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‘WEIGHED BY SUCH A GREAT CALAMITY, THEY WERE CLEANSED FOR THEIR SINS’: REMEMBERING THE SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF ANTIOCH

Andrew D. Buck

On 28 June 1098, the forces of the First Crusade, outnumbered and desperate, achieved an astounding victory over the forces of Kerbogha, *atabeg* of Mosul, outside of the north Syrian city of Antioch.¹ With this, Muslim resistance to the city’s capture crumbled, and, perhaps more importantly, after a gruelling eight-month siege the expedition had received confirmation, so many contemporary commentators believed, of God’s divine favour. The events of October 1097–June 1098 certainly left a lasting impression: Latin chroniclers expended much ink on their telling and re-telling, with the story of Antioch’s capture often emerging as the longest distinct stage of the crusade in contemporary narratives.² Through these processes, the memory of the siege and capture of Antioch during the First Crusade was crafted as one of the venture’s main proving grounds: a moment in which God tested the faith and dedication of His soldiers, allowing them to demonstrate their worthiness to recover

¹ For their invaluable insights on the ideas in this piece, I would like to thank conference audiences in Leeds and St Andrews, as well as Katy Mortimer, Beth Spacey, Stephen Spencer, and Carol Sweetenham.

² For this piece, the primary texts examined are: GF; PT; RA; FC; RM; BB; GN; AA; RC; GP. Events at Antioch were also immortalised in epic songs, wall paintings, and other forms of material culture, but these will be examined elsewhere.

Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre. Accordingly, the sources are replete with descriptions of intense suffering and acts of devotional bravery, as well as cowardice and the transgression of social bonds and structures – a comparative series of themes undoubtedly used by ecclesiastical authors to outline the idealised characteristics of a holy warrior. In short, the events at Antioch became a central node in the processes of remembering and defining the First Crusade.

Nevertheless, while modern scholarship on the inter-relationship between crusading and memory has largely argued for a value-positive relationship – that is the transmission of the crusading past served to promote future activities – this piece tests this assumption by re-considering the ways in which authors constructed and transmitted the memory of the siege and battle of Antioch, and how these events emerged as a core didactic moment in the ecclesiastical construction of the crusading ideal.³ It argues, moreover, that an exploration of the underlying tensions and traumas reflected in the narratives can lay the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of how memories of crusading interacted with secular attitudes towards the physical act of crusading itself.

Before exploring the textual traditions surrounding Antioch, though, it is worth briefly outlining the general narrative arc of the siege. Arriving in October 1097, the crusaders' supplies quickly ran out, while conditions in the camp deteriorated during the harsh winter. Meanwhile, although the crusaders withstood the continual harassment of Antioch's garrison, and successfully faced off Muslim armies from Damascus (December 1097) and Aleppo (February 1098), major foraging expeditions failed to alleviate shortages. Increased levels of

³ N. Paul, *To Follow in Their Footsteps: The Crusades and Family Memory in the High Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2012); M. Cassidy-Welch (ed.), *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading* (Abingdon, 2016).

suffering led to the dispersal of Latin forces and even desertion. It was only in spring 1098 that the situation changed, as the failure of Muslim relief armies and the construction of makeshift crusader fortresses weakened the garrison's resolve. The arrival of Latin ships at the nearby port of St Symeon also increased food supplies. However, towards June 1098, news spread of the major Muslim army led by Kerbogha, causing one leader, Stephen of Blois, to depart, and another, Bohemond of Taranto, to hatch a plan to engineer the city's fall by colluding with a tower guard called Firuz. Though Antioch was subsequently captured on 3 June 1098, the citadel held out, meaning Kerbogha's arrival the next day left the crusaders trapped between two forces. As a result, they endured three weeks of extreme suffering, with intense Muslim attacks, famine, and disease causing many secretly to flee the city and desert the venture. Morale was only maintained by strong leadership and the apparent finding of a relic of the Holy Lance. In response to this discovery, or perhaps simply the desperate reality of their situation, the crusaders faced Kerbogha in open battle on 28 June, achieving an unlikely victory. Antioch was secured, and the crusaders could embark on several months of recuperation before continuing their journey.⁴

The Penitent and Suffering Warrior

Suffering is a dominant theme of contemporary narratives of the siege of Antioch; indeed, all accounts present suffering as an ever-present and crucial spectre, one that played an important role in defining the ideal crusader.

⁴ T. Asbridge, *The First Crusade: A New History* (London, 2004), pp. 153–240.

This can be seen throughout the participant narratives. The earliest of these is probably the *Gesta Francorum*, whose anonymous author spent the months at Antioch within Bohemond of Taranto's contingent.⁵ The author described the crusaders's 'immense misfortune and misery', noting that 'we suffered these, and many anxieties and extremities which I am unable to name, for the name of Christ and to deliver the road to the Holy Sepulchre'.⁶ It was, in short, a purifying ritual. Such suffering was also often coupled to a physical test; namely battle, in which courage and dedication in combat would meet with God's reward (victory and supplies). For example, when food shortages reached a critical state in early 1098, and the Byzantine guide, Tatikios, departed the crusade, the Latins were faced with battle against Ridwan of Aleppo. Meeting the Muslim army head on 'in aid of God and the Holy Sepulchre', the crusaders's dedication and steadfast endurance ensured victory and supplies 'by God's will' (*Deo annuente*).⁷ This narrative set piece of suffering–battle–reward appeared throughout the *Gesta*'s account of the months at Antioch, with the ultimate symbol of God's favour being victory against Kerbogha with the aid of saintly warriors. Likewise, the *Gesta* repeatedly suggested that the crusaders were proving their worthiness to recover the Holy City by relating the struggle for Antioch to the journey (*iter*) to Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre.⁸ As such, after victory, the crusade leaders met to decide 'how they might best lead and guide the people until they should complete the journey

⁵ GF, pp. 28–84.

⁶ GF, pp. 62–3: 'Istas et multas anxietates ac angustias quas nominare nequeo passi sumus pro Christi nomine et Sancti Sepulchri via'.

⁷ GF, pp. 34–7 (here p. 37): 'in adiutorium Dei Sanctique Sepulchri'.

⁸ GF, pp. 38–41, 43–50, 56–65, 69–70, 72.

to the Holy Sepulchre, for which, thus far, they had already suffered many perils'.⁹ The road to Jerusalem had thus been opened by the endurance and sacrifice experienced at Antioch.

Importantly, the other participant narratives include similar themes. Peter Tudebode's *Historia*, which exhibits close textual similarities to the *Gesta* but some personal flourishes largely relating to the author's own experiences, mirrors the latter's content, while Raymond of Aguilers, who detailed events from within the camp of Count Raymond of Toulouse, noted that God inflicted suffering to scourge the crusaders and 'to rouse the minds of the shameful, adulterous and pillaging to repentance'.¹⁰ He even suggested that by overcoming famine the crusaders shared such a bond as to be considered a confraternity (*confraternitatis*), and that through the discovery of the Holy Lance, 'His divine clemency [was manifested] ... and that which had corrected the sons's lasciviousness consoled the extreme sadness in this manner'.¹¹ The divine test was perhaps most clearly expressed by Fulcher of Chartres, who spent this period in Edessa with Baldwin of Boulogne, as he described the siege as 'the destitution of the Christians' – a test of faith and endurance, during which the Latins 'suffered the greatest

⁹ GF, p. 72: 'quemadmodum hunc feliciter valerent conducere et regere populum, donec peragerent iter Sancti Sepulchri, pro quo hucusque multa erant passi pericula'.

¹⁰ PT, pp. 62–114; M. G. Bull, 'The Relationship Between the *Gesta Francorum* and Peter Tudebode's *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere*: The Evidence of a Hitherto Unexamined Manuscript (St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, 3)', in *Crusades*, 11, (2012), 1–17. RA, pp. 46–84 (here pp. 51, 53): 'flagitiorum adulterii et rapine mentes ad penitentiam concuti', 'equos suos diurna contabescere fame patiebantur'.

¹¹ RA, pp. 55, 68: 'divina clementia eis affuit, et que lascivientes filios correxerat, nimium tristes tali modo consolata est'.

hunger'.¹² Moreover, in suggesting that descent into avarice or pride caused such suffering, Fulcher drew on 1 Peter 1:6–7 – '[in] the trial of your faith (which is much more precious than gold, which is tried by fire) may be found ... praise and glory and honour' – when noting that 'like gold thrice proved and purified seven times by fire, having been chosen by God ... and weighed by such a great calamity, they were cleansed for their sins'.¹³ In the participant narratives, therefore, the suffering at Antioch was cast as a divine test: those who passed it stayed, purged themselves of sin, and achieved victory.

There were some divergences, however, as Raymond and Fulcher both decried crusaders's desire for spoils or personal enjoyment, seeing these not as divine rewards, but symbolic of a greed antithetical to the ideal penitent warrior. Thus, Fulcher stated that God doubled the punishment during Kerbogha's siege because, once the crusaders had entered the city, many had 'immediately mingled with reckless women', while Raymond, after opining that many crusaders, even Bohemond, were concerned only with luxury, noted that

while our men were counting and identifying the spoils, they desisted from besieging the upper castle, and, listening to the pagan dancing girls, had feasted sumptuously and arrogantly, remembering nothing of God, who had conferred such great kindness to them.¹⁴

¹² FC, pp. 199–203, 215–66 (here pp. 199, 222): 'De indigentia Christianorum', 'famem maximam sustinere'.

¹³ FC, pp. 222–6: 'illi quasi aurum ter probatum igni septiesque purgatum iamdudum a Domino praelecti ... et in tanta calamitate examinati, a peccatis suis mundati sunt'.

¹⁴ FC, p. 243: 'confestim cum feminis exlegibus commiscuerunt'; RA, pp. 53–4, 66 (quote at p. 66): 'dum nostri enumerando, et recognoscendo spolia, ab obpugnatione castri superioris

Moreover, although neither Fulcher or Raymond place the same emphasis on the road to Jerusalem as the *Gesta*, and Fulcher even went so far as to also omit the arrival of saintly knights in battle and to dismiss the veracity of the Holy Lance, all the participant narratives nevertheless incorporated textual discussions regarding the role of suffering and the extent to which earthly gain could, or indeed should, intersect with this new form of penitential warfare.¹⁵

Significantly, Antioch's role in the didactic formulation of the emerging crusading ethos, which emphasised the need to suffer in return for divine reward, only intensified with subsequent narrative retellings of the crusade. The most prominent of these were the Benedictine re-workings of the *Gesta*, written in the first decades of the twelfth century by Robert the Monk, Baldric of Bourgeuil, and Guibert of Nogent (who also utilised Fulcher's text).¹⁶ Thus, both Baldric and Guibert stressed the purgative nature of the suffering, with the former suggesting that victories and spoils were gained through divine aid and that famine occurred because:

desisterent, atque audiendo saltatrices paganorum splendide ac superbe epularentur, nullatenus Dei memores qui tantum beneficium eis contulerat'. See also A. Holt, 'Feminine Sexuality and the Crusades: Clerical Opposition to Women as a Strategy for Crusading Success', in A. Classen (ed.), *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 449–69.

¹⁵ FC, pp. 235–41, 251–6. Raymond's stance, at least, may relate to Raymond of Toulouse's singular failure to secure material rewards in northern Syria.

¹⁶ RM, pp. 33–90; BB, pp. 37–96; GN, pp. 168–251.

God was mercifully reproving them in such a way that they would turn to Him with their heart, and if there was any lack of repentance lurking within them, they would be purged by the fire of compunction and tempered by the misfortune of want that had come upon them.¹⁷

Both Baldric and Guibert also tied this to the Holy Sepulchre, with the former noting that the crusaders ‘suffered so many disasters in order to deserve the right to see the Sepulchre of their Lord God’, and the latter detailing an attempt by Bohemond to raise flagging morale by telling the crusaders to ‘keep in mind the purpose of this effort ... redeeming Jerusalem for God and liberating His tomb’.¹⁸ Guibert also described Antioch as a ‘pious siege’ (*piae obsidionis*) and an act ‘holy suffering’ (*sanctae passionis*), while illness caused by famine ‘refreshed the vigour of the soul’.¹⁹ Emphasising the devotional importance of endurance perhaps more than any author other than Fulcher, Guibert went further, suggesting that

¹⁷ BB, p. 43: ‘Taliter autem Deus redarguebat eos misericorditer, ut ad eum toto corde conuerterentur; et si quid impenitudinis in eis latitabat, igne compunctionis et infortunio superuenientis necessitatis excocti purgarentur’.

¹⁸ BB, p. 85: ‘multas passus est calamitates ut sepulcrum domini Dei sui uidere promereatur’; GN, pp. 187–8: ‘assumpti huius intentionem tibi propone laboris ... Iherosolimam deo redimere ac eius liberare Sepulchrum’.

¹⁹ GN, pp. 178, 180: ‘mentis reparent vigores’.

they were driven by hope for something better to rely on God alone, the only true support in such tribulation ... [while] the more they watched their supplies diminish ... the more they were taught to submit with appropriate humility to God.²⁰

The crusaders were implored to ‘offer your bravery for the suffering Christ’.²¹ Overall, therefore, both continued the pattern of portraying events at Antioch as a crucial test, one in which extensive suffering had to be endured to open the path to Jerusalem.

Perhaps the most important text for tracing memorialisation processes, however, is that of Robert the Monk, as its wide manuscript tradition reveals its contemporary popularity – such that it is considered something of a medieval bestseller.²² In this context, it is important that Robert built upon and extended the *Gesta* to provide a more theologically sound, and indeed more exciting, narrative. His account of the siege of Antioch thus begins with the statement that God wanted to regain the city ‘so that the Lord might show mortal eyes that none are strong or powerful except through Him’.²³ Thereafter, Robert portrayed high levels of suffering as a means to earn divine reward through purgative endurance, noting how ‘the harshness of the weather, the helpless misery of need, and the constriction of the enemy, weighed down upon them’, but that hard-fought crusader victories, and their rewards,

²⁰ GN, p. 182: ‘ad dei solius subsidium, sub tanta miseria unice prestolandum, spei instinctu melioris appulsos ... quo magis suas attenderent aut copias extenuari ... eo amplius ad deum ... docerentur debita humilitate subici’.

²¹ GN, p. 188: ‘tuam patienti Christo iam defer audaciam’.

²² RM, xlii–xlvi.

²³ RM, p. 34: ‘ut Dominus ostenderet oculis mortalium, quia non est virtus nec ulla potestas nisi ab ipso’.

were ‘great gifts from the supreme provider’.²⁴ Moreover, Robert imputed a speech to Bohemond in which he reminded doubting crusaders that God ‘often tests his faithful, so that He may be made aware whether they may love Him’. ‘Now’, Robert continued, ‘he tests you through troubles of hunger, and through the constant pressures of your enemies’.²⁵ He also stated that ‘God wished that the city should be difficult to secure, so that having been gained it would be held dearly’.²⁶ Echoing both Raymond and Fulcher’s comments regarding punishment for sexual incontinence, Robert included amongst a series of visions by a priest named Stephen of Valence a conversation with Christ, in which the latter remarked that ‘all the tribulations and impediments they suffered, therefore, I allowed to happen, because they committed many sins with Christian and pagan women, which is greatly displeasing in my eyes’.²⁷ Through the familiar trope of carnal sin leading to further suffering, Robert perpetuated existing debates about the proper behaviour of a *miles Christi* and the consequences of not matching these expectations. He also furthered the narrative tradition linking Antioch to Jerusalem, relating how a Fatimid offer of peaceful entry into the Holy City made at Antioch was rejected because it ‘will be ours not through human concession, but

²⁴ RM, pp. 36–7: ‘aeris inclementia, hinc misere egestatis inopia, hinc opprimebat adversariorum angustia’, ‘dona ... summi procuratoris’.

²⁵ RM, p. 37: ‘Sepe quidem fideles suos temptat, ut eisdem utrum diligant ipsum innotescat. Nunc temptat vos per inopie molestias, et per assiduas inimicantium vobis pressuras’.

²⁶ RM, p. 58: ‘voluit Deus ut urbs Antiochena difficulter adipisceretur, ut adepta carior haberetur’.

²⁷ RM, p. 66: ‘Omnes tribulationes et impedimenta que passi sunt ideo evenire permisi, quoniam multa nefanda operati sunt cum Christianis mulieribus et paganis, que valde displicent in oculis meis’.

through the justice of divine decree', and detailed that the leaders accepted Bohemond's claim to Antioch because:

none of us has left his land out of ambition for the city of Antioch; let him have it who God wishes to give it to. All of us have one intention, namely the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre.²⁸

In short, like his Benedictine contemporaries, Robert presented Antioch as a crucial step towards recovering Jerusalem, a challenge that necessitated suffering and endurance.

Significantly, these trends are found in the works of three other early non-participant chroniclers of the crusade: Albert of Aachen, Gilo of Paris, and Ralph of Caen.²⁹ Indeed, even though Albert's *Historia*, unlike most other sources, sits outside the *Gesta* tradition, it nevertheless outlined the extent and penitential nature of the crusaders's suffering.³⁰ According to Albert, a 'very serious scarcity' (*gravissima penuria*) struck the 'people of the living God', resulting from their many sins.³¹ It was only once the crusaders recognised this, and focused solely on prosecuting divine vengeance rather than their physical sustenance, that God granted them victory.³² This was epitomised in a speech given by a Lombard priest,

²⁸ RM, pp. 48, 53: 'nostra erit non per hominis indulgentiam, sed per celestis censure equitatem', 'Nullus nostrum pro ambitione urbis Antiochie de terra sua exivit; eam habeat cui Deus dare voluerit. Nostra omnium una sit intentio, sancti scilicet Sepulchri deliberatio'.

²⁹ AA, pp. 182–329; GP, 92–217; RC, pp. 599–716.

³⁰ AA, pp. 206–23, 228–47, 254–63, 266–77, 284–323, 330–7.

³¹ AA, pp. 220, 228: 'populum Dei vivi'.

³² AA, pp. 236–8, 254–8, 274–6, 298–300, 306–8, 316.

in which he exhorted his fellow crusaders, who were suffering famine, pestilence, and death, to:

not believe you are undergoing this hardship for nothing, but listen and think of the reward which Lord Jesus will give back to all of those who will die for his love and favour on this journey.³³

For Albert, like the other early chroniclers, suffering was a prerequisite to success, a trial that would bring divine reward once overcome.

Gilo of Paris, who drew heavily on Robert the Monk's text, similarly emphasised the penitential and divinely ordained nature of this attrition.³⁴ Thus, he detailed that 'those fighters for the faith regarded their excessive pains as merely bodily suffering, a small price to pay', and that 'their joy was not diminished by such punishments; nor did their good and constant minds falter due to these torments, however much their bodies suffered oppressive hardship'.³⁵ Gilo also recognised that victories were achieved 'by God's power' (*virtute Dei*), that Antioch had been granted to the crusaders because 'they had not faltered during such great burdens of suffering' ordered by God, and that those who died achieved martyrdom in return for their suffering.³⁶ In his *Gesta Tancredi*, Ralph of Caen likewise noted that

³³ AA, p. 306: 'non hunc gratis sufferre credatis laborem, sed audite et pensate premium quod Dominus Iesus omnibus hiis redditurus est qui eius amore et gratia hac in via morituri sunt'.

³⁴ GP, pp. 98–128, 160–95.

³⁵ GP, p. 102: 'fidei pugiles nimias penas fore viles / Corporeasque putant ... nec penis gaudia mutant / Nec bonas tormentis titubat constantia mentis, / Quamuis pressuras patiuntur corpora duras'.

³⁶ GP, pp. 110, 160, 162, 186 (p. 160): 'per pondera tanta malorum / ... non defecisse'.

‘everyone, the highest, those in the middle and the lowest, suffered badly’, be it from hunger, the weather, or enemy attacks.³⁷ He even deployed the same biblical imagery of gold which ‘having been tested by fire, is purged of impurities’ used by Fulcher of Chartres, reasoning that, through these privations, God could reward the afflicted.³⁸

What we find in the earliest written accounts of the crusade by both participants and non-participants, therefore, is an overarching narrative consistency in the depiction of events at Antioch as a holy trial, one in which suffering is represented as a divinely ordained opportunity for the crusaders to demonstrate their worthiness and as an important precursor to the attainment of spiritual and temporal rewards – particularly for the recovery of Jerusalem. This confirms the arguments made by modern historians who have suggested that the accounts produced by ecclesiastical authors sought to emphasise the crusade’s Christo-mimetic characteristics and the value of suffering to participants’ souls.³⁹ Despite this narrative consistency, however, a close reading of these texts can also reveal some important inconsistencies which might allow us to understand non-ecclesiastical attitudes towards crusader suffering.

³⁷ RC, p. 646: ‘socialiter autem summi, mediocres, et imi gravia pertulerunt’. See also pp. 646–7, 650–1, 653, 659, 662–3.

³⁸ RC, p. 663: ‘igne probatum, Purgatum terrae’. See also pp. 667–71.

³⁹ See S. Kangas, ‘*Deus Vult*: Violence and Suffering as a Means of Salvation during the First Crusade’, in T. M. S. Lehtonen, K. V. Jensen, *et al.* (eds), *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology* (Tampere, 2005), pp. 163–74; W. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095–c. 1187* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 12–58.

Cowardice, Status, and Social Bonds

As the suffering during the two sieges of Antioch grew, some fled from battle or chose to depart entirely, most prominently during the winter months of late 1097/early 1098 and during Kerbogha's siege. Yet, the sources detail these events in varied ways.

There are some continuities. For example, every source mentions at least one of the high-profile departures of Stephen of Blois and Hugh of Vermandois – the former being the most strongly criticised, with the author of the *Gesta Francorum* calling him 'wretched' (*infelix*) and Fulcher of Chartres stating that 'this act disgraced him'.⁴⁰ Moreover, nearly all of the authors discussed here presented the flight of crusaders during the armed struggle for Antioch as a deleterious act, with some arguing that it affected not only their reputations, but also those of their families in the West.⁴¹ In particular, the *Gesta Francorum* described those who shied from the conflict as 'the most worthless of all Christians'; Raymond of Aguilers suggested they had given in to fear (*pavidi*) rather than trusting in God's mercy, and even accused deserters of spreading malicious lies about the venture; Robert the Monk insisted that they had perjured (*periurare*) themselves; Baldric of Bourgueil declared that they 'ran away

⁴⁰ GF, pp. 63–5, 72; RA, p. 77; FC, pp. 228, 258 (quote at p. 258: 'factum fuit ei ad opprobrium'; PT, pp. 104–7; RM, pp. 65, 78–9; BB, pp. 74–7, 84–5; GN, pp. 227–9; GP, pp. 192–4; AA, pp. 304–6, 340–2; RC, pp. 650–1, 657–9, 687.

⁴¹ GF, pp. 32–4, 51, 63–5, 72; PT, pp. 66–70, 102–3; FC, pp. 222, 228, 245–7; RA, pp. 35, 50–4, 64, 66, 68–74, 77; RM, pp. 39–41, 64–5; GN, pp. 176–85, 215–19, 227–9; BB, pp. 42–4, 66–7, 74–7, 84–5; GP, pp. 192–4; RC, pp. 656–9, 662–3.

quite disgracefully, to the shame of all their kin and descendants'; and Ralph of Caen criticised those of Norman heritage who – unlike his hero, Tancred of Hauteville – were unwilling to persevere and thus shamed (*pudendar*) the entire *gens* through their cowardly behaviour.⁴² Likewise, although Gilo of Paris generally refrained from mentioning cowardice, his account of the events at Antioch ends with an invective dismissal of participants who failed to stay the course:

I blot out from my book – from any book whatsoever – those who were not ashamed to carry themselves away from the fighting; this pitiable company, as if called back to vomit, [and] allied to the world, preferred exile to their homeland.⁴³

However, while several sources transmitted other common names of deserters, such as William the Carpenter, the Grandmesnil brothers, and Guy the Red, constable of France, uniformity is lacking.⁴⁴ Indeed, some chroniclers, like Fulcher of Chartres, Robert the Monk, Guibert of Nogent, and Gilo of Paris, were willing to report and criticise desertion but overtly

⁴² GF, p. 32: 'vilissima omnium Christianorum'; RA, pp. 54, 68; RM, p. 41; BB, p. 66: 'ad tocius sue consanguinitatis et successionis ignominiam ignominiosiores aufugerunt'; RC, pp. 662–3.

⁴³ GP, pp. 192–4: 'Deleo de nostro, de qualicunque libello / Hos quos non pudit sese subducere bello: / Hec miseranda cohors velut ad vomitum revocata / Pretulit exilium patrie, mundo sociata'.

⁴⁴ GF, pp. 33–4, 56–7; PT, pp. 68–9, 97–8; RA, p. 74; RM, p. 40; GN, pp. 70–1, 89–90; BB, pp. 42–3, 66; AA, pp. 304, 310; RC, pp. 650–1.

chose not to name certain – sometimes all – of the aforementioned crusaders. The most common reason for this, alluded to above, is that it would cast shame on their families, with Guibert in particular stating that he would have provided the exact details of two Normans who fled from Antioch ‘were I not bound by close friendship with their kin to limit my remarks, [and] thus to spare them from being entirely subdued by shame’.⁴⁵ In a similar vein, the Anglo-Norman historian, Orderic Vitalis, who incorporated an abridged version of Baldric of Bourgeuil’s *Historia* into his broader chronicle, edited his base text in such a way that the Grandmesnil brothers (whose family had close links to Orderic’s monastery of St Evroult) did not appear to be exceptional cases, which had the effect of downplaying the shame attributed to the wider family and the monastic community.⁴⁶ There were also efforts to rehabilitate the reputations of Stephen of Blois and Hugh of Vermandois, or at least to lessen the level of criticism, either by not mentioning their departures or by noting their returns to the East and subsequent deaths during the 1101 Crusade. Baldric of Bourgeuil even argued that God had engineered Stephen’s departure so that Alexios would not come to Antioch and seize the city for himself.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ GN, p. 217: ‘nisi generis eorum amica michi contiguitate devictus pudori ipsorum parcere definissem’. See also FC, pp. 222–3, 228, 245–7; RM, pp. 64–5; GP, pp. 192–4.

⁴⁶ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, (ed. and trans.) M. Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford, 1969–80), vol. 5, pp. 96–8; D. Roach, ‘Orderic Vitalis and the First Crusade’, in *Journal of Medieval History*, 42/2, (2016), 177–201 (especially 185–90).

⁴⁷ BB, p. 74; FC, p. 228; RM, pp. 64–5, 79; GN, pp. 102, 227–9; AA, pp. 340–2.

Additionally, neither Peter Tudebode or Raymond of Aguilers comment upon Hugh’s departure.

Importantly, these inconsistencies tap into broader tensions within the narratives. Rather than simple opprobrium, several authors adopted a rather more sympathetic tone towards those who fled the siege, with some coming close to suggesting that flight in the face of extreme famine – albeit not in the face of battle – was an understandable, if regrettable, reaction. Robert the Monk suggested that ‘nor is it strange if human frailty should murmur under the weight of such great suffering’, while in detailing the flight of William the Carpenter, he expressed hope that this was not due to fear of battle, rather ‘because he had never experienced the unjust suffering of such greater hunger’.⁴⁸ Most prominently, though, the sources acknowledge that the level of suffering experienced was unprecedented and that it also damaged and transgressed social bonds, structures, and rituals. For the *Gesta Francorum*, the suffering was too great to describe, particularly during Kerbogha’s siege, while nearly all authors mention the deaths of horses, the reduction of knights to the status of foot-soldier, the rusting or sale of weapons (particularly swords), and how extreme poverty acted as a social leveller as it affected the lower classes and elites alike. Fulcher of Chartres therefore lamented that ‘our knights had been forced to become foot-soldiers; weak, helpless’; Raymond of Aguilers laid especial emphasis on the significance of the loss of horses; Gilo of Paris decried how poverty led to the breaking of social and familial bonds, with a knight rejecting his squire, a father his son, and a brother his brother; while Ralph of Caen suggested that the winter months were ‘much harsher for the nobles, in as much as the peasant is tougher than the knight, as a toiler is to one accustomed to luxury’, and that the sons of dukes, counts, and kings ‘were enclosed in a manner that had not happened before ...

⁴⁸ RM, pp. 37, 40: ‘Nec mirum erat si humana fragilitas sub tot tormentis pressa murmurabat’, ‘tantam famis iniuriam pati nunquam didicerat’.

nor since'.⁴⁹ 'Only those who have never heard anything like it', remarked Albert of Aachen, 'marvel at these miseries and impoverishments of the noble leaders'.⁵⁰ Finally, while all authors denote the suffering and death of the crusader forces, there are few, if any, mentions of the burial practices of the army while at Antioch; Peter Tudebode's mentioning of his brother's internment and Ralph of Caen's allusion to the grave of Conon of Brittany near the Iron Bridge are rare exceptions.⁵¹

Consequently, while it is likely that medieval commentators on the crusade utilised suffering and the breaking or transgressing of social bonds as a didactic tool to demonstrate that all were equal in the eyes of God, and that such markers of earthly status must be eschewed during acts of penitence, that they felt it necessary to comment (or remain conspicuously silent) on these, and in so doing created tensions within their narratives, could indicate that they were responding to concerns voiced outside of the Church. Indeed, as

⁴⁹ GF, pp. 34, 44, 51, 61–2 (here p. 62); FC, pp. 202, 223, 225, 228, 247, 249, 255, 263 (here p. 249): 'nostros vero milites ... effici pedites, debiles, inopes'; RA, pp. 47, 49–51, 53, 55, 61, 65, 76–7; GP, pp. 104, 180; RC, pp. 646–7, 650–1, 663 (here pp. 647, 663): 'tanto tamen nobilitati asperior, quanto est durior rusticus milite, laborifer delicato', 'Qualem nulla prius sepperunt ... nec post'. See also PT, pp. 65, 68, 73, 82–3, 91, 98, 102–4; RM, pp. 37, 40–1, 47, 60, 64–5, 69, 73, 76, 79; GN, pp. 174–81, 209–13, 218, 224–8; BB, pp. 38–9, 42–4, 47, 51, 55, 62, 67, 71–4, 79; AA, pp. 218–20, 228, 266–70, 288–90, 294–6, 302–6, 320, 332–4. See also J. France, *Victory in the East: A Military History of the First Crusade* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 280–2.

⁵⁰ AA, pp. 332–4: 'Super hiis miseriis et adtenuationibus nobilium procerum mirantur solummodo hii qui numquam huic simile audierunt'.

⁵¹ PT, p. 97; RC, p. 648.

Katherine Allen Smith has demonstrated, early crusading texts and attitudes were not simply a conversation between ecclesiastics. Rather, they reveal an ongoing dialogue between the secular and spiritual spheres.⁵² It is certainly true that most authors made use of oral testimony in constructing their texts.⁵³ As such, while it would be wrong to suggest that Latin texts were written *for* secular audiences – even if the parallels found between the works of Robert the Monk and Albert of Aachen and the Old French prose account of the siege and battle of Antioch, the *Chanson d'Antioche*, reveal that they were far from ignorant of their content – it is nevertheless likely that, if read against the grain, these narratives can offer a window, if an imperfect one, onto the negative memories that circulated in elite circles.⁵⁴

It is significant, therefore, that the tensions which emerge each tapped into an important aspect of elite culture in medieval Europe. Regarding the implications of desertion, this is perhaps obvious, for several authors recognised that such cowardly behaviour would have a lasting impact on reputations and social standing, just as success could bring long-term celebrity. Given the spiritual nature of the venture, it might also damage their immortal soul.⁵⁵ However, the loss of horses and weapons was also significant, because this not only

⁵² K. A. Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 71–111.

⁵³ S. John, 'Historical Truth and the Miraculous Past: The Use of Oral Evidence in Twelfth-Century Latin Historical Writing on the First Crusade', in *English Historical Review*, 130/543, (2015), 263–301.

⁵⁴ *The Chanson d'Antioche: An Old French Account of the First Crusade*, (ed. and trans.) C. Sweetenham and S. Edgington (Farnham, 2011), pp. 15–19.

⁵⁵ C. Kostick, 'Courage and Cowardice on the First Crusade, 1096–1099', in *War in History*, 20/32 (2013), 32–49; Paul, *To Follow in their Footsteps*, pp. 21–54.

undermined an individual's status as a knight (and perhaps as a noble), but, when combined with poverty and the breaking of social and familial bonds, could also impinge upon important dynastic identities and structures.⁵⁶ Likewise, the lack of references to burials transgressed a key means by which families might remember their dead through tomb visits, processions, and liturgy.⁵⁷ Nicholas Paul has argued that fears over the remains of the fallen might have been assuaged by belief that crusading led to martyrdom (although this is unlikely to have been widespread) or the use of prayers for the dead.⁵⁸ However, whereas the capture of Jerusalem in July 1099 was liturgically immortalised, thus giving Western families the chance to performatively remember their dead kin even if they did not have access to their remains, no such tradition grew up around the taking of Antioch.⁵⁹ Concerns over how the dead at Antioch should be properly remembered might thus have been keenly felt amongst aristocratic families. That there is an underlying sense that the authors felt the need to

⁵⁶ Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, pp. 176–9; C. Bouchard, *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 1–102. On the positive role such items, symbols, and networks could play, see Paul, *To Follow in their Footsteps*, pp. 55–132.

⁵⁷ K. Tracy, 'Defining the Medieval City through Death: A Case Study', in A. Classen (ed.), *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age* (Berlin, 2009), pp. 183–204 (especially pp. 191–6).

⁵⁸ Paul, *To Follow in their Footsteps*, pp. 134–70 (especially pp. 137–8).

⁵⁹ S.A. John, "'The Feast of the Liberation of Jerusalem': Remembering and Reconstructing the First Crusade in the Holy City, 1099–1187', in *Journal of Medieval History*, 41 (2015), 409–31; M. C. Gaposchkin, *Invisible Weapons: Liturgy and the Making of Crusade Ideology* (Ithaca, NY, 2017), pp. 130–91.

rationalise, explain, or deflect attention away from issues of cowardice, desertion, and the transgressing of social bonds, markers, and rituals, could therefore indicate that, although ecclesiastics were convinced of the Christo-mimetic value of crusading, those charged with undertaking the venture, along with their families in the West, may have been less convinced.

Conclusion: Trauma and Memory

In a recent article, Megan Cassidy-Welch has argued for the potential value of exploring the crusading past through the prism of trauma theory, noting that:

the relationship between individual experience and collective identifications that lay at the heart of medieval crusading culture can be illuminated by attention to contemporaneous theories of cognition, experience, memory and suffering, all of which are elements of trauma theory.⁶⁰

Moreover, as Geoffrey Cubitt has outlined in *History and Memory*, narratives which coalesce around specific moments of trauma, particularly those in which the suffering experienced threatens both personal memory and the social structures which facilitate group remembrance, can lead to a ‘selective reworking of remembered detail’. In such instances, those describing the trauma look to craft their own versions of events, and thus achieve some sense of personal ownership over the past. Through this, however, narrative consistency is

⁶⁰ M. Cassidy-Welch, ‘Before Trauma: The Crusades, Medieval Memory and Violence’, in *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 31/5, (2017), 619–27 (here 626).

often lost, making way instead for a ‘crisis in the organisation of ... remembering’.⁶¹

Consequently, while Cassidy-Welch has traced the effects of traumatic memory in moments of crusading failure, namely the loss of the True Cross at the Battle of Hattin in 1187, the evidence examined here suggests that similar insights might be gleaned from those episodes which, taken as a whole, could be considered successes for the crusading movement, like the siege and battle of Antioch.

Therefore, although the emphasis on the rewards for suffering came to define the nascent ethos behind this new form of penitential warfare, placing Antioch as a central node in the textual legitimising processes of crusading and a useful ecclesiastical didactic tool for better emphasising the Christo-mimetic ideal, the likelihood is that stories about those who failed to endure such hardships, saw their social status or bonds diminish, or failed to receive a proper burial, also transgressed core aspects of the emerging concepts of knighthood, nobility, and familial honour, which were all important means by which future crusades might be promoted. As such, while Albert of Aachen wrote that ‘those wonderful and unbelievable things which were done during the siege of Antioch cannot, I think, be recorded by any pen, any memory’, because ‘so many and such various things are reported to have happened there’, it is clear that medieval commentators *did* expend a great deal of effort in trying to explain and rationalise these events, more so even than the capture of Jerusalem.⁶² Whereas some scholars have seen in this efforts, exposed most prominently in the *Gesta Francorum*, to present Antioch as the First Crusade’s climax, the aforementioned narrative inconsistencies perhaps instead reveal something of the underlying traumas the siege created

⁶¹ G. Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 108–11.

⁶² AA, p. 336: ‘que et in obsidione urbis Antiochie mira et inaudita gesta sunt, nullius stilo, nullius memoria estimo retinenda, tot et tam diversa illic extitisse referuntur’.

within those elite circles which would have been considered the most receptive to the crusading message and the attempts made to respond to them.⁶³ This partly confirms Nicholas Paul's belief that the 'resonance' of the siege of Antioch 'was all the stronger because the story distinguished who stood fast in the face of danger from those who abandoned their fellows and fled back to the West'.⁶⁴ However, the anxieties and tensions which emerge in the texts suggest an even more complex picture than this, one that could have important consequences for how historians understand the interplay between crusading memory and crusade participation.⁶⁵

⁶³ K. Baxter Wolff, 'Crusade and Narrative: Bohemond and the *Gesta Francorum*', in *Journal of Medieval History*, 17 (1991), 207–16.

⁶⁴ Paul, *To Follow in their Footsteps*, pp. 80–3.

⁶⁵ This will be examined in a broader survey of Antioch's relationship with the crusading movement.