

Men, Women, and Beasts at Clermont, 1095

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Gender, Identity, and Religion in Medieval Europe

When Pope Urban II called for a military campaign to the Holy Land in 1095, he launched what would be the first in a series of Christian crusades. But even more than that, he advocated a form of warfare that would be pleasing to God. Because the idea of spiritually based violence survives to this day, it is not surprising that scholars have scrutinized the pope's initial call to arms very carefully. They have explored its Roman and early Christian roots, compared it to Islamic views of *jihad*, considered its impact on canon law, and traced its eventual influence on the Reformation (Alphandéry 1954; Berry 1956; Bull 1993a, 1993b; Cole 1991, 1993; Cowdrey 1970, 1976, 1977, 1982; Erdman 1977; Gilchrist 1988a, 1988b; Jensen 2003; Munro 1906, 1914; Nicholson 1998; Riley-Smith 1986; Somerville 1974, 1976; Tyerman 1995, 1998). To date, however, scholars have not looked specifically at gender constructions in accounts of the sermon and how they factored into depictions of the heroes, villains, and victims.

This is a significant omission, for most recent scholarship indicates more continuity than not between the pope's sermon and earlier understandings of Christian duty, pilgrimage, love, and so on. Many scholars have noted that crusade preaching succeeded because its message worked existing spiritual and social norms into a new framework—specifically, by offering a novel outlet for fighters that would incur God's forgiveness. Contemporary gender assumptions also got incorporated and may have augmented the appeal of crusading. Accounts of this sermon showed in subtle ways how male crusaders could enhance their masculinity and become more human by saving a feminine object of desire from virile, ferocious, clever beasts. Thus the victims of Muslim atrocities were feminine or effeminate, while both the heroes and the villains were highly masculine and therefore a little too close to beasts. Yet the Catholic heroes could upgrade themselves, while the Muslims were doomed to beastliness. The rhetoric of difference in reports of Clermont helps us understand medieval efforts to define the Other in new ways, for it

combines constructions of gender with a judgment of someone's humanity in enunciating religious roles.

Gender assumptions within any culture interweave social understandings of biology and behavior. Several decades ago, gender theorists recognized that while biology determined one's sex as male or female, societies constructed gender by associating specific functions, roles, and behavioral norms with masculinity or femininity. Thus any culture could label a biological male as effeminate or a biological female as manly. Theorists further noted that these social constructions require at least two genders, for masculinity and femininity have to have complements, if not direct opposites.

Yet societies are not limited to two genders. In fact, they may develop multiple gender constructions influenced by physical attributes, age, social status, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. For example, medieval European society may have included numerous genders defined by biology (male/female), social status (the three orders and burgesses), age (*juvenes* versus full-fledged adults), ethnicity (white or non-white), and religion (Christian, Jew, Muslim).¹ Moreover, gender constructions are not necessarily mutually exclusive; indeed, they rarely are. So although medieval thinkers equated gender with sex and perceived them as a dichotomy, current theory recognizes that gender constructions typically form a continuum (McNamara 1999). Someone's exact position along this continuum would be shaped by the interplay of biology, age, ethnicity, social rank, and religious affiliation. Once this highly complicated system was in place, medieval Europeans did not just apply it within their culture. They also extended it outwards, to non-Europeans, usually as an object lesson for those inside the system. Focusing on Them could help Us (medieval Europeans) form a common identity. This is where Urban II's sermon at Clermont comes in, for reporters of the sermon applied a European gender system to Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the East.

¹ For a historiographical discussion of gender theory and an introductory bibliography, see Gerish 2005a. For age as an element in gender systems, see Aird 1999. Challenges and revisions to the distinction between sex and gender appear in Herdt 1994.

Sources and Methodology

Accounts of this sermon do not preserve the pope's exact language or even his original intent, as scholars have noted and as some of the authors admitted themselves. Instead, reporters responded to the Christian victory at Jerusalem in 1099 by reinterpreting the original sermon in light of the crusade's success. Two early crusade chronicles, dating from around 1101, mentioned the church council very briefly. The anonymous *Gesta Francorum* author and Peter Tudebode explained that Urban II reacted to a wave of religious fervor by preaching at Clermont. According to these reporters, the pope focused on penitence. He sketchily described the suffering involved in crusade, which would confer spiritual rewards on the participants (Hill 1962; Tudebode 1974; France 1998).

Seven other reporters devoted much more space to the Clermont sermon, and in so doing they indicate a complicated and at times contradictory set of gender constructions, interwoven with assessments of humanity or beastliness. Fulcher of Chartres, an eyewitness at the council, recounted the sermon in his *Historia Hierosolymitana* around 1100; though he redacted the chronicle around 1124, it is unlikely that he rewrote the sermon. Another eyewitness, Robert the Monk (Robert of Rheims), authored the next account around 1107. Though Robert had personal ties to the third author, Baudry of Dol wrote an independent account of the council around 1108, then worked from the anonymous *Gesta Francorum* to describe the First Crusade. Guibert of Nogent composed the most theologically sophisticated version of the sermon for his crusade chronicle, first written between 1104 and 1108, then revised around 1111. Though he relied upon Fulcher and other eyewitnesses, Guibert admitted that he was only preserving the sense of Urban II's words (Fulcher 1913; Baudry 1879; Robert 1866; Guibert 1996; Cole 1991; Riley-Smith 1986). All four reported the sermon as the necessary prelude to the crusade; its triumphant conclusion, they hoped, would encourage more Roman Catholics to take the cross.

Three later writers also reworked the sermon. William of Malmesbury, an English cleric, chronicled the First Crusade in his *Gesta regum anglorum* (c. 1125) and the Norman monk Orderic Vitalis did the same in his *Ecclesiastical History* (c. 1135) so that readers would know something about this monumental event (William of Malmesbury 1964; Orderic Vitalis 1975). Lastly, William of Tyre recounted the First Crusade at the beginning of his history of the Crusader States. This author, a chancellor of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, wrote the first segment of his history between 1170 and 1174 to encourage more western crusades, for William recognized the growing threat represented by Saladin (William of Tyre 1986; Edbury and Rowe 1988). Thus while Urban II's original audience may have included mostly clergy, his reporters expected to reach lay readers and listeners through crusade preachers. For the purposes of this inquiry, the pope's exact language becomes much less important than the various reporters' gender imagery in the context of an armed pilgrimage against Muslims.

These seven accounts show that preaching of the First Crusade incorporated a gender system based on biology, social status, ethnicity, and religious affiliation—in other words, all the elements listed above except for age. And another factor emerges: a continuum of humanity and beastliness. People mentioned in the sermon were not only more masculine or more feminine. They were also more human or more beastly. According to these reporters, European lay males were very manly because they could fight, but since their violence presented a danger to Christendom, they were more like animals than they should be. The Church hoped to humanize these men by providing new goals and justifications for violence. Men who fought for the right reasons, under the Church's direction, would become more human and thus closer to what God intended. In contrast, writers gendered Eastern Christians as effeminate males unable to protect themselves from physical and sexual violence. Eastern weakness offered an opportunity for the *milites christi* to defend the Church, which was not only feminine but an object of desire. These effeminate and feminine beings seem to have been more human than not simply because they were Christian, though the “humanity index” may have applied to masculinity only. Finally, the

Muslim enemies were both extremely masculine and extremely beastly, for they polluted everything they touched. They acted like a pack of wild yet cunning animals. Their prowess and their political cohesion permitted them to dominate any people and any lands they conquered. Since there was no chance they could become more human, Christians could only kill them.

The gender continuum and the humanity index reinforced each other in highly subtle yet effective ways: according to the reporters, the real problem in 1095 lay in masculine violence. Here Roman Catholic and Muslim males differed little. Yet the chroniclers held out hope for male Catholic humans that was not available to male Muslim “animals.” The rhetoric of difference simultaneously acknowledged the villains’ virility and debased their humanity.

A caveat: I do not mean to imply that Urban or his reporters focused solely on gender constructions or deliberately slipped them in to strengthen their call to arms. Crusades historians have shown authoritatively that the Clermont sermon was, first and foremost, about a campaign to liberate Jerusalem. Numerous themes worked their way into preaching of the First Crusade to serve this end. Penny Cole’s seminal studies of crusade preaching note that the four earliest reporters of Urban II’s sermon drew upon sophisticated eschatological, teleological, and exegetical concepts, as well as more visceral imagery concerning Christian suffering and Muslim pollution (Cole 1991, 1993). Assumptions about gender and beastliness, much more than these other elements, were incidental; probably none of the reporters were even aware of them as they recounted the sermon. It would be ludicrous to argue that the chroniclers consciously determined how to fit such disparate elements as sex, ethnicity, and so on into a consistent multivalent gender system. Sometimes gender theories imply a deliberate side to social constructions of gender that I believe would actually undercut such systems. The *lack* of intent or awareness makes expressions of gender all the more potent and efficacious within a culture. It also creates inconsistencies. As Victor Turner notes, “Coherent wholes may exist . . . but human social groups tend to find their openness to the future in the variety of their metaphors for what may be the good life and in the

contest of their paradigms” (Turner 1974, 14). Accounts of Urban II’s sermon draw upon and reinforce a gender system that is not terribly systematic or even consistent in the end.

The Four Early Accounts: Catholic Masculinity and Beastliness

This point becomes apparent immediately in the chroniclers’ treatment of aggression, in that some masculinities and some forms of violence merited praise while others did not. All reporters referred to Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim males with the masculine noun *virī* rather than the neuter *homines* (with one exception), no matter how much strength or humanity they assigned to each subgroup. Christians were also *fratres*, whether they were clergy or laymen. But not all Christians behaved like brothers. As each author reworked the sermon, he had the pope address the lay males whose squabbling over land, wealth, and power had gotten out of control. Baudry of Dol made numerous references to Catholic men who fought for the wrong reasons:

Those of you joined by soldierly bond, you remain in great pride; you tear your brothers in pieces, and you will be cut up among yourselves. This is not the soldiery of Christ, which mangles the sheepfold of the Redeemer....Truly you do not hold the way through which you might go to [eternal] life: you oppressors of orphans, you robbers of widows, you homicides, you sacrilegers, you plunderers of another’s rights: you look for income of robbers from the pouring out of Christian blood; and like vultures sniffing out bodies, thus you enter upon and chase after war in distant parts. Truly this way is the worst, because it is wholly removed from God....On this account, brothers, we speak, so that you might stay your murdering hands from your brothers (Baudry cap. 4).²

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

Fulcher of Chartres and Guibert of Nogent touched on the same themes: knightly avarice led to crimes against the money or property of other Christians. As Guibert explained, “Thus far you have waged unlawful war, at different times you have brandished insane weapons at each other, only for the purpose of greed or pride, from which you will merit perpetual ruin and the certain destruction of damnation” (Guibert cap. 4). Robert the Monk attributed these actions to poverty caused by the overpopulation of Europe: “This land that you inhabit, bounded on all sides by the sea and surrounded by a range of mountains, is constrained by your numbers, nor does it abound in copious riches and scarcely renders enough food to its cultivators. Thus it is that you sting and strive against one another, you undertake wars and destroy many with wounds inflicted. Therefore let hatred cease amongst you, let strife become still, let wars quiet down and let all dissent of controversy be calmed” (Robert cap. 1).

Yet not all masculine violence received censure. Baudry overtly approved of fighting when he referred to the Israelites’ struggles: “When the sons of Israel were led out of Egypt, who prefigured you in crossing the Red Sea, they appropriated this land for you with their arms, led by Jesus; they expelled the Jebusites and others gathered there; and inhabited the earthly Jerusalem in the likeness of heavenly Jerusalem” (Baudry cap. 4). Guibert also alluded to past fighting in favorable terms: “If formerly it most greatly profited the renown of the piety of the Maccabees because they fought for the ceremonies and the temple, also to you, O Christian soldiers, it has been considered legitimate that you defend the liberty of your fatherland by the zeal of arms” (Guibert cap. 4). Robert invoked more recent history, naming valiant Frankish kings who had fought for God and encouraging his audience to live up to their heritage: “May the deeds of your predecessors move and incite your souls to manliness, the probity and greatness of King Charles the Great, and Louis his son and others of your kings, who destroyed the realms of the pagans and enlarged the holy Church in their boundaries....O most powerful soldiers, generated by invincible

families, do not degenerate, but recollect the virtue of your ancestors” (Robert cap. 1).³ He also noted the respect inherent in fighting by twice mentioning “the honorable insignia of arms” (*insigne decus armorum*; Robert cap. 1).

Moreover, three authors indicated that Jesus would lead the crusaders into battle—clearly they felt that God approved wholeheartedly of fighting when it occurred for the right reasons. Baudry stated that “under Jesus Christ, your warlord, you must contend in the Christian battle-line, the most invincible battle-line, better than Jacob’s sons of old, for your Jerusalem” (Baudry cap. 4). He also referred to God as *imperator*, a term whose military overtones may have carried over from the Roman era (Baudry cap. 4). Fulcher called the crusaders “heralds of Christ” (*christi praecones*; Fulcher 1.4). Guibert exhorted his audience to “believe that Christ will be sent out before you in his war as a standard-bearer and an inseparable vanguard” (Guibert cap. 4). Thus masculine violence could be positive under certain conditions.

The Four Early Accounts: Orthodox Effeminacy

Fortunately for the Roman Catholic warrior, the Holy Land provided exactly the right circumstances for the right kind of fighting. The clergy who chronicled Urban II’s sermon said so in two different thematic strands. First, Fulcher and Baudry demonstrated that Eastern Christians lacked the power to defend themselves; Robert and Guibert said the same about pilgrims, presumably from the West as well as the East. The writers did not create positive images here. Their efforts to arouse sympathy in Europe focused on the powerlessness of eastern *fratres*. Pilgrims to the Holy Land and Christian males who populated the region had been unable to defend themselves, their women, their homes, and their churches. Ultimately, all four writers contrasted powerful western men with effeminate males of or in the East to show that heroes had an obligation to help the victims.

³ This reference to family honor was a common part of European masculinity and fighting traditions (Bennett 1999).

Fulcher of Chartres, normally the most laconic reporter of the four, not only portrayed Eastern Christians as passive, but as imploring for assistance:

It is necessary, therefore, with our brothers in the eastern region having frequently spoken for so long, that you hasten to offer your aid quickly to the cry of the natives, by a quick route. Moreover the Turks, the people of Persia, who having occupied more and more lands of the Christians within Roman boundaries, have invaded them, as it has been said to many of you, up to the Mediterranean Sea, to the place that is called the arm of St.

George....If you will allow [the Turks] to remain thus in some degree in quiet, how much more will the faithful of God be stepped on (Fulcher 1.4).

Fulcher then had the pope call on western males to “succor the Christian inhabitants” of the Holy Land, crying, “O how many reproaches will be laid on you from God Himself, if you will not help them who, like you, are numbered in the profession of Christianity.”

Baudry took a similar approach, mentioning the pathetic plight of Eastern Christians in six different passages. As he introduced the actual council, he stated, “We were seeing for some time among us citizens of Jerusalem [as] beggars and wanderers: we were seeing the indigent of Antioch, deploring the overthrow of the holy places, and humbly imploring public alms for themselves as paupers. We were feeling pain for some poor men” (Baudry cap. 3). Then, within the sermon itself, Baudry had Urban II begin by dwelling on the plight of these men:

We have heard, most beloved brothers, and you have heard, what we are scarcely able to relate without deep sobs—with how many calamities, how many losses, what terrible griefs, in Jerusalem and in Antioch and in other cities of eastern regions, the Christians, our brothers, members in Christ, are scourged, overwhelmed, injured. Your blood-brothers, your comrades,

your associates (for you are sons of the same Christ and the same Church) in their hereditary homes, are either given to other lords, or driven away from their own [homes], or beg among us; or what is more serious, live as slaves in exile and are beaten in their own lands....There remain more of both our brothers in misery, and the pillagings of God's churches, than we are able to report on one by one (Baudry cap. 4).

It is impossible to miss the emotional appeal of these passages: good Catholics were supposed to help their brothers. As Ebels-Hoving and Arbagi have argued, the Clermont sermon did not mark a reversal in papal policy toward Byzantium, nor did it come out of centuries of mistrust between the two cultures. Tensions between Catholic and Greek Christians would surface as a result of the First Crusade, not a cause. Both Arbagi and Ebels-Hoving theorized that at Clermont, Urban II wanted to arouse sympathy for the Greeks, and thus he emphasized the fraternity of Christians everywhere (Arbagi 1971, 93–99, 101–107; Ebels-Hoving 1971, 272–73). Neither Baudry nor Fulcher overtly called the Greeks untrustworthy, weak, or effeminate (though Guibert did in his chronicle) (Arbagi 1971, 184; Tolan 2002, 145). And all of them might have done so, because classical Roman writers had conventionally applied these labels to Greeks (Ebels-Hoving 1971, 278–82).⁴

Yet underneath the references to brotherhood, we can see that Eastern Christians lacked power and virility. They had not been able to stop the Muslims' advance, so they ultimately lost their state. Nor would they be able to help the Church. Both Baudry and Fulcher clearly undercut their language of fraternity. Though Eastern Christians were males, they were at best younger or effeminate brothers who still needed help from their more masculine and more powerful older brothers.

⁴ Chroniclers of the later twelfth century would return to this language in the aftermath of the First, Second, and Third Crusades (Carrier 2002).

Robert and Guibert, in contrast, focused on pilgrims' helplessness. As we shall see below, Robert included many gruesome details about their tribulations, yet in fact these incidents focused on Muslim power and only indirectly on pilgrims' lack thereof. Guibert devoted more attention to the sufferers themselves:

If the sayings of Scripture do not inspire you, nor our warnings enter your souls, may at any event the great miseries of those who desire to go to the holy places arouse you: consider those who journeyed and rushed through the Mediterranean there; even if they were more wealthy, to how many tributes, to how much violence were they subject, since they were forced to give up payments and tributes at almost every single mile, to pay bribes at each gate of the city, at entrances of churches and temples; in each moving from place to place, struck by any sort of charge, they were compelled to payment, indeed the prefects of the Gentiles are accustomed to fiercely urge with floggings those reluctant in any way to give gifts! What will we say of those who took this road having absolutely nothing, trusting in naked poverty, who seem to have nothing more than their bodies that they might lose? From their riches, which do not exist, insufferable penalties were exacted; the calluses of their heels were investigated by being cut up and torn away, in case they had hidden anything there; the cruelty of the nefarious ones went to such an extent, thinking to devour the lusters of gold or silver, or having been given purgatives in a drink to the point of vomiting or even forcing an eruption of their bowels; or with a sword (how horrible it is to say) cutting their bellies, pulling out the covering of the intestines so that whatever nature

has in secret they opened in horrid mutilation. Consider, I pray, the
thousands of those who have perished abominably (Guibert cap. 4).

Neither chronicler specified the pilgrims' geographic origins, perhaps because this did not matter. Robert and Guibert wanted to emphasize the effeminacy of any Christians *in* the East to highlight their inability to defend Mother Church. Guibert heightened his imagery by noting that Muslims had targeted the one thing that would make pilgrimage possible: money.

The Four Early Accounts: Feminine Objects of Desire

Here the four reporters contrasted a negative effeminacy with a more positive femininity exhibited by the Church itself. Catholic clergy often feminized the Church in their writings—partly because *ecclesia* is a feminine noun and partly because allegorically the Church served as wife of Christ and mother to all Christians. Yet the similarities between hapless Eastern Christians and pilgrims on the one hand and the Church, the Holy Land, or the city of Jerusalem on the other reinforced the idea that the human males there, despite their physical attributes, did not live up to western standards of manliness. Both the pathetically effeminate people and the suitably feminine Church in the Holy Land suffered the same atrocities and reacted in the same way: both sought help from Europe's masculine warriors.

No one, however, expected a feminine construct/place to save herself. Thus Guibert of Nogent based his entire call to arms on the idea that western Catholics needed to defend the fountain of Christianity, the land that nourished Jesus, the mother Church. Robert the Monk touched on the same theme and went even further. Like the pilgrims he described, the holy places begged for aid from the West: "Jerusalem is the navel of the lands, a land fruitful above others, like another Paradise of delights. This the redeemer in his human form made renowned by his coming, beautified by his habitation, consecrated by his passion, redeemed by his death, distinguished by his tomb. Therefore this royal city, placed in the middle of the world, now is

being held captive by enemies, and serves in the rites of people who do not know God. So it seeks and desires to be freed, and does not cease to implore you to come to it” (Robert cap. 2).

Effeminacy and femininity afforded western males a golden opportunity. Since Eastern Christians and pilgrims had already failed to protect the Church, Roman Catholic warriors had to do so. In essence, the reporters made the Holy Land and the Church into a feminine object of desire for the heroes to rescue. Success would enhance their masculinity in several ways. They would get to free the land from Muslim control and then dominate it themselves. Furthermore, as a special bonus they would earn remission of sins. Guibert enunciated the contrast between eastern and western men very clearly as part of his apocalyptic vision of crusading: “Be stirred in your memory by the voice of God as he speaks to the church: *from the East*, he says, *I will lead your seed and from the West I will gather you* [Isaiah 43.5]. God has already brought our seed from the East, because in two ways He brought forth from this province of the East the earliest growth of our church, but from the West he gathered [the church], for through them (namely the westerners) they took the last proofs of faith, so through you, as we think (God willing), this can be done: the losses of Jerusalem will be restored” (Guibert cap. 4).

Other writers emphasized the spiritual benefits of taking the cross. Fulcher, for example, had Urban II say, “Let those...who formerly have been accustomed to improperly extend themselves in private strife against the faithful now go out to begin properly fighting against the infidels and ending in a sign of victory. Now may they be knights of Christ, who formerly had lived as ravishers; now may they fight by right against the barbarians, who formerly used to fight against their brothers and kinsmen; now may they obtain eternal reward, who used to be mercenaries for a few coins” (Fulcher 1.4). Baudry repeated this imagery: “Therefore if you wish to reflect on your souls, either put aside this swordbelt of soldiery as quickly as possible, or boldly proceed as knights of Christ, and come together speedily for the defense of the eastern Church. For it is from Her that the joys of all your salvation emanate, who poured in your mouth words like divine milk, who furnished to you the sacrosanct teachings of the Gospel” (Baudry cap.

4). Robert the Monk emphasized the earthly and spiritual benefits crusaders would accrue: “Therefore to whom should this labor of vengeance, of recovery fall, if not to you?...Enter on the road to the Holy Sepulcher, seize that land from the infamous people, and subject it to you....Therefore take this way in remission of your sins, secure in the unfading glory of the heavenly realm” (Robert cap. 2).

The Four Early Accounts: Muslim Masculinity and Beastliness

But in order for western Christian men to gain such earthly powers and spiritual blessings, they had to overcome a dangerous enemy. Muslims threatened the Church in several ways. First, they willfully rejected Christianity and embraced demonic beings who encouraged them to remain spiritually sightless. Secondly, they expressed this blindness in ways that damaged Christianity physically and financially; they were obviously gendered masculine, for their crimes mirrored the sorts of atrocities committed by Catholic knights mentioned above. Finally, the Muslims were a collective—they had enough political cohesion within their *gens* to conquer and then to exact money from Christians. In short, they were like a pack of savage and clever wolves. They were beastly, yet they were also smart enough to hurt Christians in a variety of ways. No reporter seemed to notice that beasts of either sex rarely have the intelligence to arrange taxation systems and other political institutions.

All three examples of Muslim ferocity show up in the four earliest reports of Clermont—probably Urban II mentioned the Muslims’ beastliness at the council, for it appears in several of his letters as well (quoted in Arbaji 1971, 110). Fulcher of Chartres spoke of the Muslims’ collective spiritual crimes and political ascendancy: they were a vile people (*genus nequam*), pagans (*paganos*), barbarians (*barbaros*), a contemptible and degenerate race that was the bondswoman of demons (*gens . . . sprete, degener et daemonum ancilla*) (Fulcher 1.4). When I first translated the last phrase, it seemed that Fulcher of Chartres had gendered Muslims as feminine, yet he referred too many times to their prowess and political domination. They might

serve demons the way a slave served her master, but they did so through hostile takeovers:

“Moreover the Turks, the people of Persia, who having occupied more and more lands of the Christians within Roman boundaries, have invaded them, as it has been said to many of you, up to the Mediterranean Sea, to the place that is called the arm of St. George; they have overcome them already as victors in seven battles, having killed or captured many, having overthrown churches, having laid waste the kingdom of God” (Fulcher 1.4).

Robert the Monk more explicitly named the Muslims’ faults: spiritual blindness, physical savagery, and political domination. They were “a race certainly alienated from God,” “infamous people,” “unclean,” and “people who do not know God.” He thoroughly described the physical crimes Muslims had committed, which involved the forced circumcision of Christian men, the rape of Christian women, and a particularly nasty game where they would disembowel Christians, tie them to stakes by their intestines, and force the victims to run around the stakes until they died. Robert also enthusiastically noted that Muslims had polluted Christian holy sites. In one passage, he said they did so by pouring out Christian blood over church altars. Usually, though, Robert was not so specific; he simply stated that Muslim filth had befouled holy places. Finally, Robert mentioned their political power: “Now the realm of the Greeks has been so torn apart and given up to their purposes that it is not possible to cross through it in a journey of two months.” In other words, Muslims had broken up a state. Robert’s use of rape imagery in this passage, wherein the Byzantine Empire lay broken and helpless, underscores both Muslims’ physical brutality and their political domination.

As graphically as Robert the Monk described the Muslims’ crimes, it was Baudry of Dol who fully developed the theme of their beastliness. After describing many religious and political atrocities committed by Muslims, Baudry stated that anyone who was not moved by the miracle of the Easter fire was a “beastly person, senseless in the head” (*bestialis homo et insulsi capitis*—only here does the neuter term appear). He then extended this label to Muslims: “And nevertheless gentiles themselves see this together with Christians, and are not corrected; they are

truly terrified, but they are not turned to the faith: and no wonder, because blindness of the mind dominates them” (Baudry cap. 4). Baudry’s account made numerous references to the beastliness of the enemy. Muslims were politically powerful animals who had polluted Christian houses of worship by stabling animals in them and practicing their superstitious rites; they were unclean; they had “dominion over our brothers.” Guibert of Nogent similarly mentioned spiritual crimes, wherein the Gentiles polluted Jerusalem and Christ’s tomb; political crimes involving Muslims ruling over Christians; and physical/financial crimes when Muslim leaders extorted money from Christian pilgrims by mutilating, disemboweling, or forcibly administering purgatives to them. He too associated these things with animal behavior in an interpretation of a Gospel passage discussing the end of the world: “Christians are ruled over [by them] as is pleasing to them, and for their own shameful pleasures they have frequented the hog-pools of all disgracefulness, and in all of these things they have no obstacle” (Guibert cap. 4).

Clearly all four writers saw little difference between the sorts of crimes committed by either Christian or Muslim men, though the latter were more disgusting. Just as clearly, all the reporters wanted to contrast disunity among European Christians with unity among the Muslim enemy. Cohesion had helped Islam subdue Christians in the East; solidarity encouraged Muslims to use their manly powers to achieve their goals. Thus the Muslims portrayed at Clermont were not an effeminate other. They threatened Christendom precisely because they were so masculine.⁵ Here we can see a marked difference between portrayals of Muslims in the accounts of Clermont and medieval Iberian writings. As Louise Mirrer and David Nirenberg have shown, Iberian Christian writers tended to focus on the Muslims’ *lack* of power.⁶ Indeed, Nirenberg has argued most convincingly that law codes from Aragon effectively re-enacted the *Reconquista* by allowing the Christian rulers to exert continual power over their Muslim subjects. The contrast

⁵ Though Hay explores a different issue altogether from the one discussed here, he too notes that “when describing the climax of a battle or siege, [crusades chronicles] are primarily and often exclusively concerned with describing the fates of the male combatants” (Hay 2001).

⁶ Jews also were passive and effeminate (Mirrer 1996, 1994; Nirenberg 1996).

between these two sets of texts almost certainly stems from differences in power relationships. Iberian Christian writers typically (though not always) lived in a state where Christians ruled over Muslims and Jews. Yet would-be crusaders were not in a position of power over their enemies. They still had to challenge these manly enemies if they were going to aid the feminine Church. The liberation motif in Urban II's sermon, discussed by Jonathan Riley-Smith, could demonstrate its full worth (Riley-Smith 1986). Moreover, proximity certainly influenced writers. Iberian authors lived next door to their Muslim neighbors; the chroniclers of Clermont did not.

Thus to Urban II's reporters, both Muslim and Catholic men started in the same place, committing similar physical crimes urged upon them by their virile natures. However, Christian men could reflect on their sins and their relationship with God. They could rise above the less-human side of themselves by fighting for the proper reasons. Muslims could not. They were a collective—a pack moved by their animal instincts to devour Christians and Christianity.

Three Later Accounts

Even later reporters of Clermont picked up on these themes. Historians have typically tried to reconstruct the pope's actual words and so overlooked accounts of Urban II's sermon written after 1111 (the date of Guibert's redaction). Nevertheless, William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, and William of Tyre, like the writers they drew upon, reveal gender assumptions in what they borrowed, what they eliminated, and what they adapted from their sources. In minor ways, the three later chroniclers moved away from their sources, yet they employed a similar rhetoric of difference that incorporated assessments of gender and humanity.

The Anglo-Norman chronicler William of Malmesbury, composing his account of the First Crusade around 1125, focused on only one of the themes noted above: he saw the Muslims as powerful enemies whose domination of Eastern Christians dishonored the West. Surprisingly and contradictorily, William of Malmesbury was also the only writer who downplayed Muslim

prowess. After describing their encroachment on Christian lands, the Anglo-Norman monk referred to Muslim cowardice:

The artless people are devouring [the rest of Europe] by hope, and...not having the boldness for hand-to-hand fighting, love a fleeing warfare. For never does the Turk dare war by foot [in] close battle, but striking far from that place he stretches the bowstrings, and casts wounds by the winds; and because he has arrows intoxicated with a deadly potion, it is not manliness but poison that causes death in the man whom he hits. Therefore I can attribute whatever he does to fortune, not to strength, because he fights by flight and poison (William of Malmesbury 4.2).

This passage clearly denounces Muslim masculinity and may in fact feminize the enemy, for medieval writers commonly associated poison with women (though Marjorie Chibnall notes that males in Orderic Vitalis's history used it too) (Chibnall 1990). At the very least, William chose to emphasize the enemy's weakness in battle. While such *topoi* appeared fairly regularly in medieval battle speeches (Bliese 1988), William of Malmesbury was the only one to employ this device in recounting the pope's sermon. His portrait of timid archers running away to shoot their poison-tipped arrows does not mesh easily with his description of the Muslims' growing empire.⁷

However, William of Malmesbury also indirectly (perhaps inadvertently) classed *all* easterners together in this regard. Directly following the poison passage, William claimed that the Muslims and any other race from warmer regions had to fight more cautiously because they possessed less blood. We can assume that Eastern Christians as well as Muslims would fit into this category. The crusaders, coming from a cooler climate, might appear less cautious but in reality fought prudently and ferociously, because they did not have to worry about bleeding to

⁷ Niall Christie has noticed the same inconsistency in al-Sulami's discussion of *jihad*; see his forthcoming article in *Crusades*.

death. William spoke proudly of Europeans' skill in battle, which would garner praise from the whole world if they delivered their eastern brethren. This chronicler, though the most subtle and least consistent of the reporters in his gender constructions, thus masculinized western males at the expense of *all* eastern ones: westerners could fight like men, but easterners could not.⁸

William of Malmesbury's near contemporary, Orderic Vitalis, used more vivid language to portray both the power and the beastliness of the Muslims. Some of this language came from his sources. Orderic, writing in Normandy in the 1130s, relied upon Baudry's account of the First Crusade, which was the most insistent on the animal nature of the Christians' enemy. (Though Orderic also mentioned Fulcher's chronicle, he does not seem to have used it.) Both Orderic and Baudry indicated that the Muslims' animal tendencies revealed themselves in their acts of destruction and domination. Yet Orderic added a new twist. The conquerors used Christian captives to perform, literally, the work of animals: "They have carried off many prisoners into exile in distant lands and, binding them with thongs, have forced them to submit to the yoke and to cultivate the fields laboriously, dragging the plows like oxen, and to undergo other cruel labours more fitting for beasts than for men. As our brothers sweat at such tasks [the Muslims] lash them with whips, prick them with goads, and subject them to terrible sufferings in countless ways" (Orderic Vitalis 9.2). This last theme did not appear in Baudry's account, and Orderic Vitalis almost certainly had other sources of information from the East (Mayer 1989). But whether he borrowed this theme from someone else or invented it himself, it reinforced his point about the enemies' physical and animal appetites. Muslims, so vile in and of themselves, had to degrade their Christian slaves by treating them as animals too.

Lastly, a chronicler writing between 1170 and 1174 developed similar themes. William of Tyre, the great historian and chancellor of the First Kingdom of Jerusalem, drew upon Fulcher's and Baudry's narratives for information on Clermont as well as the First Crusade and the early

⁸ Gransden notes a similar tension in William's attitudes about the Normans and Anglo-Saxons: the Normans were much more impressive than the "unwarlike" Anglo-Saxons, whom he also indicted for "effeminacy [and] lust" (Gransden 1974, 173).

kingdom. Fulcher's bare-bones *reportatio* style (see Cole 1991, 10–13) seems not to have inspired William, except for his reference to the *ancilla*, or bondswoman, from whose line the Muslims sprung (William of Tyre 1.15). Baudry's ornamental rhetoric echoed more resoundingly in William's account. No other reporter of Urban II's sermon matched these two in emphasizing the Muslims' filth, superstition, and pollution. William commented at length on the power of the Muslims. He also drew attention to their animal behavior, calling them (among other things) "dogs [who] have entered into holy places" who turned the Temple into "a seat of demons" (William of Tyre 1.15).

However, William adduced another example of the enemy's beastliness that did not come from either of his sources. He borrowed Baudry's comment about Muslims stabling animals in Christian churches, but he amplified it. In the passage below, Muslims figuratively raped Jerusalem by worshipping in her temples, which they polluted with their own feces; they either tortured Christian virgins and matrons to death or forced them into prostitution (a more literal rape); and they slaughtered like animals any male captives who refused to blaspheme God:

The city of the king of all kings, which gave to others the rules of an undefiled faith, is forced, against its will, to serve the superstitions of [that] race; the Church of the Holy Resurrection, resting place of the sleeping Lord, must endure their powers, polluted by the dung of those who will not have a sharing in the resurrection, but will be judged [to] eternal flame, as grass in continual flames; the venerable sites, given over to divine mysteries, which received as a guest the Lord in flesh, saw his signs and perceived his benefits, of which all in full faith held as proofs, are made pens for sheep, stables of cattle; the praiseworthy people, to whom the Lord of Hosts made blessing, groans, fatigued, under services and from the weight of despicable payments: the sons of them are

snatched away, the precious securities of Mother Church, that they might serve the impurities of this race, and compelled to deny the name of the living God or to blaspheme with a sacrilegious mouth; if abominating the impious commands they are killed with swords in the manner of sheep, companions to the holy martyrs. To the sacrilegers, there is no difference of places or respect of persons: the priest and Levite are killed in sanctuaries, virgins are forced into fornication or to perish through torture, and the more mature years of the matron are not favored (William of Tyre 1.15).

William of Tyre's imagery thus feminized the holy city and demonstrated that her Muslim enemies had to pull Christianity and its faithful down to their own animal level, but William played up the intensely sexual nature of these acts. Only one other writer, Robert the Monk, noted that Muslims raped Christian women, and he did not provide details as William did. No writer besides these two applied rape imagery to either the Church or Jerusalem. Possibly William knew of Robert's account,⁹ but if so, William used the language of rape in a different way.

There are other curious features in William's account of Clermont, for they emphasize the gap between his knowledge and his rhetoric of difference. First, William knew a great deal about Muslim culture, both through his position as archbishop of Tyre and chancellor of the kingdom, and through his research, compiled in a now-lost history of Islam (Edbury and Rowe 1988, 23–24; Schwinges 2001). He may well have known that calling Muslims "dogs" would have constituted a mortal insult, and he was the only reporter to do so. He also understood that Islam shared many features with Christianity and did not involve the worship of demons, as expressed in other parts of his long chronicle. Moreover, William respected some Muslim leaders

⁹ William had access to the anonymous *Historia Nicaena vel Antiochena*, whose author slavishly followed Robert the Monk and Fulcher of Chartres. Heinrich Hagenmeyer dismissed the anonymous history as a "ganzen wertlosen Erzählung" (Fulcher 1913, 85; Gerish 2005b).

and recognized that growing unity within their polity represented a major threat to the Crusader States (Jubb 2005; Schwinges 2001). He sometimes ascribed the positive quality of *prudentia* to Muslims as well as Franks (Tessera 2002, 66–67). Why, then, does his account of Clermont ignore the positive aspects of his personal experience?

As noted above, some of the inflammatory material came from the chancellor's sources. Edbury and Rowe have noted that the first eight books of the history (which include Urban II's sermon) have a more religious tone to them than books 9–23, which tended toward the pragmatic (Edbury and Rowe 1988, 153–55). Rainer Christoph Schwinges, similarly, states that when William stopped relying on his sources in book 16, he rarely focused on the non-Christian nature of Muslims (Schwinges 2001, 127). However, one of Schwinges's conclusions about the chronicle as a whole cannot apply to William's account of Clermont: "It becomes quite clear that William of Tyre considered the enmities on the soil of his fatherland as largely separate from the western ideological context, attempting instead to present them as locally and regionally limited conflicts for domination" (Schwinges 2001, 130). I propose that William wanted to emphasize the *preaching* of the First Crusade—as Guibert, Baudry, and Robert all wanted to do (Cole 1991, 5–9, 12–13)—because he sought to renew crusading fervor. When William expanded upon the Muslims' pollution in his account of Clermont, he did so to re-inspire his contemporaries to continue their defense of the Crusader States. By the mid-twelfth century, when William was schooled in Europe, negative references to the Muslims and their animal nature had become part of crusade preaching (Cole 1993). William might have amplified the examples from his sources even though they conflicted with his own experience.

How do these three later reporters compare to the earliest four? Fulcher of Chartres, Robert the Monk, Baudry of Dol, and Guibert of Nogent had connected masculinity with beastliness when describing Catholic and Muslim warriors, though they held out a "cure" for the former. Catholic men could enhance their humanity by protecting the feminine Church, the Holy Land, and other affiliated sacred sites. Femininity thus presented no problem at all. However, the

effeminacy of Christians in the East did, because these men could not defend themselves against the powerful enemies of Christendom. The last two writers, Orderic Vitalis and William of Tyre, repeated many of these themes and underscored the beastliness of the enemy by showing how Muslims had to drag Christians down to their own level. Only William of Malmesbury differed slightly from the others, claiming that climate caused a cultural divide between Europe and Asia that allowed men from the West to fight in a manly way, while eastern warriors could not. Yet despite their differences in emphasis and example, all seven reporters displayed fairly consistent attitudes toward men, women, and beasts.

Contexts and Conclusion

This fact suggests that our writers intertwined gender constructions and evaluations of humanity in ways that spoke to internal and external problems. Within Catholic Europe, Urban II offered a religious resolution to the challenge of masculine violence among Catholics (even as it sought to help eastern Christians) (Arbaci 1971, 108–111a). There was a subtle object lesson embedded in reports of his message: Catholic males were behaving like the beastly Muslim villains, and if the Christians failed to mend their ways and play a more heroic role, they would end up in hell. Urban's spiritual answer also had a social component, for crusading obviously reinforced the connection between violence and masculinity that Richard Kaeuper has noted in the context of chivalry (Kaeuper 1999; Flori 1998, 1984).

This, in turn, led to exclusion: only western men could fully participate as crusaders. Eastern Christians, for example, were not capable of crusading because they were too effeminate. As for women, they could not physically fight, nor should they try to rescue other powerless people from beastly men. They could not be the heroes of this piece. That was the job of lay Catholics who needed to improve themselves. Yet the Catholic fighters still needed victims and supporters as foils for their masculinity. Sarah Lambert has perceptively recognized that women served as supporting characters within the twelfth-century crusading movement, highlighting the

masculine heroes' actions (Lambert 2001). I would add that in the accounts of Clermont, Eastern Christians also played minor roles, since their powerlessness threw into relief the virility of both the heroes and the villains. It is worth noting as an aside that if medieval clergy tried to constitute themselves as a third gender, as some scholars have theorized (McNamara 1999; Swanson 1999), females and effeminate males were perhaps closer to them than to the masculine warriors who needed to crusade. In the end, gender and humanity within these seven texts reinforced an existing social order in Europe.

Gender and humanity in these accounts also underscored the way Catholic Europeans defined themselves *vis-à-vis* outsiders. Western self-identity increasingly shaped itself along religious rather than ethnic lines throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁰ A rhetoric of difference that incorporated comments on the enemy's gender and humanity became part of this process, and it spanned different eras and places. Propagandists accused invaders of the same sorts of masculine crimes and the same hatred of Christianity. Proximity seems to have heightened a writer's negative assessment of the villains' masculinity and beastliness—the closer the enemy, the more of a threat he represented, and the more he was dehumanized.

For instance, Muslim attacks on Western Europe did not always provoke the same reaction that they did at Clermont. John Tolan has ably demonstrated that northern writers in the eighth century did not portray Muslims as enemies of Christianity; they were instruments of divine punishment and dangerous warriors, but nothing more. Even Christians in the Iberian peninsula did not dehumanize their Muslim overlords until the Cordovan martyrs movement of the 850s. At that point, polemicists such Alvarus identified Muhammad with Antichrist, while Eugenius portrayed Muslims as murderers and rapists. Eugenius's examples mentioned female virgins forced into prostitution, murdered Christian priests, and ruined churches. Both he and Alvarus named aggression and burning lust as the great flaws of Islamic culture. These

¹⁰ See references throughout this paper and in Jubb 2005; Arbagi 1971; Ebels-Hoving 1971.

propagandists also likened Muslims to barbarians and beasts; Alvarus specifically called them wolves (Tolan 2002, ch. 4).

Such dynamics continued through time. Around the year 1000, for example, Catholic writers across Europe began accusing Muslims of idolatry and paganism—a theme that continued into the early modern period. By the twelfth century, theologians also began “proving” that Islam was a heresy, a misguided form of Christianity (Tolan 2002, ch. 6). A similar process took place in western writing about Byzantium, in that by the end of the twelfth century, western writers began vociferously calling the Greeks heretics (Ebels-Hoving 1971). Ebels-Hoving concluded, “So, in the end, one may say that the conquest of Constantinople marks the end of a process in which Western Europe was forming and defending a kind of identity in contrast with an Eastern Empire.” Other religions or variants of Christianity had to be wrong or at least misguided for Christianity to be right, thus non-Catholics could not be as masculine (for Orthodoxy) or as human (for Islam) (Ebels-Hoving 1971, 284–85).

Yet denunciations of an outsider’s masculine aggression and beastliness appeared in other contexts. It is worth exploring these examples in some detail, because the themes that emerge look very similar to the reports of Clermont. Simon Coupland has proved that Carolingian writers dehumanized the Vikings and associated them with paganism in the ninth and tenth centuries (Coupland 1991). Coupland showed that Christian writers accused the Vikings of punishing Christians for their sins, calling them *pagani*, *barbari*, and *inimici dei*, among other appellations. (They also applied these terms to Moors, Slavs, and Magyars who attacked their lands.) All such enemies despoiled monasteries and churches. Coupland listed the sorts of Viking atrocities that appear in the chronicles, though unfortunately he did not repeat the exact language. Norse attacks on clerics, women, and children sound similar to the ones ascribed to the Turks and may suggest that as early as the ninth and tenth centuries these actions were gendered masculine, though such a theory requires more investigation. Moreover, the Christians’ language led J.M. Wallace-Hadrill to believe that the Vikings were “crusading” against Christianity (*persecutores*

fidei christianae...et daemonum cultoribus), though Coupland contended that in fact Frankish writers falsely attributed such motives to them (Coupland 1991). A Frank who killed a Viking in defending the Church did not have to perform penance, because “pagans such as the Vikings were less than fully human” (Coupland 1991, 547). Coupland’s evidence for the beastliness of Vikings in European thinking is quite convincing; further investigation of these sources may reveal that both the villains’ atrocities and the heroes’ defense of Christianity were gendered masculine.

Several centuries later, William of Malmesbury and Orderic Vitalis degraded another group of outsiders closer to home. They were joined by a number of contemporaries, such as Henry of Huntingdon, Richard of Hexham, and William of Newburgh. According to these men, the Irish and Scots committed the same sorts of violent, bestial, and sexual crimes that Muslims did: they ripped open the bellies of their victims (especially pregnant women), killed priests in their churches, and defaced crucifixes. Two of Gillingham’s examples sound remarkably similar to accounts of Clermont. Henry of Huntingdon accused Scottish invaders in 1138 of targeting the helpless and defiling Christian symbols: “They ripped open pregnant women, tossed children on the points of their spears, butchered priests at the altars; they cut off the heads of images of Christ on the cross and exchanged them for the decapitated heads of their own victims.” Richard of Hexham noted that the invaders sexually abused their prisoners and then treated them like animals: “These bestial men, once they were weary of abusing their prisoners in the manner of brutish animals—for they regarded adultery, incest and other abominations as being of no account,—either made them slave women or sold them for cattle to other barbarians” (quoted in Gillingham 1992, 70, 72). Gillingham suggested that English and Norman writers reacted in this way because in the 1130s various Celtic confederations began attacking England, whereas earlier they had been on the defensive (Gillingham 1992; Hoffman 1983). Even early modern writers depicted Celtic “barbarians” as primitive beings who engaged in bizarre sexual acts (Leerssen 1995). Thus the rhetoric of difference, though often invoked in particular situations, could also

transcend circumstances, applying to any formidable outsider. And even if he were Christian, the enemy could be accused of masculine, bestial crimes against the Church.

Nevertheless, Islam seems to have come in for the most opprobrium after the First Crusade—probably because it presented the biggest threat to western self-identity, political domination, and Catholic religious hegemony within Europe. In the hands of western writers, according to Edward Said, “Islam became an image...whose function was not so much to represent Islam within itself, as to represent it for the medieval Christian” (quoted in Jubb 2005, 229). Margaret Jubb has concurred: “Far from being indifferent to Islam, westerners were both fascinated and repelled by it; they wanted and needed to control and subjugate it through discourse” (Jubb 2005, 231).

Over the last century, literary specialists have noted the simultaneous attraction and distaste in medieval epic, even if their explanations for its existence have been revised (Daniel 1984, 1960; Warren 1914; de Weever 1998). Recent work has also connected this European approach–avoidance conflict to literary and visual depictions of Muslims (along with other “deviants”) as monsters and grotesques (Bovey 2002; Campbell 1988; Cohen 1999; Friedman 1981; Harpham 1982; Strickland 2003; Williams 1996; Wittkower 1942). Historians who favor the hypothesis that medieval Catholics projected their own darkest fears onto Islamic society will easily see parallels between the rhetoric of difference analyzed above and Michael Camille’s conclusions. Camille argued that some Catholic art reflected theological areas of vulnerability and tension within Christian doctrine: Jews mocked the Host, Muslims worshipped idols representing an alternate (fictional) Trinity (Camille 1991). Based on my proposed reading of the Clermont accounts, we might wonder if Europeans also feared losing political power over territory and physical power over bodies, especially the bodies of women and children.

A different but related theory regarding western views of outsiders may prove even more fruitful in explaining the rhetoric of difference. John Tolan’s seminal work proposes a model of inversion: medieval Catholics portrayed other cultures as distorted reflections of themselves

(Tolan 2002, ch. 6). I have proposed that in the accounts of Clermont, Catholic and Muslim men shared the same qualities of masculine aggression and beastliness, though Christian men could rise above both the masculinity and the beastliness. Some Muslim characters in *chansons de geste* also mimicked Christian heroes, for Catholic characters often bemoaned the fact that these brilliant warriors supported the wrong side (Tolan 2002, 106–7, 125–126; Bennett 1986). As Tolan eloquently put it, “The goal of the poet here is the same as that of the filmmaker portraying quintessential bad guys: to allow the reader (or viewer) to enjoy the violence, to revel in the blood and killing, without remorse. Only by dehumanizing the adversary, making him sufficiently ‘other,’ is this possible. Yet he cannot be made too other, for it is not valorous to slaughter mere beasts. Hence the paradoxical, mixed nature of the Saracen host in *Roland*: alongside the monstrous creatures are virtuous knights who seem to be mirror images of their Christian adversaries” (Tolan 2002, 126).

Thus the argument proposed above raises a number of implications for gender constructions in twelfth-century crusades rhetoric and preaching. Gender and humanness could at times play a part in the construction of Catholic European cultural identity, for the seven texts analyzed above delineated certain social and religious roles for the heroes, the victims, and the villains at Clermont.

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