe and mayntene thyn holy name. And also thou holy saynt Iames, by the reuelacyon of whome I am in thys Iourneye, I requyre the that I may subdewe thys cytee, & entre therin, for to shewe the mysbyleuyng peple the cause

⁶⁷ Rouse, 'Crusaders', pp. 174–75; White, 'Saracens and Crusaders: from Fact to Allegory', pp. 170–91; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, Vol. II, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Markowski, 'Crucesignatus'.

of theyr errour’.

(*Charles*, 203.31–204.3)

This prayer addresses both ‘saynt Iames’ from the vision and the ‘lord god’, drawing attention to the devotion and hardship that necessitates divine intervention: not only did Charlemagne accept this crusade for the Christian faith, he intends to convert ‘the mysbyleyung peple’ as further proof of devotion. He is, miraculously, rewarded:

‘Assone as Charles had fynysshed his oryson, the walles of the cyte, whyche were of marble merueillously strong, ouerthrew to the erthe, & fyl alle in pyeces’ (204.5–7).

This miracle offers a divine solution to a human problem, and it is granted through a twofold demonstration of religious conviction: the crusade itself, and Charles’s prayer.

It is repeated shortly thereafter, when Charlemagne besieges the city of Lucerne for four months, before eventually making a ‘prayer vnto god, and to saynt Iames, that he myght be vycorious’ (205.26–27). The description that follows is narrative and the words of the prayer are not given, indicating that Charlemagne’s devotion, regardless of the content of his prayer, is enough to deserve divine intervention in his favour:

Hys oryson was herde, soo that the walles fyl down to the erthe, and was put to destructyon in suche wyse þat neuer man dwelled therin after, and after it sanke, and therin was an abysme or swolowe of water, In whyche were founden after, fysshes alle blacke.

(*Charles*, 205.29–33)

The miracle is again repeated with a significant increase in its potency and power. On the first occasion, the city walls crumble through divine intervention; on the second, the city is destroyed so completely that it is returned to nature, again drawing attention to miracles as a force that interacts with the natural world.

The final repetition of the miracle is the most potent of all, but also the most problematic in terms of the source of supernatural power. The text suggests that, from

Lucerne onwards, neither prayer nor divine intervention is necessary to call forth miracles:

Emonge the other cytees that he [Charlemagne] took, there were iiij
[4] that dyd hym moche payne, or he myght gete them, & therefore he
gaf them the maladyctyon of god, and they were cursed, in suche
wyse that vnto thys day there is in them none habytacion.

(*Charles*, 205.34–206.3)

Here, there can be no return to nature as the land itself is rendered uninhabitable.

Moreover, passive or agentless actions (such as ‘put to destructyon’) are replaced by active ones: in this passage, Charlemagne does not call for divine intervention, he enacts it; he ‘gaf them the maladyctyon of god’. The text even refers to these cities as ‘cursed’, a word considered, in the fifteenth century, to be related to rituals intended to cause evil intent.⁶⁹ This act carries close and worrying associations with nigromancy—dangerous magic associated with the Saracen antagonists—because it is no longer clearly authored by God alone.

The prose romances generally maintain a distance between Christian knights and any form of supernatural power not authored by God, but the final episode of city destruction shows Charlemagne, a great Christian hero and one of the three Christian Worthies, channel the power of God for the purposes of advancing a crusading cause. It is a problematic image, but one that reinforces how the supernatural is an ambivalent force that evaluates the Christian morality of a knight more than it directly helps or hinders him. Charlemagne, as a paragon of Christianity and chivalry, is found so worthy that he has divine approval to control supernatural powers directly, provided that they are used for the crusading cause.

⁶⁹ Kieckhefer discusses a recorded instance of a ‘curse’ in 1486, one year after the publication of *Charles the Grete*, further noting that it was believed that those who invoked curses and sorcery used and corrupted the Church’s own holy objects in the process. See Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p. 82.

SARACEN NIGROMANCY AND ENCHANTMENT

While miracle is the most licit form of the supernatural and provides divine assistance to crusaders, those supernatural phenomena that work against the will of God occupy the other end of this scale as highly illicit and immoral. In the prose romances, this is any form of magic wielded by Saracen opponents, generally referred to as ‘enchantment’ or ‘nigromancy’. The latter concept is similar to the more modern ‘necromancy’, although as Saunders notes, ‘nigromancy’ is less extreme and might be most clearly described as black magic instead;⁷⁰ nigromancy is ‘not inherently evil’, but its use is forbidden to Christians and it is situated at the very edge of acceptability.⁷¹ Some episodes in the prose romances draw links between Saracens and demons as enemies of Christianity, although most instances of Saracen magic are presented as illicit but still very human.⁷² In the prose romances, nigromancy and enchantment are doubly disparaged because they are controlled by mortal men, rather than by God, and also because those who control it are the Saracens, who stand in the way of Christian crusade. Christian characters must renounce all claim to control magic, as Huon does when assuring the reader he is ‘none enchanter’ (*Huon*, 88.31) while wielding Oberon’s goblet, because being anything more than the conduit for divine power would place them too close to the illicit magic of Saracen nigromancers and enchanters.

In Middle English verse romance, nigromancy is more frequently associated with fairy marvel or witchcraft than with the Saracens of the prose romances. For example, the Emir of *Floris and Blancheflour* holds his wives captive in a tower that is ‘maked so wel, / Ne mai no man hit breke with no stel’ (*Floris*, ll. 613–17) and a

⁷⁰ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 154.

⁷¹ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 161; Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 6.

⁷² As Saunders notes, it is ‘very rare for romances to describe explicitly demonic magic practised by humans’. Many of the supernatural episodes discussed in this episode fit into this discussion of magic that is intended to harm the Christian knights, but is morally-suspect only to the extent that it is a human wielding any sort of magic. Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 154.

marvellous roof that glows through the night. This tower is a marvel of the Saracen world, but its magical properties are never attributed to nigromancy, only marvellous craftsmanship. Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* features a similarly marvellous tower which is walled off through 'nigromance', a reference to dark magic that Saunders suggests 'remains hauntingly unexplained'.⁷³ In some late medieval English texts, like Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, instances of morally-dubious magic are present but not labelled as 'nigromancy' or enchantment'.⁷⁴ Aurelius is tasked with the impossible job of removing the rocks of Brittany to earn Dorigen's love, and he approaches a 'magicien', who uses 'wrecchednesse / Of swich a supersticious cursednesse' to aid him.⁷⁵ The narrative voice condemns this use of magic, and the magician who uses it, but without labelling it as nigromancy.

The prose romances are far more explicit in naming their harmful magic as 'nigromancy' and their magicians as 'enchanters', linking both to Saracens in a way that reinforces the religious and cultural binaries of the crusading narratives. In the 'Fierabras' romances, Floripas's magical girdle sustains the Christian knights besieged within her tower until it is stolen by a Saracen thief named Marpyn, upon the orders of Admiral Balan.⁷⁶ In *Sowdone*, Marpyn is described as an 'engynoure' (*Sowdone*, l. 2231), who is 'fals' (l. 2347) and cunning, a deceptive antagonist but a mortal man nonetheless. The version of this encounter in Caxton's *Charles the Grete* is more explicit in linking magic to the text's moral concerns, as Marpyn is not only 'a moche fals thief emong alle humayn creatures' (*Charles*, 122.23–24) but an enchanter too. He infiltrates the tower using 'fals & dyabolyke wordes' to open doors and he 'made so

⁷³ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 170.

⁷⁴ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 154.

⁷⁵ Chaucer, 'The Franklin's Tale', ll. 1241 and 1271–72.

⁷⁶ In earlier verse romances, this is generally spelled 'Maypn', but in *Charles the Grete*, and henceforth in this discussion, it is spelled 'Marpyn'.

enchantements' (123.7–10) to ensure that the occupants do not awake from their slumber. *Charles the Grete* also others Marpyn in more obvious ways than is the case in earlier English romances. His attempted rape of Floripas is insinuated in other versions, but explicit in the prose romance: Marpyn 'was enclyned anone to haue defouled' the naked Floripas (123.14–15) if she had not called out for help. As Floripas's maidens arrive, the text also gives its first visual description of Marpyn as 'blacke as a moore' (123.19), which is later paralleled in the depiction of Saracen giants as 'blacke as pytche boyllled' (176.1).⁷⁷ His appearance marks him as an outsider in this text, in a manner that Geraldine Heng suggests 'supposes the normativity of whiteness and of the white racial body, as the guarantor of normalcy, aesthetic and moral virtue'.⁷⁸ The representation of race in medieval romance is ideological, and Marpyn is vilified in the eyes of the reader through both his appearance and actions.⁷⁹

Shortly after the encounter with Marpyn, the Saracens break the siege and assault the Christian tower through the use of marvel and magic. The Saracen Admiral Balan calls upon 'a man Ingenyous & enchauntour' (141.9) to take the castle, castle, further associating enchantment with Saracen opposition to crusades. Moreover, the

⁷⁷ Cohen discusses the racial and gendered representations of Saracen bodies throughout romance, suggesting that male Saracen bodies are often differentiated from male Christian ones through both race and beauty, resulting in the pairing of dark skin and physical disfigurement. See Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment', pp. 119–20.

⁷⁸ In this instance, Heng refers specifically to an episode in *King of Tars* where a converting Sultan is physically altered, from 'blac' and 'foule' to 'Al white'. Her following discussion considers the ways in which the romance genre pairs religion and skin colour. Jacqueline de Weever further explores this issue in chansons de geste and French romance, discussing skin colour in Saracen princesses to suggest that beauty and acceptability is coded within descriptions of paleness and fairness. See Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 230–31; de Weever, *Sheba's Daughters*, pp. 113–16; Heng, *The Invention of Race*, pp. 210–14.

⁷⁹ As the introduction to this thesis has explored, the prose romances are printed for an assumed hegemonic white, Christian readership, which is important when considering their representation of race. As Cohen suggests, 'Christianitas seldomly acknowledged its own internal differences', let alone the differences of the non-Christian world. These texts shape and respond to the political and religious tensions of their time, many of which were given structure through the use of broad cultural stereotypes such as race and ethnicity. See Heng's essays on race, now superseded by *The Invention of Race* (2018): Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages 1: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages'; Heng, 'The Invention of Race in the Middle Ages 2: Locations of Medieval Race', p. 344. See also Cohen, 'On Saracen Enjoyment', p. 115

man is named ‘Mahon’ (141.10), or ‘Mahoun’, the prophet Muhammed, suggesting that his supernatural abilities stem from the Saracen faith he holds. Mahon’s first role in the text is the creation of siege devices: ‘two meruayllous engynes’ (141.10) that break through the outer walls of the castle. Mahon’s second feat of supernatural power is more directly magical: ‘by hys crafte and arte he made a flamme of fyre so meruayllous that þe pylers of marble & other stones bygonnen to brenne & make fyre at vtterance’ (141.34–42.3). Mahon’s agency and ability closely link the religious discourse of the text with this act of supernatural power, through which Saracen forces are presented as dangerous and demonic. However, this fire is ultimately little more than a trick with alchemical explanations.⁸⁰ Floripas, who has recently converted and is besieged alongside the knights, is aware of the trick and ‘knewe the manere how that fyre artyfycyally brente the stones’ (142.10–11). As a former Saracen, she has knowledge and ability that the Christian knights do not, and is able to extinguish the flame through ‘herbes and other medecynes’ (142.9). Though the pillars of flame are an alchemical illusion, Floripas dispelling them lends credence to the notion that the Saracens of romance have intrinsic knowledge of demonic and immoral illusions and an inherent link to the supernatural world.

A later episode in *Charles the Grete*, during Charlemagne’s final campaign through Iberia, also strengthens the connection between Saracen faith and dark magic. Charlemagne arrives in Salancadys, a Saracen holy city and the site of the statue of ‘a grete god’ (206.14):

⁸⁰ Moreover, despite the presentation of the flames as magic, this form of warfare would have been entirely possible at the time of writing. As David Nicolle notes, incendiary weapons were used in some late medieval siege situations, though they appear far less frequently in written sources than throwing devices. It is possible that this passage is a reference to an incendiary siege machine, but even with such technology available, it is unlikely that the construction of a machine that propels a continuous stream of flames would be possible, or in fact at all useful, for a besieging army. The presentation of these flames as the result of an enchanter indicates that this passage was not intended to be read as a standard siege situation. See David Nicolle, *Medieval Siege Weapons (1): Western Europe AD 585–1385* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2002), pp. 37–41.

That ydolle was made of the honde of Machomete in the tyme that he lyued, & was named Mahomet in thonour of hym: and by arte magyke and dyabolyke he closed therin a legyon of deuylls, for to kepe it and make sygnes for to abuse the peple. And thys ydolle was kepte so by deuylls, that noo persone lyuyng coude by strengthe destroye it, ne put it down.

(*Charles*, 206.14–21)

This passage explicitly links together religious and supernatural discourses, associating the prophet Muhammed with magic, diabolical arts and actual ‘deuylls’. It also refers to the ongoing conflict between Christendom and the Saracen East: ‘yf ony crysten man came nyghe [...] Assone as he began to coniure and preche, anon he was perysshed & destroyed’ (206.22–24). The idol holds in its hand a great key to the city, which it will let fall ‘whan a kyng of fraunce shold be borne’ (207.7) with strength enough to conquer the land. When Charlemagne approaches, ‘the ydolle lete the keye falle doun to the grounde’ (207.13–14), causing the Saracen inhabitants of the city to flee and reinforcing the religious victory of the text. Charlemagne appears almost saintly in this passage – a representation that mirrors his control of miraculous powers earlier in the text. The statue itself is a religiously-charged item that conflates Islam with pagan idolatry, further distinguishing the Christians as prophesied conquerors and the Saracens as nigromancers and enchanters.

MAGIC IN *LE MORTE DARTHUR* AND OTHER PROSE ROMANCES

Some sections of the *Morte* have clear crusading interests, as prior chapters have explored, though these parts are not primarily concerned with the supernatural. Other parts, however, demonstrate the same turn towards treating the supernatural as miraculous rather than magical common to the prose romances that would be printed alongside the *Morte*. In the Grail Quest, which is the most spiritually-focused portion of

the *Morte*, supernatural objects and phenomena are used to evaluate knights' Christian virtues above other chivalric expectations. Elsewhere, in tales that are not explicitly spiritual, characters like Morgan, Merlin, and Gareth's dwarf squire parallel the enchanters and nigromancers of the prose romances in their capacity to wield supernatural power against, and in the place of, good Christian knights.

SUPERNATURAL TESTING IN *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

Supernatural objects in Malory's Grail Quest, like those in the other prose romances, evaluate knights primarily in terms of their Christian virtue and their potential to advance Christian causes. Of course, there is no crusading and no great Saracen foe in the Grail Quest, but it is a portion of the *Morte* that, similarly to the crusading prose romances, focuses on divinely-sanctioned chivalric action. The vague setting in the Grail Quest also conveys a similar sense of distance from the court; like the East of the prose romances, it is not an otherworld, but it is a place where knights are tested through individuals, objects, and the very geography of the world itself.⁸¹ Magic is central to this narrative, as Saunders notes:

In the Quest, the supernatural becomes a means of testing the human in ways that go far beyond the physical. Marvellous adventure is taken onto another level, transfigured as the Grail Knights themselves will be.⁸²

On this journey, supernatural objects are integral in defining how knights' spiritual nature is evaluated. In this sense, as Jill Mann notes, the evaluation is consistent with

⁸¹ The Arthurian tradition is not devoid of otherworlds, although Malory's *Morte* portrays the location of the Grail Quest as both human and magical. For further discussion of otherworlds in the Arthurian traditions, including religious otherworlds, see Will Hasty, 'The Allure of Otherworlds: The Arthurian Romances of Germany', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 175–88 (p. 178); Byrne, *Otherworlds*, pp. 119–29.

⁸² Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 253.

the rest of the *Morte* as a heuristic adventure that ‘reveals a knight’s pre-existing worth rather than offering an opportunity to acquire it’.⁸³ The Tale opens with the notion of secular and chivalric evaluation, when Launcelot is told that ‘there ys now one bettir than ye’ (*Morte*, 672.10). However, the narrative soon shifts to a form of evaluation based strictly on Christian virtue, and one that creates a clear distinction between ‘erthly knyghthode’ and ‘the knyghtis of hevynly adventures’ (721.5–7) that Launcelot encounters. While the Roman War episode is the part of the *Morte* that shares most with the crusading focus of the other prose romances, the Grail Quest is the portion with most affinity with how the other prose romances represent the supernatural: as a form of religious evaluation that reveals the chivalric qualities of a knight.

The Grail has more power to test knights than any other object in the narrative, but much of the Tale’s testing comes from the spiritual framework of the narrative rather than the object itself. Judgements are delivered by proxy, through the Tale’s many hermits and religious folk who emphasise the journey’s religious significance. Before the court even embarks upon the quest, they are warned that ‘he that ys nat clene of hys synnes he shall nat se the mysteryes of Oure Lord Jesu Cryste’ (675.28–29), and this warning is repeatedly proved true. Launcelot sleeps through the Grail’s presence because he ‘dwellith in som dedly synne whereof he was never confessed’ (694.17–18), and Gawain is told that the Grail ‘apperith nat to no synners’ (729.26) such as he. Others such as Bors are told that through ‘pure confession’ (731.14) they may eventually become worthy. Worthiness is here predicated on cleanliness and sinfulness,

⁸³ Also, Malory’s Grail Quest is a close adaption of his source material, but one that Radulescu suggests is a ‘special experience among other earthly adventures’, in which chivalric values take precedence over religious ones. See Raluca Radulescu, ‘Malory and the Quest for the Holy Grail’, in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. by Helen Fulton (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 326–39 (pp. 326–27); Jill Mann, ‘Malory and the Grail Legend’, in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996, repr. 2000), pp. 203–20 (p. 210).

and religious values are specifically foregrounded over secular chivalric ones in a narrative that has already established a link between the two.⁸⁴

The various descriptions of the successful Grail-seekers, and the way other characters address them, further suggest that religious values are foregrounded above all others. Percival's worthiness depends on his sexual purity, and he may sit with the Grail only after recalling his chivalric vows—articulated as 'hys knyghthode and hys promyse' (711.29)—and his religious devotion, which leads him to call on 'Fayre swete lord Jesu Cryste' (711.33–34). Galahad, the most successful Grail-seeker, is also judged by these two metrics as he is welcomed by King Mordrayns as 'a clene virgyne above all knyghtes, as the floure of the lyly in whom virginité is signified' (779.11–13). Galahad's purity is highlighted throughout the tale, and his limited presence elsewhere in *Le Morte Darthur* further binds him to this particularly spiritual narrative.⁸⁵ Sexual purity is linked with chivalric prowess in numerous other prose romances, but Geraldine Heng suggests two examples of this link elsewhere in *Morte*: Mordred's incestuous birth is offered as proof of his villainy, and the giant of Mont St. Michel is hypersexualised to show unrestrained desire as the opposite of chivalric behaviour.⁸⁶ Other examples can be found in *Huon of Burdeux*, including the magical armour requiring the purity of both Huon and his mother. Huon's chivalric valour is also questioned when he and his wife disobey a promise to avoid consummating their marriage until they have been blessed at Rome. They are punished with 'a mereuelous

⁸⁴ As Radulescu notes, Launcelot is still Malory's favourite knight, but he is a paragon of penance rather than skill in this tale. See Radulescu, 'Malory and the Quest for the Holy Grail', pp. 327–28.

⁸⁵ Kathleen Coyne Kelly argues that Galahad is a 'curiously static character', who does not grow as a knight or fully integrate within the homosocial community. His virginity and purity are usually foregrounded in art and literature, and his role in this narrative is more concerned with spirituality than chivalric maturation. Dorsey Armstrong further notes that Galahad's purity often extends beyond his own narrative, implicating others such as Gawain and Launcelot in sinful behaviours. Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity*, pp. 112–13; Dorsey Armstrong, *Gender and the Chivalric Community in Malory's Morte d'Arthur* (Orlando: University Press of Florida, 2003), pp. 154–55.

⁸⁶ Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 176–79.

tempest' (*Huon*, 156.23–24) of supernatural means, and rescued from the subsequent shipwreck by Malabron, a man who has been previously 'condempnyd' (111.27–28) to the form of a great beast for incurring the wrath of Oberon. Across the prose romances, supernatural chivalric testing foregrounds Christian ideas of sin and purity, and reading the Grail Quest in this context reveals connections between this spiritual narrative and the crusading romances.

The Grail is the central supernatural object of the quest, but the narrative is rife with other armaments, garments, and even modes of transport that test knights' spiritual devotion through supernatural means. Galahad, the most successful Grail-seeker, is introduced through the 'Sege Perelous', or the perilous seat, and the text's second sword-in-a-stone. Above the seat are found, 'wretyn with golde lettirs' (*Morte*, 667.11), words stating that the seat should be filled this day, and by he who would successfully find the Grail – Galahad.⁸⁷ Galahad proves his worth by extracting the sword from the stone, which is marked with similar golden lettering denoting him as 'the best knyght of the worlde' (668.15), in a manner reminiscent of Arthur proving his right to the throne by extracting Excalibur.⁸⁸ Paul Dingman suggests that stability in this instance is based on Arthur's legitimacy, which itself stems from the 'mystical solution' of the sword in the stone.⁸⁹ Likewise, we might consider that Galahad's legitimacy as the 'the best

⁸⁷ However, as Richard Moll points out, the Sege Perelous has been used in Arthurian analogues for a variety of textual purposes. In John Hardyng's *Metrical Chronicle*, he reads the seat alongside other Grail Quest material as a way of further emphasising Hardyng's political concerns regarding English authority over Scotland and furthering an association between Arthurian chivalry and contemporary England. See Richard Moll, *Before Malory: Reading Arthur in Later Medieval England* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 155 and 176–81.

⁸⁸ Whilst neither this sword nor Excalibur are supernatural objects, Excalibur is the subject of many supernatural occurrences throughout the text. Paul Dingman links Excalibur to Arthur's legitimacy in terms of fifteenth-century concerns over feudal authority, suggesting that we can read chivalric romance as offering a vision of stable government that Malory's audience might have found more attractive than the conflict of the Wars of the Roses. See Paul Dingman, 'Sword-made Men: Mystical Armament and Earthly Authority in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*', in *Prowess, Piety and Public Order in Medieval Society*, ed. by Craig M. Nakashian and Daniel Franke (Boston: Brill, 2017), pp. 368–80 (pp. 368–70).

⁸⁹ See Dingman, 'Sword-made Men', pp. 368–72.

knyght in the worlde' (668.15) stems from the supernatural and spiritual solutions of the sword and the 'sege perelous'.

Galahad's legitimacy is reconfirmed through another supernatural object with chivalric associations. His first adventure on the Grail Quest sees him arrive at an abbey and claim a shield that rejects all wielders except for 'the worthyest knyght of the worlde' (678.28–29). The knights are informed that anyone unworthy who attempts to wield the shield will be dead or maimed within three days, and this warning is realised through Sir Bagdemagus's fate. The shield is accompanied by a supernatural guardian—a literal 'whyght knyght' (679.10) symbolising chivalric and spiritual purity—who is 'conjured' (679.26) when Sir Bagdemagus improperly claims the item. This artefact is for the worthiest alone, and 'seyde the knyght, "thys shelde behovith unto no man but unto Sir Galahad"' (679.26–27). The shield that this figure guards is an item of chivalric use, of supernatural power, and of spiritual significance, as it resides within an abbey. The combined image ensures that magical items test a knight's worthiness according to the moral contrast between purity and sin.

Other influential and supernatural items emerge further into the Grail Quest, in what Kenneth Hodges refers to as the 'suite of significant objects' on the Ship of Faith: the decorated sword, the girdle produced by Percival's sister, and the ship itself.⁹⁰ These objects are like the Grail in their ability to hold knights accountable to their chivalric and religious vows. The sword, like the Tale's first, can be wielded only by he who 'shall passe all othir' (753.15), and it is Galahad again who holds it. Percival's sister, who accompanies the knights at this point, explains the considerable biblical and historical contexts in the sword's history: a worthy wielder of this sword is placed into a

⁹⁰ Kenneth Hodges, 'Guinevere's Ghost: Spenser's Response to Malory's Erotics', in *Sexuality and Memory in Early Modern England: Literature and the Erotics of Recollection*, ed. by John S. Garrison and Kyle Pivetti (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 81–95.

cultural and religious narrative that includes key Christian figures such as Solomon and Eve. Not only does the Grail Quest envelop the knights within Christian history, it also takes them beyond the boundaries of human experience.⁹¹ The boat, upon which Launcelot and Galahad travel for this portion of the test, also relies on the worthiness and faith of the occupant to reach its destination, not unlike the myriad of appearances in romance of other rudderless boats.⁹² Once aboard, they find themselves ‘fulfylled with all thyng that he thought on other desyred’ (77.14–15) and ‘susteyned with the grace of the Holy Goste’ for a full month (770.27). Supernatural sustenance via a supernatural object is a common motif elsewhere in the prose romances, as Floripas’s girdle has demonstrated in *Charles the Grete*, but this supernatural sustenance is notably spiritual in nature: not only have the knights proved their spiritual worth by getting this far, but the boat ensures that only those spiritually-worthy will progress any further.

The Grail seekers are eventually forced apart by a white knight who approaches from the shore to advise that Galahad alone must continue on this journey. Once he has disembarked, ‘the wynde arose and drove Sir Launcelot more than a moneth thorow the se’ (772.22–24), ensuring that each of the knights progresses in a manner that responds to the judgements made upon his spiritual and chivalric valour. The rudderless boats of this text permit or deny narrative progression based on an evaluation of spiritual worthiness. Notably, Galahad is deemed worthy of seeking the Grail whilst Launcelot is not. The boats, like the supernatural objects found on the quest, and like the Grail itself, evaluate the Christian virtue of the knights in a way that prioritises Christian virtue over

⁹¹ Joseph D. Parry, ‘Following Malory out of Arthur’s World’, *Modern Philology*, 95.2 (1997), 147–69 (p. 165).

⁹² Cooper highlights the prevalence of this meme, and the extent to which a boat’s occupant is required to place his or her faith in God. Some vessels, much like the one that Launcelot boards in the Grail Quest, ‘represent something more like the ultimate in luxury travel than extreme privation in rotten skiffs’. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 128.

all other aspects of chivalry. As is the case elsewhere in the prose romances, upon journeys into the East in *Huon of Burdeux* and *Charles the Grete*, supernatural phenomena and objects are a means of evaluating the spiritual, as well as chivalric, worthiness of a knight.

ENCHANTMENT AND MAGIC IN *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

In late medieval romance, illicit magic is wielded by individuals who operate beyond the court. Whilst earlier English romance placed magic in the hands of fairies in otherworlds, the prose romances locate this magic in real world people and places distanced from the protagonists' court. Accordingly, in the *Morte Darthur*, Morgan Le Fay is the character most frequently associated with magic, in line with her antagonistic nature and distance from court, in the same way that the crusading prose romances associate Saracen enchanters with dangerous magic. As Wade notes, Morgan is humanised in fifteenth-century Arthurian romance, and in the *Morte Darthur* she is stripped of the otherworldly qualities with which she was imbued in earlier romances, without removing her magical abilities.⁹³ She becomes a wholly human antagonist, ideologically distanced from Arthur's court despite her familial connections, because of her villainous intent. Morgan's power in the *Morte*, then, is more comparable to the Saracen enchantment of the prose romances than the fairy magic she was associated with in earlier romance. Merlin, meanwhile, one of the rare Arthurian magic-users represented positively and with courtly connections, is removed from the court in a downfall that permanently binds him to the wilderness beyond courtly society.⁹⁴

⁹³ Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance*, pp. 9–12.

⁹⁴ Merlin's eventual imprisonment and death comes from being tempted beyond the court and, in *Le Morte Darthur*, at the hands of the Lady of the Lake. In the *Morte* he is trapped beneath a great stone, but earlier sources show the punishment in different natural forms, including a tower of air and a cave. Merlin's courtly connections are nullified by this death, which sees him eternally confined in the wilderness to which he eventually retreats. See S. E. Holbrook, 'Nymue, the Chief Lady of the Lake',

Morgan is the *Morte*'s foremost user of magic, and most of the text's references to supernatural power are about her. In Caxton's 1485 print, she is referred to in primarily feminine forms, like 'enchantress', whereas in the Winchester Manuscript these references are instead in the masculine or neutral form of 'enchanter'. Other references to supernatural power differ in this same way. Caxton's *Morte* does not include 'sorcerer', but has nine instances of 'sorceress' which mostly refer to Morgan. The Winchester Manuscript contains no mention of 'sorcerers' or 'sorceresses' at all, and only a single mention of 'sorcery', in an unfavourable reference to the Lady of the Lake: 'by sorcery she hath bene the destroyer of many good knyghtes' (*Morte*, 51.31).⁹⁵ Caxton's print contains three instances of 'enchantresses' (all in plural form) compared to two instances of 'enchanter', one of which is coupled with 'sorceress' and clearly intended to refer to a group of 'damesels' (*Morte*, 126.10).⁹⁶ The Winchester Manuscript refers to 'enchanters' in three instances, using the masculine form only even when referencing this same group of damsels.⁹⁷ This lexical variation between manuscript and print versions of the *Morte* could be the result of editorial changes during the printing process, but it could also be due to the technical requirements of the printing press, where variations in spelling or additions of adjectives were sometimes used to amend lines to fit the printed page.⁹⁸ As Daniel Wakelin notes, drawing on the

Speculum, 53.4 (1978), 761–77 (pp. 761–66). On the distinctions between Merlin in *Le Morte Darthur* and in other romances, see Carol E. Harding, *Merlin and Legendary Romance* (London: Garland, 1988, repr. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

⁹⁵ Tomomi Kato (eds.), *A Concordance to the Works of Sir Thomas Malory* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974), p. 1157.

⁹⁶ See Kiyokazu Mizobata (ed), *A Concordance to Caxton's Morte Darthur (1485)* (Osaka: Osaka Books, 2009).

⁹⁷ Being an enchanter in the *Morte Darthur* appears to be a broadly gender-neutral occupation, which fits with the prevailing view of witchcraft in the Middle Ages. As Cooper puts it, 'witchcraft in the Middle Ages was taken to be an act, not a state', and the terminology is therefore not gender-specific. For concordance data, see Kato (eds.), *A Concordance to the Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, p. 363. On witchcraft, see Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 160.

⁹⁸ As scholars have explored, the physical process of printing often required careful attention to the way words appeared on the page. Caxton used a range of typefaces in a variety of sizes, for example. See Pamela Robinson, 'Materials: Paper and Type', in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain 1476–1558*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 61–74.

work of Takako Kato, Caxton's compositor for the *Morte* inserted and cut spaces and words to ensure visual consistency from page to page.⁹⁹

Regardless of the way the text refers to her, Morgan's power is consistently derived from her use of magic. Both the Winchester Manuscript and the Caxton print refer to 'nigromancy' on only one occasion, and in reference to Morgan: the first book tells us that 'Morgan le Fey, was put to scole in a nonnery, and ther she lerned so moche that she was a grete clerke of nygromancye' (4.21–22). Nigromancy indicates a supernatural power derived from ungodly sources, and the fact that Morgan acquires hers from a nunnery further emphasises how she contravenes the Christian and chivalric values of the court. While Arthur's knights are not generally on crusading journeys—apart from during the Roman War, where Morgan does not feature—their various chivalric journeys are done in the service of God. Morgan's nigromancy opposes their progress. Morgan is othered through her nigromancy but also as a woman in a homosocial, chivalric society.¹⁰⁰ Her power to subvert the knights' progress comes from her beauty, charm and rhetoric as much as her magical abilities.¹⁰¹ Morgan also has geographical mobility throughout the *Morte*, connecting her more closely to adventurous damsels like Lyoness in 'Sir Gareth of Orkney', who guide knights through the text, rather than to other queens, who are generally stationary but within a court environment. In this sense, as Elizabeth Edwards notes, her mobility is typical of female characters.¹⁰² It is also typical of characters with particular narrative agency: whilst

⁹⁹ Daniel Wakelin, 'Writing the Words', in *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500*, ed. by Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, repr. 2013), pp. 34–58 (p. 57); Takako Kato, *Caxton's Morte Darthur: The Printing Process and the Authenticity of the Text* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ As Heng suggests, this is a society defined by masculine actions, in which 'to be truly a man is to be a knight'. Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 130.

¹⁰¹ Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 51.

¹⁰² Elizabeth Edwards, 'The Place of Women in the *Morte Darthur*', in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 37–54 (pp. 38–39).

knights and damsels often travel together, only the knights regain their mobility after being wounded and forced to rest.¹⁰³ In the context of the prose romances, however, Morgan's mobility is more typical of magic-users than of female characters. She functions similarly to the magical dwarves, Pacolet and Oberon, although their nigromancy and enchantment is generally performed in the service of the crusaders. They, like Morgan, have the capacity to move throughout the narrative, independently of the knightly protagonists, and are close to the chivalric court despite being supernaturally othered.

Morgan also uses a variety of supernatural items to achieve her goals, many of which evaluate and attempt to denigrate the Arthurian community.¹⁰⁴ She attempts to cause Arthur's downfall by sending him the 'rycheste mantel that ever was sene in the courte' (121.31–32), which is imbued with supernatural power. Arthur requests that the damsel who delivers it try it on first, and she 'fell downe dede' (122.21) upon wearing it. Morgan's second gift is a drinking horn, 'made by sorsery' (344.26), which no lady may drink from unless 'she were trew to her husbande; and if she were false she sholde spylle all the drynke' (344.7–9). This gift is more clearly an assessment of Christian virtue, and it parallels the goblet that Oberon gives Huon in *Huon of Burdeux*. Oberon's goblet fills with wine when 'the signe of a crosse' (*Huon*, 76.15) is made above it, on the condition that the user be devout and sinless. The drinking horn that Morgan sends, in the *Morte*, is likewise only usable by those who are virtuous Christians. The intention is to cause social outrage by proving Guinevere's adultery to the court, but this proof

¹⁰³ Kenneth Hodges further notes that wounds are not restricted to either gender, and that the fragility of the body is clear across the text. However, the way that 'vulnerability is understood and practiced' differs between the sexes, where male wounds are temporary and help to reinforce masculinity in practice and female wounds are 'often seen as permanent and markers of shame or social failure'. See Kenneth Hodges, 'Wounded Masculinity: Injury and Gender in Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le Morte Darthur'', *Studies in Philology*, 106.1 (2009), 14–31 (pp. 14 and 27–30).

¹⁰⁴ As Larrington notes, women in the Arthurian world often rely upon words as a means of influencing knights to do their bidding and claim an underhanded power based on the prowess of others. See Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, p. 51.

would also result in Guinevere's death at the stake. The knights lambaste Morgan for deploying such a magical item, referring to her as 'the falsest sorseres and wycche moste that is now lyvyng' (344.27–28).

Elsewhere in the *Morte*, Morgan steals and deploys helpful magical items against the chivalric community, demonstrating the power of her charm alongside her subversive nature. In one such episode, she steals Excalibur and its magical scabbard, giving them to Accolon, who 'was so bolde because of Excalyber' (112.21–22) that he willingly fights Arthur on her behalf, turning a magical object against the very community that it helped to form.¹⁰⁵ As with supernatural items elsewhere in romance, the significance of items is not so much in their power but in their ability to reveal how a knight—or a king, in this case—can prevail without them.¹⁰⁶ As Arthur uncovers the deception and explains it to his vanquished opponent, he states that 'my sistir Morgan le Fay by hir false crauftis made the to agré to hir fals lustes' (115.19–21). This brief line of explanation binds together a myriad of ways in which Morgan is at once connected to and othered from the inner circle of Arthur's chivalric kingdom. She is othered as an enchantress and a woman, but is still a 'sistir', in a text so centred around familial relationships. While many of Morgan's episodes of magic come directly from the *Tristan en Prose*, Carolyne Larrington suggests that Malory also creates entirely new episodes that highlight Morgan's cruelty and magic.¹⁰⁷ These episodes reinforce how Morgan's use of magic informs her presentation as an antagonist. In one example, Launcelot encounters a maiden, who 'by enchaumentente Quene Morgan le Fay and the

¹⁰⁵ Edwards links this episode to magical deception through fears over shape-shifting. She suggests that women's ability to alter reality recurs throughout *Le Morte Darthur*, alongside the 'menace in female sexuality'. See Edwards, 'The Place of Women', p. 40.

¹⁰⁶ See Cooper's discussion of magic that doesn't work. As Cooper further notes, this episode is one of the few instances where the magical scabbard of Excalibur is actually used. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁷ Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses*, pp. 84–85.

Quene of Northe Galys' (621.14–15) have trapped in scalding water. This instance not only highlights Morgan's malevolence but sets her apart from the ethics of chivalric society. Once Launcelot has rescued the damsel and 'toke the fayryst lady by the honde', the entire community 'brought her clothis' (621.13 and 20) as an act of kindness.

Morgan and the few other female 'false enchaunters' (194.26) which she associated with are uncommon figures in the prose romances, which generally feature male enchanters and nigromancers. An episode in *Godeffroy of Boloyn*e offers a rare comparison here, where the crusaders attempt to besiege a key city in the Holy Land but are hindered by a group of enchantresses upon the city walls:

they dyde do come vpon the walles .ij. old wythes or
enchaunteresses [...] and they had with them iij maydens, for to helpe
to make theyr charme.

(*Godeffroy*, 268.3–5)

These witches weave charms to break the siege engines necessary for the final Christian push, and their violent deaths represent a triumph not only over the Saracen-controlled Holy Land but over illicit supernatural power: the knights 'threwe the stones / & atteyned the two old wythes and the thre maydens in such wise that they were smeton alle to pyeces, and fyl doun deed fro the walles, of whom the sowles wente forthe to helle' (268.8–11). In this example, otherness is emphasised through both gender and religion, combining anxieties over magical power found in romance both at court and out on crusade.

DWARFS AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Dwarfs in the prose romances are generally supernatural others, markedly distinct from knights in physical appearance, magical capacity, and connection to the Saracen world.

Even so, dwarfs prove helpful to the Christian cause on multiple occasions.¹⁰⁸ Episodes in the prose romances where dwarfs help Christian knights against Saracens explicitly and magically, as Oberon and Pacolet do in *Huon of Burdeux* and *Valentine and Orson*, find partial parallels in Malory's *Morte* – parallels either for their magical abilities, or for their helpfulness. Morgan and Merlin in *Le Morte Darthur*, are not dwarfs, but they demonstrate that the wielders of supernatural power must exist beyond the court. Gareth's dwarf, while not magical, demonstrates the tradition distinct to English romance of the dwarf as a helper figure.

In Middle English Arthurian romances, as Leitch suggests, dwarfs have a particular cultural specificity as sources of ethical advice and judgement, appearing most prominently in the romances without French sources and in tales of Gawain.¹⁰⁹ Individuals with dwarfism were a very real 'other' within medieval society, although not necessarily disparaged for their difference.¹¹⁰ There has been a recent upsurge of

¹⁰⁸ As Stevens suggests, physical distortion is 'normally symptomatic of an evil character in the romances', highlighting the figure of the malevolent dwarf as a notable example. Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁹ Megan Leitch, 'The Servants of Chivalry? Dwarves and Porters in Malory and the Middle English Gawain Romances', *Arthuriana*, 27.1 (2017), 3–27 (pp. 3–5).

¹¹⁰ The field of medieval disability studies provides a number of interesting interpretations on the topic of dwarves as 'others' within society. Joshua Eyler discusses medieval perceptions of dwarfism, citing Henri-Jacques Striker, who suggests that those with disabilities would have been the societal outcasts of medieval society – the beggars and the hospitalised. However, Eyler argues productively against the modern fallacy that medieval societies invariably linked disability with sin, offering instead a variety of positive frameworks for the medieval treatment of disability. A. E. Comber contributes to this discussion by suggesting that medieval society saw physical abnormalities, including dwarfism, as natural phenomena. Irina Metzler, in her considerations of disability in medieval society, suggests instead that there are many examples of dwarfism being an accepted part of life; she cites examples of individuals with dwarfism being accepted within legal and academic circles. David Williams considers physical size by contrasting giants and pygmies, suggesting that there is no specific norm for comparison, meaning that 'the normal is, therefore, relative, the abnormal, absolute'. Though the dwarf of romance is an exaggerated and fantasised version of an 'Other', there is clear precedent in fifteenth-century society for positive representations of dwarves in romance, even when they are overtly magical. See Joshua Eyler, 'Introduction: Breaking Boundaries, Building Bridges', in *Disability in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joshua Eyler (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 1–8 (pp. 2–7); A. E. Comber, 'A Medieval King "Disabled" by an Early Modern Construct: A Contextual Examination of *Richard III*', in *Disability in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joshua Eyler (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 183–96, (p. 187); Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 40–41. David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Functions of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), p. 113.

interest in marginal characters, and in printing *Huon* and *Valentine*, de Worde draws upon some of the stereotypes examined elsewhere in this critical field.¹¹¹ Oberon, in *Huon*, is othered through his fairy background and continues a long tradition in medieval literature of fairies symbolising moral or social disorder.¹¹² Pacolet, in *Valentine*, occupies a more servile position at first, more akin to those dwarfs that Emily Huber suggests can be more easily read alongside objects of chivalry rather than characters.¹¹³ However, he takes up a far more prominent position in the narrative, wielding magic and acting as a powerful force for Christian good. Crucially, in selecting these texts, de Worde draws upon what Leitch identifies as a tradition distinct to English romance – where marginal figures such as dwarfs act as helpers who provide ethically-sound assistance to knights.¹¹⁴ Pacolet and Oberon both offer supernatural objects and actions that help the crusaders navigate the Saracen East, and they therefore help to bolster the chivalric community on crusade.

Gareth's nameless dwarf, in Malory's 'Tale of Gareth', does not engage with supernatural objects or phenomena, but he does ensure that Gareth reaches chivalric maturity and become part of the community. In this sense, he is a helper figure, like Pacolet and Oberon, who ensures community cohesion in advance of later adventures. He serves the important role of squire both at the court and beyond. Before Gareth sets out, the 'dwarff had brought hym all thyng that neded hym' (227.20–21), and on the

¹¹¹ Comparably, in his 1958 monograph on dwarfs of Arthurian romance, Vernon Harward suggested that there are many dwarves in the Arthurian tradition, 'whose parts are simply insignificant', and about whom 'no purpose would be served by further summaries'. As Aisling Byrne notes, there has been considerable other interest in these marginal figures since then. Vernon Harward, *The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1958), pp. 5 and 143; Byrne, *Otherworlds*, p. 3.

¹¹² For discussion of fairies and social disorder, see Neil Cartlidge, 'Sir Orfeo in the Otherworld: Courting Chaos?', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 26 (2004), 195–226 (p. 200).

¹¹³ Huber refers to Gareth's dwarf, who is discussed at the end of this subsection. She suggests that Gareth's dwarf 'helps establish Gareth's identity' in the community, but that he is otherwise as inanimate as Gareth's horse or sword. See Emily Rebekah Huber, "'Delyver Me My Dwarff!': Gareth's Dwarf and Chivalric Identity", *Arthuriana*, 16.2 (2006), 49–53 (pp. 49–51).

¹¹⁴ Leitch, 'Dwarves and Porters', pp. 3–5 and 11.

journey, Gareth ‘betoke his horse to the dwarff and commaunded the dwarff to wacche all nyght’ (256.3–4). The dwarf is later kidnapped by Sir Gryngamor, who rides away having ‘plucked hym faste undir his arme’ (256.24–25). Huber compares Gareth’s dwarf in this episode to the ‘paraphernalia of chivalry’ alongside Gareth’s sword, horse and armour, arguing that the dwarf is miniaturized into a ‘pitiful object’ in need of rescue that refocuses the story on Gareth’s heroic efforts.¹¹⁵ Elsewhere in the prose romances, the ‘lytell Pacolet’ (*Valentine*, 156.20) is described with similar miniaturization. However, these dwarfs are far more important to their narratives than their size indicates. The dwarf of this tale fulfils a crucial role in spreading Gareth’s renown and ensuring his acceptance into the chivalric community. He spreads word of Gareth’s triumphs, endearing him to Lyonesse, who is ‘gladde of thys tydynges’ (246.33), and boasts of Gareth’s prowess to the Red Knight himself, naming Gareth (or ‘Beawmaynes’, at this point), among the ‘noble knyghtes’ (248.11) of the Round Table. All of this prowess-building is *marvel*, of the sort that John Stevens subdivides into categories including both ‘the mysterious’ and ‘the magical’.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere in the *Morte*, Malory omits characters that fit this stereotype in stature but not in spirit. As Leitch notes, he omits a dwarf ‘who is both hostile and un-informative’ from the Knight of the Cart episode in ‘Launcelot and Guinevere’;¹¹⁷ the cart drivers that Launcelot kills (848.4) are, in Chrétien de Troyes’ *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, dwarves. Gareth’s dwarf fulfils a role distinct to dwarfs of English romance in being both an ‘other’ and a helper.

The ‘Tale of Gareth’ has no extant source, which has led to a critical debate over whether Malory constructed it from a lost source or whether, as Leitch and Rushton

¹¹⁵ Huber does, however, note that Gareth’s dwarf can ‘shift between active and passive roles’ as required. See Huber, ‘Gareth’s Dwarf and Chivalric Identity’, pp. 49–51.

¹¹⁶ Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, pp. 99–102.

¹¹⁷ Leitch, ‘Dwarves and Porters’, p. 11.

argue in the *New Companion to Malory*, the tale is Malory's own creation.¹¹⁸ That Malory was unable to create a romance without having copied from a source is an enduring critical view based on Eugène Vinaver's argument that Malory's skill and independence as a writer was noticeably developed by the final two books of the *Morte*, but only as a result of Malory having learned from his sources for earlier Tales.¹¹⁹ However, the presence of Gareth's dwarf, who is so similar to other helpful and marginalised figures in English romance, lends weight to the notion that Malory was writing and creating as part of a literary tradition specific to late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English romance. De Worde, in selecting *Valentine and Orson* and *Huon of Burdeux* for translation and print, continued to work within this tradition by presenting similar dwarfs: Pacolet and Oberon not only help cohere the chivalric community but help it to access Saracen magic whilst on crusade.

PACOLET AND OBERON: DWARFS AS SUPERNATURAL HELPERS

Pacolet and Oberon, from *Valentine and Orson* and *Huon of Burdeux*, draw upon the late medieval English tradition of dwarfs as ethical helpers, assisting the crusaders through the Saracen East via supernatural objects and powers.¹²⁰ Pacolet holds a servile position as squire and messenger, and has 'lerner so muche of the arte of

¹¹⁸ Leitch and Rushton, 'Introduction', pp. 1–10. See also Helen Cooper, "Introduction," in *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*, ed. by Helen Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. vii–xxx, (p. xx).

¹¹⁹ See Leitch and Rushton, 'Introduction', pp. 4–6. Eugène Vinaver championed earlier arguments for a lost French source, assuming that Malory's skill as a writer grew from humble beginnings whilst compiling the *Morte Darthur*. Later arguments, from P. J. C. Field and Ralph Norris pointed instead towards the possibility of a lost English source. More recent criticism is less dismissive of the possibility that Malory might have created the work without a source. See Vinaver, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, vol. III, p. 1419, for discussion of Malory's 'misreading'. On this critical debate more broadly, see Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, pp. 250–51. See also Norris, *Malory's Library*, p. 94; Cory Rushton, 'Absent Fathers, Unexpected Sons: Paternity in Malory's "Morte Darthur"', *Studies in Philology*, 101.2 (2004), 136–52 (pp. 146–47); Barbara Nolan, 'The Tale of Sir Gareth and the Tale of Sir Launcelot', in *Studies in Malory*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, [1996] 2000), pp. 153–82 (pp. 156–57).

¹²⁰ Leitch, 'Dwarves and Porters', pp. 3–5.

Nygmancye' (*Valentine*, 142.17–18). He begins as the servant of a Saracen but almost immediately becomes an asset to the Christian cause. Oberon is an explicitly Christian fairy king, who promises 'my realme & all my dygnyte' (*Huon*, 266.24) as assistance in the religious conflict that man and fairy share against the Saracens.

As a fairy dwarf king who is also Christian, Oberon has access to a range of powerful magic and a desire to see it used for the good of Christendom. Despite his faith bringing him close to the crusading goals, he is ideologically distant from the court, found in a wood 'full of ye fayrey & straunge thynges', and physically othered: 'of heygth but of [three] fote, and crokyd shulderyd' (*Huon*, 63.19–23). Even so, he greets Huon 'in ye name of ye god that made & formyd vs' (71.16–17). Oberon's faith binds him to this crusading narrative, but he is found in a forest on the journey to Babylon and therefore exists beyond the fringes of chivalric society where dwarves generally operate.¹²¹ He is a Christian 'other', who wields potentially-dangerous power. When he welcomes Huon's gesture of friendship, Oberon reveals a past that grounds him in the history of the world, in the typology of the Nine Worthies, and in Christian theology.¹²² His father was 'Julius cesar' (72.24–25), and his birth was attended by 'many a prynce and barons of the fayrre' [fairy] (73.14). In the Old French *chanson de geste*, which is the source material for the French prose edition that Lord Berners translates, Oberon even has a further matrilineal link to magic and villainy through Morgan Le Fay.¹²³ Though *Huon of Burdeux* does not explicitly name Morgan as Oberon's mother, she does appear at his court in later continuations of the narrative, as both human and fairy, drawing together the connections between Malory's *Morte*

¹²¹ Leitch, 'Dwarves and Porters', pp. 3–4.

¹²² S. L. Lee, 'Introduction' in *The English Charlemagne Romances, Parts VII and VIII*, EETS ES 40 & 41 (London: Trubner, 1882), pp. xxix–xxxii.

¹²³ For the Old French *chanson*, see F. M. Guessard (ed.), *Huon de Bordeaux: chanson de geste* (Paris: F. Viewig, 1860), p. 104.

Darthur and the other prose romances.¹²⁴ As Helen Cooper notes, *Huon of Burdeux* was also popular enough to establish ‘Oberon’ as the standard name for a fairy king, as demonstrated by Spenser’s and Shakespeare’s familiarity with the character.¹²⁵ Oberon’s magic lives on beyond this text, though his Christian devotion is specific to this crusading narrative in which he assists.

Oberon’s supernatural power assists Huon throughout his penitential journey, and he comes close to performing miracles. At birth, Oberon was granted supernatural gifts, allowing him to know ‘all that euer any man can knowe or thynke’ (73.28), to summon immediately anything ‘at myne owne deuyse’ (74.1–2), and to travel instantly whilst summoning armies to his aid. He declares that he will use ‘the grete power that god hath gyuen me’ (76.12–13) to aid Huon, declaring in this statement that he is Huon’s political, supernatural, and religious superior: Oberon is a king whilst Huon is only a knight, he holds magical power whilst Huon does not, and he wields great power from God whilst Huon embarks upon a journey to win religious favour. Oberon is here grounded within Christianity despite the clear pagan and magical associations of his character. Without his Christian connections, his magic would be another unfamiliar and heathen danger of the East. The two gifts that Oberon gives Huon—the drinking goblet and summoning horn—also emphasise a religious connection in their capacity to evaluate Huon’s Christian virtue.¹²⁶

In *Valentine and Orson*, the dwarf Pacolet is first introduced in a chapter heading as ‘an enchauntour named Pacolet’ (*Valentine*, 4.1 and 142). His magic serves

¹²⁴ Martha Driver, ‘Reading A Midsummer Night’s Dream Through Romance’, in *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays with Medieval Sources or Settings*, ed. by Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray (London: MacFarland, 2009), pp. 140–60 (p. 154, n. 31).

¹²⁵ Cooper, ‘Malory and the Early Prose Romances’, pp. 115–17. See also Jefferson B. Fletcher, ‘Huon of Burdeux and the Fairie Queene’, *The Journal of German Philology*, 2.2 (1898), 203–212; John R. Macarthur, ‘The Influence of Huon of Burdeux upon the Fairie Queene’, *The Journal of German Philology*, 4.2 (1902), 215–38.

¹²⁶ See this chapter’s earlier discussion of supernatural objects in the prose romances, and the way in which these objects are reframed as closer to miraculous than magical.

the Christian cause like Oberon's, though he originally serves a Saracen lady previously introduced by the Green Knight as 'my syster Clerymonde' (116.30):

In the castell of pleasaunce of the fayre lady Clerymode was a dwerfe that she had nourysshed from his chyldhode [and] sette vnto the scole. That same dwerfe was called Pacolet. He was full of grete wytte and vnderstondyng, the whiche at the scole of tollette had lerned so muche of the arte of Nygromancye that aboue all other he was perfyte, in suche manere that by enchauntemente he had made and composed a lytell hors of wodde, and in the heed there was artyfycyelly a pynne that was in suche wyse set, that euery tyme that he mounted vpon the horse for to goo somewhere, he torned the pynne towarde the place that he wolde go to, and anone he founde him in the place without harme or daunger, for the hors was of suche facyon that he went thourghe the ayre more faster than ony byrde coude flee.

(*Valentine*, 142.13–26)

The passage establishes Pacolet's magical nature as a skilled practitioner of 'nygromancye', an illegitimate power for its ungodliness, and one that proves both useful and problematic for its capacity to advance the Christian cause. The crusaders achieve greater and greater victories through Pacolet's magic, bringing them ever closer to immoral supernatural power.

Also introduced in this passage is Pacolet's 'lytell hors of wodde', which he has 'made and composed' as a further demonstration of his skill. The wooden horse is a common motif, with analogues throughout medieval literature in texts such as 'The Squire's Tale'.¹²⁷ The device can instantly fly its user to their destination by the turning of a pin, though as Helen Cooper notes, romances with this motif rarely describe actual

¹²⁷ Craig Berry suggests that this text provides the 'closest near-contemporary literary analogue' to the horse that is gifted in "The Squire's Tale". The horse of that tale is given by a knight who appears 'though he were comen ayeyn out of Faiyre', and it allows the user to travel 'wher-so yow lyst' at great speed. See Craig A. Berry, 'Flying Sources: Classical Authority in Chaucer's "Squire's Tale"', *ELH*, 68.2 (2001), 287–313 (p. 309, n. 21); Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 134. For the horse in 'The Squire's Tale', see Chaucer, 'The Squire's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 170 (ll. 96 and 115–18).

flight.¹²⁸ Even so, mechanical marvels and automata of this sort were common in romances from the twelfth century, often showcasing the exoticism of foreign courts.¹²⁹ Pacolet's horse is a similar form of controlled exoticism, where his 'nygromancye' is used to further Christian causes rather than hinder them. In this regard, he might be comparable to Morgan le Fay in *Le Morte Darthur*, who despite being schooled in nigromancy, is not always clearly an antagonist. Morgan is still kin to Arthur, and following his mortal wound she is one of the four ladies who ensures Arthur is 'lad away in a shyp' (*Morte*, 928.7) to return again at some later date. Her earlier villainy is forgotten in this episode, suggesting that notions of 'licit' and 'illicit' magic are complex and do not always map neatly onto the moral and religious contrasts of the prose romances.

Pacolet is not explicitly Christian, and he is correspondingly shown to be capable of using ethically-questionable magic to advance the crusading cause. When the Sultan Muradin captures Valentine and the Green Knight in Constantinople, it is Pacolet who formulates a plan for their escape. He appeals to King Pepin of France to 'put your trust in me' (175.20), then travels via his magical horse to Sultan Muradin, to convince him that he is a fellow Saracen sent to assist. In the night, he comes 'vnto valentyne and the grene knight and vnbound them' (178.20–21), freeing the protagonists and proving his worth as a Christian ally. Moreover, Pacolet uses the opportunity available to strike a dire blow against the Saracens by kidnapping the Sultan Muradin. Luring the Sultan into a trap, 'pacolet made the soudan to mounte vp behynde hym and torned the pynne

¹²⁸ Cooper does go on to suggest at this point that this is because the magic itself often does not work, or is ultimately refused by the romance hero. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 144.

¹²⁹ See Truitt, *Medieval Robots: Mechanism, Magic, Nature, and Art*, pp. 1–5. Truitt goes on to consider that these automata 'stood at the intersection of natural knowledge (including magic) and technology'. Kieckhefer also notes that some analogues of this episode specifically link the device to the East or the Orient, or to Christian notions of sin. See Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rights: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 1997), pp. 42–43.

and the horse rose vp in the ayre so impetuously that also sone they were in the cyte of Constantinoble' (179.13–15). Both the escape sequence and the kidnap utilise the magic horse in a manner that showcases Pacolet's subterfuge and his magical craftsmanship in a clear reminder that while Pacolet serves Christendom he is still an 'other' to it. His efforts are recognised as 'the Emperour thanked muche Pacolet for the delyueraunce of hys sonne Valentyne' (180.34–36), but this recognition comes with an important realisation – this feat would have been both impossible and inappropriate for the Christian knights, as the conversation following Pacolet's capture of Muradin makes clear:

...and the kyng Pepyn said vnto him [:] Pacolet fayre syr thou must shewe one gambaude with thy horse. Syr sayd Pacolet mounte vp behynde me and I shall brynge you without restynge in to helle, frende sayde the kyng Pepyn, God kepe me frome it.

(*Valentine*, 180.36–181.2)

When Pepin requests a ride on the magical horse, Pacolet jests that he will ride him 'in to helle', causing Pepin to immediately withdraw the request. It is a clear reminder to characters and readers alike that direct involvement in magic, even when crusading success depends upon it, would deeply compromise Pepin's Christian beliefs. Pacolet's status as an outsider friendly to Christendom provides a safe way of accessing this potentially-dangerous magic.

The Christian knights continue to rely on Pacolet's power, which grows in its potency and ability to create Christian order by sowing destruction amongst the Saracens. Pacolet prevents a major battle from starting, but he does so by slaughtering thousands of Saracens overnight:

And when the nyght was come and the watche set Pacolet entred among the paynyns and caste his charme in such maner that he made them all fall vnto the earth on slepe [...] Nowe the good kyng Pepyn slepte not nor his army, for when it came toward midnight hee entred

into the hoost with thre score thousand fighting men and the noble Orson | and amonge the tentes and pauylions sette the fyre on euery syde, and all the paynymys put vnto death without sparyng lytle or grete.

(*Valentine*, 256.17–25)

The description of Pacolet's powers here implies that he operates for the good of Christendom, and burning Saracens alive may be read as comparable to the witch-hunts of late medieval Europe against those suspected of pagan magic.¹³⁰ Notably, King Pepin is only complicit in the legitimised and encouraged slaughter of Saracens and not the magic that makes it possible. Pacolet's magic culminates in a deception where he disguises himself as the prophet Muhammed himself, further highlighting uncomfortable associations between magic and Saracens:

[Pacolet] caste a charme in suche maner by the arte of Nygromancye that he made them fall to the earth and slepe as dead men. After he wente to the kyng of Ynde and vnbounde his eyen, and sayd to hym[:]
Noble kyng of Ynde take ioye and comferte in me, for I am thy god mahowne that is descended from heuen for to succour the.

(*Valentine*, 263.8–13)

Pacolet's capture of this Saracen figurehead completes his role in the narrative. Shortly after this, Pacolet is killed by an individual he attempts to control when a 'charme fayled' (282.7), ensuring that his final successful act in the text is the disguise as Muhammed, in which he assists the crusaders whilst overtly connecting magic with the exoticism of the East and the religion of the Saracens.

The magic that Pacolet and Oberon provide heavily influences the crusading narratives of their texts. Pacolet's magic lingers in the text after his death, posing a

¹³⁰ Kieckhefer notes that there was a 'dramatic upswing' in the number of witch trials in the mid- to late-fifteenth century, particularly in France, where much of *Valentine* and *Orson* takes place. He refers to Saint Bernardino of Siena's records to suggest that such witch-trials often resulted in the accused being burned to death. See Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p. 194. See also Karen Jolly, Catharina Raudvere and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 23–26.

mortal threat to those like Valentine who attempt to wield it. When Valentine enters ‘in to hys secrete chambre for to preue the tables of Pacolet’ (291.22–23), he attempts to take more direct control of magic that has previously been limited to the margins of the chivalric community. This episode precedes the final sequences of the text, in which Valentine accidentally slays his father and becomes an outcast. Prior to his penance, which bears remarkable similarity to that of Robert the Devil’s (as a period of animalistic exclusion from society), Valentine laments that ‘of all the senners I am the worst’ (312.30).¹³¹ Though his father’s death is an unfortunate misunderstanding, Valentine’s penance is in fact a punishment for abusing magical forces that Christians should not access, such as Pacolet’s tablets. Valentine’s penance is issued by the Pope, privately and personally, and his task requires him to humble himself and ‘li vnder the staires of thy palays with out speche if god giue the life so longe, and thou shalt neyther eate nor drinke but of the relefe of the table’ (313.14–16). Cooper also discusses this scene in some detail, noting that Valentine’s access to Pacolet’s magical tables does nothing to prevent the ‘entirely natural catastrophe’ of him killing his father.¹³² In reducing himself to this baseness prior to his death, and assuming a form that is physically mute and stripped of his prior chivalric responsibilities, Valentine is realigned with the Christian values of humility and modesty from which he has strayed.

CONCLUSION: THE SUPERNATURAL IN PROSE ROMANCE

¹³¹ *The Lyfe of Robert the Deuyll*, ed. by William J. Thoms (London: Nattali and Bond, 1858).

¹³² Cooper further suggests that this patricide is a ‘chivalric act that goes wrong’, and one that compromises the expected ending of the romance, in which the succession of the throne is assured and the kingdom is stable. She notes that the perilous condition in which the texts’ kingdoms are left is comparable to other unhappy prose romance endings; even the successful conquests of *Charles the Grete* end with betrayal. See Cooper, ‘Counter-Romance’, pp. 160–61 and 148; Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 184–88.

The prose romances ground their most fantastic and supernatural elements of the English prose romances resonate with the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century crusading values and desires by which they were informed and to which they contributed. This grounding is not unusual for the genre, and previous chapters have considered how the texts engage with such values through single combat and spaces. Notably, however, even in its most fantastical elements, romance responds to contemporary concerns and anxieties. Magic most often evaluates knights, revealing abilities or characteristics already within them: rudderless boats take knights where they deserve to be, and even magical swords still need a strong arm to swing them.¹³³ The prose romances shift this presentation of supernatural away from purely magical and towards miraculous, where any form of supernatural power can be considered licit and beneficial only when created by God and used in the service of the Christian good.¹³⁴ Any form of magical power not associated with God must, therefore, be both physically and morally dangerous. When crusaders find assistance through the supernatural objects common to romance, it is because the object has revealed the legitimacy of the knight's Christian values. When Saracens wield enchantment and nigromancy against the crusaders, it is ungodly both because it works against Christian crusading goals and because it is controlled by man, rather than God.¹³⁵ These distinctions are, at times, complicated by characters such as Pacolet or Morgan le Fay, who have close ties to the chivalric court but operate geographically and ideologically beyond it, using immoral supernatural power.

¹³³ Similarly, Cooper suggests that romance often overpromises on its fantastical elements, offering marvels that are 'neither very wonderful nor very admirable'. Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 137.

¹³⁴ Stevens, *Medieval Romance*, p. 101; Le Goff, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 35.

¹³⁵ For discussions of 'licit' and 'illicit' magic, see Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 7. For further discussion of how magic can be read as an evaluative system in romance, see Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance*, p. 169.

The way the prose romances change the supernatural from magical to miraculous highlights the extent to which these texts respond to and embody late fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century English crusading concerns. As a positive force, the supernatural reinforces to the reader that crusade against the East, in the narratives and in the broader cultural imagination, has divine support. As a negative force, the supernatural presents that Saracen world as dangerous and demonic, populated by those who would wish harm upon Christendom. These texts are presented in print as ‘hystories’ (*Charles*, 1.13), where ‘alle that is therein trewe’ (*Godeffroy*, 4.2), and even their fantastical elements draw upon these claims to emphasise the potential for Christian triumph in a new crusade. In these same prologues, Caxton calls upon his readership to support a fifteenth-century crusade, supporting the veracity of these texts through their representation of the supernatural:

I haue emprysed to translate this book of the conquest of Iherusalem out of ffrenssh in to our maternal tongue, to thentente tencourage them by the redyng and heeryng of the merueyllous hystories herin comprysed, and of the holy myracles shewyd that euery man in his partye endeuoyre theym vnto the resistence afore sayd.

(*Godeffroy*, 4.22–27)

The narratives offer verisimilitude, allowing fifteenth-century readers to engage with their fantastical elements as part of the call for crusade that they propagate. This call is spurred on by the representation of the enemy as wielders of dark and demonic magic, and bolstered by the ways in which the prose romances overtly link helpful displays of magic and supernatural influence to the Christian cause.

CONCLUSION

Romance is a malleable genre, and one that adapts to changing cultural contexts throughout the Middle Ages. The late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English prose romances constitute a distinctive subgenre of romance, and by analysing the prose romances printed between 1473 and 1534 alongside shorter crusade-focused texts likewise circulated by the printing press, this thesis has demonstrated that this subgenre responds to contemporary concerns about crusade as well as about England's internal politics. The prose romances offer distinctive re-articulations of common romance traditions and memes in direct response to the contemporary socio-political situation, and engage with a far broader audience than earlier English romance through the advent of print technology in England.

There has been a welcome recent trend towards considering the prose romances as a group of texts that engages with the cultural concerns of late medieval English audiences. Several notable studies have recently considered the extent to which some of these texts, as well as other contemporary romances, responded to the social discord and genealogical anxieties of the Wars of the Roses, as well as concerns over England's recent loss of territory in the Hundred Years War.¹ Others have focused on the extent to which romance more broadly interacted with the tumultuous social, cultural, and political changes of the fifteenth century.² These studies have mainly been concerned with England's internal issues, and the extent to which the prose romances also responded to outward-looking concerns has previously been a little-analysed subject. This dissertation, however, has argued that reading the prose romances in terms of their

¹ Notably, see Leitch, *Romancing Treason*, pp. 92–174; Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, pp. 193–235; Ailes and Hardman, *The Legend of Charlemagne*, pp. 156–220; Nall, 'Malory in Historical Context'; Riddy, *Sir Thomas Malory*.

² Notably, see Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts*; Cooper, *English Romance in Time*; Nall, *Reading and War*.

external crusading concerns reveals how the texts mediate growing anxieties over England's place in the world and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. One aim of this thesis has been to assess how these this subgenre invites its readership to consider the value of crusade in re-establishing social order at home and throughout the Christian world.

This thesis has also contributed to the field of Malory studies by demonstrating that the crusading impulses in the *Morte Darthur* situate the text amongst other English prose romances as a response to the same cultural concerns. The Roman War episode, in particular, has an even clearer crusading agenda than does Malory's source, the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*. This agenda is clearer still in Caxton's 1485 print, which closely reflects crusading interests in other prose romances, as distinct from earlier English verse romance. Drawing upon the well-known ideas of Vegetius, sections of Malory's *Morte* explore how external crusade can help preserve peace and polity within a realm.³ Both the Roman War episode and the final lines of the text show how fractured communities might be brought together by campaigns against the Saracen East. The distinctions between Caxton's 1485 print and the Winchester manuscript also indicate that an editorial hand—most likely Caxton's—guides the reader towards a reading in which Lucius's Saracen army and the 'myscreantes or Turkes' at the text's end are representative of the Ottoman Turks. This sentiment is one that Caxton repeats throughout the prologues and epilogues to his other prose romances, and one with which de Worde continues to articulate when he reprints texts and expands the subgenre.

As we have seen in Chapter One, the prose romances were produced alongside other printed material, such as eyewitness accounts and indulgences, that encouraged

³ Nall, *Reading and War*, pp. 48–74; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 143–44.

individual contributions to a crusading cause.⁴ These texts testify to anxieties common across Western Europe, over the Ottoman Empire's encroachment into Eastern and Central Europe, which contributed to readers' interests in printed material that advocated crusade. Caxton and de Worde selected the prose romances to appeal in such an environment. In England, the civil strife of the Wars of the Roses and its aftermath meant that the prose romances could offer a nostalgic vision of an English realm reunited against an external enemy. Likewise, they could offer a vision that superseded memories of England's recent territorial losses in France by inviting them to imagine or participate in a united Christian endeavour to (re)conquer more important lands. Caxton's prologues and epilogues, and the revisions of these prologues by Wynkyn de Worde, framed the prose romances as direct engagements with these socio-political concerns, drawing parallels between the romance narratives and the prevailing situation in Europe that might warrant a crusading response.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four have demonstrated the extent to which the prose romances reframe a range of romance memes and traditions to invite a reading that focuses on the benefits of crusading action against the East. The examination of stock Saracen individuals, in Chapter Two, demonstrates how the prose romances reconfigure certain Saracen bodies as commodities that can be won for Christendom through martial and marital contracts. Encounters with Saracen princesses and Saracen knights—or Heroic Heathens—are memes that the prose romances replicate and reconfigure to focus on how converting these others benefits the Christian cause. Heroic Heathens, notably, undergo a significant change in the prose romances, where they are converted and assimilated into the community rather than beheaded for the threat they pose.

⁴ Vann and Kagay, *Hospitaller Piety and Crusader Propaganda*; Tyerman, *England and the Crusades*; Housley, *Crusading & the Ottoman Threat*.

Architectural places too, and the ideologically-defined spaces within them, receive a more detailed focus in the prose romances than in earlier English verse. As Chapter Three has argued, towers, bridges, gateways, and cities, are important markers of crusading progress that also represent broader crusade goals. The prose romances frequently draw attention to architectural structures, presenting a model of crusade most appropriate to late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century audiences in its emphasis on Christians as the rightful overlords of several places the Ottoman Empire had captured. Magic and the supernatural, explored in Chapter Four, are used in the prose romances to draw attention to alterity and quite literally demonise the Saracen opponents common to romance. Supernatural phenomena acting for the Christian good, like miracles and relics, are legitimised by connection to God, and supernatural phenomena authored by Saracen nigromancers and enchanters are illicit 'magic' that works against the crusade. Under these terms, the crusaders have limited access to forms of magic. Where they encounter the supernatural, its role is to test and evaluate knights more than to help them, as in earlier romance. Moreover, the prose romances prioritise evaluating knights' religious morality above other chivalric expectations. This emphasis is consistent with the importance and contemporary relevance of their crusading narratives.

The prose romances that were selected for print respond to late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English crusading concerns, which themselves stemmed from the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the repercussions of civil strife in the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War. These issues, like the crusades in the prose romances, are cultural and political as much as they are religious. As Julian Weiss argues, it would be reductionist to consider the significance of romance crusading campaigns as being merely about a conflict between Christianity and Islam.⁵ Recent

⁵ Weiss, 'Remembering Spain in the Medieval European Epic', p. 70.

postcolonial readings of how Western medieval literature depicts the East have also warned of the risk of imposing upon the texts anachronistic issues of modern Islamophobia. Sharon Kinoshita warns specifically that discussion of religion as central to medieval identity in post-9/11 discourse risks sliding into generalised assumptions of either clashing intolerance or idealised co-existence.⁶ The introduction to this thesis has already discussed how this conflict can be more clearly defined in terms of Christendom against the East, acknowledging that these terms represent not wholly religious viewpoints but political and territorial concerns as well as clashes between broader cultural worldviews of ‘self’ and ‘other’. The crusading journeys in the prose romances demonstrate cultural and ethical desires for crusade, both to reclaim the Holy Land from heathen hands and to reaffirm peace within Christendom and England. Considering earlier English romance, Turville-Petre has suggested that protagonists must combine ‘nationalist and religious interests’ to appeal to their audience. So too do the prose romances Caxton and de Worde selected depict a version of the East that appeals to an English audience’s cultural and political interests as much as their religious ones.

The crusading interests of the prose romances were further promoted by the means in which these books were produced, in print runs for a broad audience, and with paratextual comments speaking to the contemporary need for crusade. Many of Caxton’s comments, notably including his lament that Constantinople has been captured by ‘mescreauntes and turkes’ (*Godeffroy*, 3.19–20), rearticulate the crusading concerns already present in these texts in terms familiar to a growing late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English readership. The prose romances that Caxton and de Worde selected as a core part of these first two generations of print spoke to not only domestic issues of civil war and nostalgia over perceived chivalric decline, but also the broader,

⁶ Kinoshita, ‘Locating the Medieval Mediterranean’, p. 40.

geopolitical concerns over the changing face of Christendom and even England's place in the world.

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