

The Medieval Idea of the Saracen, as
illustrated in English Literature,
Spectacle and Sport.

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Candidacy for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Leicester.....1972.

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Preface

The present investigation has two main purposes: firstly to provide a background against which the literature that reflects the medieval Englishman's interest in the Saracens may be set; and secondly to present a composite picture of the Saracen as seen through the eyes of the medieval writers. In attempting to do this, historical data will occasionally be used to provide a perspective, but every effort has been made to avoid overburdening the study with details of more interest to historians than to students of literature.

In setting the temporal limits to this study I have been guided more by the amount and nature of previous work done on the subject than by any conventional lines of demarcation. The studies conducted by Louis Wann (1915), W.G. Rice (1927), Samuel Chew (1937), Byron P. Smith (1939), Orhan Burian (1952), Suraya Artemel (1965) and others¹ all deal with the English literary interest in the Muslim East from periods beginning, at the earliest, with the accession of Elizabeth I. The only exception is Samuel Chew in his

1 See below "Appendix D".

Crescent and the Rose he promises to deal with the relations between England and Islam from 1453 to 1642.

But he excludes a good deal of material which appeared within this period. The prose and metrical romances and the folk-plays find no place in his study, and the drama of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries received very little attention in this otherwise erudite and comprehensive work. Consequently, and in an attempt to fill a gap and bring to light a mass of material long neglected, I have focused my attention chiefly on the vernacular romances written in England between the thirteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth. I have also included a chapter on the English view of the Saracen as represented in the drama, spectacle and sport of this period.

For the sake of clarity, it is advisable to define some of the terms used in this study. A wider sense is given to the term "medieval" to cover the period with which we are concerned and during which the English attitude towards Islam crystallized. "Crusades" will generally be used to signify not only the organised campaigns sponsored and led by the Latin Church to recover the Holy Land, but also in connection with any wars, defensive or offensive, conducted against the Muslim in which the latter was viewed as an infidel, a religious rather than a political, racial or military enemy. "Saracen" in medieval and early modern England was a term broad enough for and capable of various interpretations.

Throughout this study it will be used as equivalent to the term "Muslim".

In discussing Islam and the Saracens from the medieval English standpoint, my sources have been mainly those written in Middle English. In the case of some classical writings, Latin chronicles, and pilgrims' accounts, I resorted to the standard English translations of these works. The Eastern sources have been studied in the original, mainly Arabic, with the exception of The Thousand and One Nights, where Sir Richard Burton's excellent translation has been followed.

The historical figures and place-names have been spelt as they are often encountered in modern works. Saladin, for instance, and not Salah-Uddin; Acre instead of Akka. The form "Muhammed" is however preferred to the more common "Mohammed" or "Muhammad". For practical reasons the sign (3) is used for the Middle English yogh, while the thorn is inserted by hand, in the standardised form "þ".

The following study was undertaken under the supervision of Dr. James Winny, now lecturing in Canada, and Dr. Lois Potter, to both of whom I am greatly indebted for constant encouragement, valuable criticism and help. To Dr. Claude Luttrell my deepest thanks are due. He has devoted much of his time to reading the draft, eliminating obscurities and offering me many new ideas and invaluable suggestions, both critical and bibliographical.

I should also like to express my gratitude to the members of the Study Leave Committee of Baghdad University, who enabled me to enjoy the benefit of a scholarship. To Mr. V.R.A. Denne I am, in common with all the Gulbenkian Foundation students in the U.K., constantly and deeply indebted. I also have to thank the library staff of the British Museum, Cambridge University, and the University of Leicester (especially the Inter-Library Loan Service), who assisted me efficiently and courteously.

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List of Abbreviations

Ar.	Arabic.
EETS.ES.	Early English Text Society, Extra Series.
EETS.OS.	Early English Text Society, Original Series.
EHR.	English Historical Review.
ESTS.	Early Scottish Text Society.
JEFDSS.	Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.
JEGP.	Journal of English and Germanic Philology.
MLN.	Modern Language Notes.
MLR.	Modern Language Review.
MP.	Modern Philology.
O.E.D.	The Oxford English Dictionary.
Per.	Persian.
PMLA.	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.
PPTS.	Palestine Pilgrims Text Society.
Tur.	Turkish.

Chapter I - Islam and Christendom in the Middle Ages:

The Creation of a Horrible Image

, (i) The Expansion of Islam and its Impact on Western Europe

From the rise of Islam in the middle of the seventh century and until recent times Western Europe and Islam faced one another like hostile powers mutually aggressive and suspicious. Their historical relations were virtually a sequence of rivalries and engagements. There were only a few periods of relative peace in which words took the place of arms as the means of communications between them. The ill-will that this protracted state of warfare left behind has not yet been completely removed. To the Christian-Muslim antagonism, which became extreme during the Crusades, the early Muslim futuh (Ar. opening, conquest) contributed generously.

The story of the Muslim futuh begins in 634 when the vigorous and far-seeing Umar came to power, twelve years after the death of his prophet and companion, Muhammed. Umar, the second in a long line of caliphs and sultans lasting at least in name until the end of World War I, brought under his suzerainty no less than thirty-six thousand cities or castles and built 1400 mosques to the glory of Allah in his short ten-year administration. His first task, however, was to complete the wars of Riddah (Ar. returning, apostasy) waged by his predecessor, Abu Bakr, to bring back to Islam those Arab tribes who had revolted.¹ When those punitive campaigns were successfully

1 The Cambridge History of Islam, ed., P.M. Holt, A.S. Lambton and B. Lewis (Cambridge, 1970), i, 64 ff; Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (Oxford, 1925), v, 474-5.

concluded, the caliph embarked upon a more ambitious programme of religious conquest in the neighbouring lands.

Of the many heroes to emerge as futuh champions, Khalid, nicknamed "Allah's Sword", was the most celebrated. Khalid, who had gained much experience from his earlier expeditions against the rebels of the Arab peninsula, led a column of zealous warriors across the Syrian desert, a feat which in those days was considered a miracle of audacity and organization. In 635 he defeated the Byzantines led by Heraclius (d.641) and occupied Damascus, soon to become the capital of the Islamic empire. The fall of Damascus was the first of a series of astounding victories to be achieved by the successors of the prophet over the Eastern Christians. In the following year, "Allah's Sword" scored another decisive victory at Yarmouk, a tributary of the Jordan. From Yarmouk he advanced dauntlessly towards Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam, which had been sanctified by the revelations of Moses, Jesus and Muhammed himself. After a siege lasting four months, the Christian inhabitants yielded to the perseverance of the besiegers. To the astonishment of the population of Jerusalem, who were accustomed to Byzantine pomp and splendour, the new master, Umar, entered the city wearing his usual coarse mantle which he never abandoned until his death. By 641 all Greater Syria from the head of the Red Sea to the foothills of Taurus had fallen into Muslim hands.²

With Syria as a base, Egypt, another Byzantine province, was soon overrun. Amru-ibn-al-As, another futuh champion, marched

² Cambridge History, i, 62; P.K. Hitti, History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present, 9th ed. (New York, 1968), pp. 149-54; Gibbon, Decline and Fall, v, 512-3.

across the vast deserts of the Sinai peninsula and did not stop until he pitched camp outside the castle of Babilyoun, near the site of modern Cairo. Reinforced by 5000 men from his chiefs in Medinah, Amru easily defeated the Byzantines in 640. The Muslim battle-cry "Allah Akber" (Allah is Greatest) once again echoed victoriously in the inner halls of the conquered fortress. Alexandria, second only to Constantinople among the cities of the medieval East, offered some resistance. After a siege which lasted almost a year, the Byzantine garrison withdrew and the city surrendered to Muslim forces far inferior in number and equipment to those of the besieged. The dark rumour that the Great Alexandrian library was set on fire by Umar's orders is unfounded. Modern scholarship has shown that it had been destroyed centuries before the coming of the Muslims.³

Soon after the subjugation of Egypt, raids were carried westward into Africa. The Muslim Alexander, Ukbah, founder of the famous city of Al-Qairawan in Tunisia (670), advanced along the northern coast of Africa, conquering city after city until the Atlantic stopped his Arabian cavalry.

The victories on the Eastern front were no less brilliant than those of the West. Sa'ad, a close companion of Muhammed, routed the Persian garrison at Qadissiyah, crossed the Tigris and pursued the fleeing Persians energetically. In 642 the fate of the Persian empire, the most powerful in the East, was finally sealed. By the reduction of Persia the Muslims

³ Bernard Lewis, The Arabs in History (London, 1964), p.54. The hostile allegation about the library is alluded to in many literary and religious works in England.

gradually approached the Caspian Sea and under Mu'awiyah, the first of the Umayyad dynasty (r. 661-80), and his successors, they crossed the Oxus and the Jaxartes and penetrated deep into central Asia, bringing Islam to many new peoples of different races, customs and degrees of civilization. These included the Turks, who were to become the champions of Islam and builders of its modern empire.⁴

These conquests made little or no impression on Western Europe. It was far away and, moreover, separated by the sea with which the warriors of the desert were not sufficiently acquainted. But the sea could not check the Muslim advance for long. "Within a few years of their occupation of the Syrian and Egyptian coastlines", says Bernard Lewis, "the people of the land-locked desert of Arabia...equipped and manned war fleets which soon won victories as striking as these of the Muslim armies".⁵ The charge of supervising and co-ordinating the operations of these newly-formed fleets was entrusted to a chief commander whom the Arabs called amir-al-bahr (lord of the sea), a title which most languages of the world were soon to adopt in its corrupted form of admiral.

First to feel the blows of the Muslim navy were the Byzantine islands of Cyprus, Rhodes and Crete, but the occupation of these islands was for the most part brief and transitory. The European mainland was first raided in 710 when Tarif landed on the tiny peninsula which is almost the southernmost tip of the European continent. The raided town still bears the name of Tarifa.

⁴ Gibbon, Decline and Fall, v, 533ff, 581-82; Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 166, 209 ff.

⁵ The Arabs, p. 115; cf. Hitti, History of the Arabs, p. 193.

Encouraged by the success of this brief raid, Tariq, a resourceful freedman of the Muslim governor of north-west Africa, prepared a larger expedition in the following year, and in the spring of 711 he landed on that mighty rock which has since immortalised his name, Jabal Tariq (Gibraltar = Mount of Tariq). Nearby, he engaged and routed the armies of Roderick, the Visigothic usurper, who disappeared mysteriously from the battlefield.⁶ Tariq's march northward into the interior of Spain proved easier and swifter than he had expected, and by the end of the decade the Muslim armies had overrun the whole of Spain and moved beyond the Pyrenees to Narbonne and then to Bordeaux. The Muslims, says Gibbon, had prolonged their victorious line of march more than 1000 miles from Gibraltar to the banks of the Loire:

The repetition of an equal space would have carried the Saracens⁷ to the confines of Poland and and the highlands of Scotland; the Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet.⁸

From such calamities, adds Gibbon, was Christendom delivered by the genius and fortune of one man. That one man was, of course, Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, who checked the Muslim advance at the famous battle of Poitiers in 732.

6 Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 493 ff. The Muslim conquest and occupation of Spain is one of the popular themes in seventeenth century English drama. Rowley's All's Lost by Lust (1619) dramatises the story of the violation of Julian's beautiful daughter, Florinda, by Roderick, which is usually offered in explanation of Julian's co-operation with the Muslims and the subsequent loss of all Spain to the Moors. The story is purely legendary. For a detailed study of the plays which deal with the Moors and the Hispano-Arab conflict consult Eldred Jones's recent book, Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama (Oxford, 1965).

7 (*Italics mine*). For the origin of this term see below pp. 31-32.

8 Decline and Fall, vi, 17-18.

The portentous advance into Spain and Southern France, the first European soil to be acquired by the Muslims, was to Christian Europe an alarming measure of the Muslim threat. The distant danger of the East suddenly became a hard reality and Christian Europe woke up to find its very safety at stake. From then on every Christian was taught to pronounce the name "Saracen" with terror and abhorrence. In England, the first to point to the intensity of the Muslim danger was the Venerable Bede, who mentioned the battle of Poitiers and spoke of the "dreadful plague of the Saracens" who "ravaged France with miserable slaughter".⁹ Reaction to the threat was inevitable: the French offered tough resistance, and from the middle of the eighth century onwards Charles Martel's successors continued the process of halting the Muslim advance. The Franco-Spanish border was the scene of numerous engagements, attacks and counter-attacks between the Muslims and the Christians. These border clashes were later to become one of the most familiar themes in the poetry of Christian Europe, immortalised in the most famous of the French heroic songs, the Chanson de Roland.

Far from being a defeat to the Muslims, the celebrated battle of Poitiers had actually decided nothing. It is true that the Muslims were checked at this point, but their raids continued elsewhere: Provence, northern Italy and even Switzerland were raided, and the islands of Corsica and Sardinia were again and again assaulted. After a number of preliminary attacks on Sicily from 825, the Muslims finally captured the island in 831 on the pretext of aiding the local Byzantine governor against his

9 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, pp. 556-57. For editions of texts used in this study see bibliography.

home government. Palermo remained the capital of Muslim Sicily for two and a half centuries until it was reconquered by the Normans towards the end of the eleventh century. From Sicily the Muslims were able to send campaigns against southern Italian cities, and for a time they established garrisons at Bari and Tarento. The conquest of Sicily, however, represents in Hitti's words "the last ripple" in the wave that brought the Muslim Arabs into North Africa and Southern Europe.¹⁰

After this sharp and abrupt rise under the able leadership of the Umayyeds, from the second half of the ninth century the Muslim empire underwent a period of gradual decline and decay. The Abbasids who came to the caliphate and ruled from Baghdad until 1258 were more interested in luxurious living, wines and foreign wives than in winning new lands for Allah and his prophet. In their capital on the Tigris, immortalised in The Thousand and One Nights, they reigned rather than ruled. The central government lost its authority in the remoter provinces of the empire and local independent dynasties were established beyond any possibility of displacement in Syria, North Africa, Egypt and Iran. The Baghdad Caliphate, seeking a new basis of support, found it in the recruitment of Turkish tribesmen from central Asia. As expatriates, these Turks were all the more devoted to their Arab masters, since they had no local, tribal or family affiliations. In time, however, they infiltrated the

10 Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 602 ff; Cambridge Medieval History, ii, 381-82. The Arab conquest of Sicily has contributed at least one word to most languages including English. The origin of the term "mafia", the Sicilian based secret criminal organization, is Arabic ma'wa (shelter, refuge). As a result of the conquest many Sicilian men found a ma'wa or mafia in the hills where they duly became peasant bandits with patriotic and family loyalties. See Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, centenary edition, revised by Ivor H. Evans (London, 1970), s.v. "mafia".

Caliphal state and worked their way into the highest positions. As the Caliph's power declined, that of his Turkish retainers increased. In the course of the eleventh century more Turks entered the territories of the Caliph, while the Turkish leader Tughril Beg of the Seljuk tribe established his own kingdom which comprised Persia and Khurasan. In 1055 Tughril Beg was invited by Baghdad to take over the temporal government of the whole of the Abbasid empire. He was given the title of "Sultan" (Al-Sultan, he with the authority), later borne by the Ottomans, cousins and successors of the Seljuks.¹¹

The second half of the twelfth century witnessed the most brilliant period of Seljuk ascendancy over the Muslim East. The greater part of the empire was now united under their authority, and the faded glory of Muslim arms revived. Islam's ancient enemy, Christian Byzantium, which had enjoyed a period of peace because of the divisions and internal conflicts among the Muslims, began to suffer harsher blows from the new masters. Already in 1071, at the battle of Manzikert, the Seljuks under Alp Arslan (Turk. Hero-Lion) crushed the Byzantine army and captured their emperor Romanus Diogenes. This decisive battle won the Seljuks a firm foothold in Asia Minor; and from that a mighty sultanate, covering the whole of the peninsula except a few coastal districts, was established. This was the state through which the Crusaders had to fight their way.¹²

The great Mongol invasion initiated by Ghenkis Khan (r.1206-1227), who devastated all the lands between the Wall of China and

11 Lewis, The Arabs, pp. 146-7; Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 288 ff.

12 Steven Runciman, The Fall of Constantinople 1453 (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 25-26.

the Volga, put an end to the Seljuk expansion. Like most people,¹³ the Turks were alarmed at the sudden surge in the Mongols' power, and after their defeat the Seljuks were driven into the mountains of Armenia. But as soon as the Mongols withdrew eastwards the Turks descended from the mountains and hideouts and formed a small emirate (princedom) under their competent tribal leader, Ertoghrul (Turk. the right-hearted-man, d.1281). His son, Othman (d.1326), the eponymous founder of the Ottoman empire and a man of great genius, expanded his father's domain and turned the small emirate into a formidable power - the spear-head of Islam against Christendom. By the middle of the fourteenth century almost all Asia Minor had become a Muslim province. The conquest of Eastern Europe followed immediately. Under Murad I (Amorath I, d.1389) and his son Bayazid (Bajazeth, d.1403) all Serbia and Macedonia were overrun. The Byzantine empire, now shrunk to consist only of Constantinople and a few isolated towns, had become dangerously immersed in a Muslim sea. In 1402 it seemed that nothing short of a miracle could save it from Bayazid's clutch. Yet a miracle did happen and the life of Byzantium was prolonged another fifty years.¹⁴

That miracle was the sudden rise of the last conqueror of the world, Timur Lang (d. 1405), commonly corrupted to Tamburlane or Tamerlane in English literature. Timur's career as a conqueror is unparalleled in history. Raging over the hemisphere

13 The rapid and ruthless invasions of the Mongols had some repercussions on the economy of medieval England. Mathew Paris points out that fear of the Mongols was so great in Western Europe that "the inhabitants of Gothland and Friesland did not, as was their custom, come to Yarmouth in England, at the time of herring-fisheries". Because of this the prices of herrings lowered considerably "even at places at great distance from the sea" (English History, i, 131).

14 Runciman, Fall of Constantinople, pp. 38-42.

lusting for more victories, in the thirty-six years of his career he conquered twenty-seven countries and deposed nine different dynasties of kings. To oppose Timur's westward advance, the Ottomans had to lift their siege of Constantinople. At the battle of Ankara (Marlowe's Angora), the Turks were defeated and their sultan, Bayazid (Bajazeth) taken prisoner. While in captivity, the sultan was treated as an honoured guest by his captor, a Muslim like himself. Bayazid was invited to Timur's court ceremonies and the restoration of his lands was promised. He travelled with his conqueror in a litter surrounded by a grille (Kafas). Later legend transformed this into an iron or golden cage, and Bayazid's fall became a moral fable illustrating the mutability of worldly power.¹⁵ The chaos which Timur left in his wake confronted the Ottomans with the serious task of remarrying their strength. This would have been the moment for Christian Europe to take the offensive and break the Ottoman danger. But the Byzantines contented themselves with a peace treaty with the Turks, and the Christians supposed that the Muslim danger was averted. The miscalculation proved fatal: Murad II (Amorath II, r. 1421-1451) reappeared before the walls of Constantinople, and despite the heroism of George Castriot (Scanderbeg)¹⁶ in Albania

15 Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 701 f. Sir Edward S. Creasy, History of the Ottoman Turks from the Beginning of their Empire to the Present Time, with a new introduction by Z.N. Zeine (Beirut, 1961), pp. 45-51. Both Timur and Bayazid are of course familiar figures in English drama, particularly in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

16 The well known seventeenth-century saying in England that "Scanderbeg's sword must have Scanderbeg's arm" attests to the familiarity of the English public with Scanderbeg's exploits. The Scanderbeg motif in English and European literatures has been studied by B.B. Ashcom, "Notes on the Development of the Scanderbeg Theme", Comparative Literature, v (1953), 16-29.

and Hunaydi Jonas on the Hungarian borders, the Ottomans firmly re-established their hold throughout the Balkan peninsula, Transylvania and the Danube Country.¹⁷

The end of Byzantium came on 29 May 1453. The Muslims who had endeavoured for eight centuries to subdue Constantinople gave their fatal blow while Europe was still preoccupied with dynastic and religious rivalries and unrest. Muhammed II (r. 1451-1481) put himself at the head of a formidable army including 12,000 of the notoriously ruthless Janissaries (Turk. Yeni Cheri, new men). Through a breach in the wall, the victorious Sultan marched into the desolate streets of the magnificent city. Three days later he came to the Church of Hagia Sophia and mounted the pulpit accompanied by an Imam (religious leader). There, the religious formula of Islam was repeated and the Friday prayers were offered to Allah. The downfall of Constantinople touched the conscience of Europe and profoundly shocked it. Even today western historians lament its fall and blame the selfish monarchs of Europe for allowing the queen of Christian cities to be overrun by the Ottomans, who came to be known as "the terror of the world".¹⁸ The year 1453 is a turning point in the long history of the struggle between the crescent and the cross. The only strategic point which Christendom could use against Islam was eliminated. For the Muslims, the capture of the old imperial city was much

17 Creasy, History of the Ottoman Turks, pp. 72-73; Henry Pirenne, A History of Europe from the Invasion to the XVI Century, trans., Bernard Miall (London, 1939), p. 496.

18 Gibbon, Decline and Fall, vi, 220-21, 234; Runciman, Fall of Constantinople, pp. 181 ff. C.W.C. Oman, The Byzantine Empire (London, 1892), pp. 448-50. Cf. "Address to the Reader" in Richard Knolles, The Generall Historie of the Turkes (London, 1603).

more than a military triumph. Situated at the principal point of intersection between Asia and Europe, Constantinople was the natural capital for an empire whose provinces reached into both continents. Furthermore, the capture of Constantinople secured a long-standing Muslim presence in Europe. Even today, the Turks still possess Thrace, despite the vicissitudes in their history.¹⁹

A new period of rapid Muslim expansion soon followed. Muhammed II, nicknamed "The Opener" on account of his conquest of Constantinople, besieged Belgrade, overran Morea and effected a foothold in Southern Italy at Otranto. Under Bayazid II (r.1481-1512) the Turks invaded Austria and Poland. Solyman (r. 1520-66), known to Europe as the Magnificent, penetrated deep into Eastern Europe and turned the Mediterranean into a Muslim sea. The tide of invasion rolled on, but from the time of the battle of Lepanto (1570) until the treaty of Carlowitz (1688) the Turkish campaigns were seldom crowned by overwhelming victory or permanent conquest. Their military reputation however continued to be enormous during that period.²⁰

These, in short, are the landmarks of the Muslim advance into Europe - an advance achieved mostly at the expense of Christendom. The waves of conquest initiated first by the Arabs and then by the Turks are of paramount significance to Christian-Muslim relations in the period with which we are concerned. The long state of warfare conditioned the medieval Christian's view of Islam and established

19 Runciman, Fall of Constantinople, p. xii.

20 Paul Coles, The Ottoman Impact on Europe (London, 1968), pp. 77-107. Creasy, History of the Ottoman Turks, chapters VII-X passim.

in his mind an ugly image of the Muslim, with sword in one hand and the Koran in the other, ever searching for more victims and more gains.²¹ But there were other forces at work which precipitated the Christian-Muslim alienation. Christendom and Islam not only represented two distinct systems of religion, they were societies extraordinarily unlike from almost every point of view. Their social foundation, ideals, mode of life, language and even their dress were so different that any serious attempt at bringing about understanding and co-existence presented insuperable difficulties.²² As if these considerations were not enough to estrange the Muslim, the powerful medieval Church launched constant and unrelenting war propaganda against everything Islam stood for. This hate-the-Muslim campaign, started by the Spanish divines and later adopted by the papal authorities, reached a frenzied peak in the period shortly before and during the Crusades.

21 This is one of the most recurrent notions about the Muslim in the literary as well as the historical writings in England. Cf., for example, Shakespeare, Coriolanus, IV, ii, 21-25; Gibbon, Decline and Fall, v, 365.

22 R.W. Southern, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 7-8.

(ii) Anti-Islamic Polemics and Crusade Propaganda.

Alarmed by the permanent Muslim presence in Spain and Sicily, and the decline of Christian influence in southern Europe and the East, the Latin Church was compelled from the eighth century to concern itself with Islam. The Church's interest in Muslim affairs was, of course, not motivated by an innocent spirit of inquiry; rather, it was hoped that by learning about Islam the Church would then be better equipped to attack it and annihilate its foundations from within. A very serious obstacle had to be surmounted before any result could be achieved. Until the mid-twelfth century there was a desperate shortage of Latin studies of Islam. In time, however, this was overcome by relying exclusively and uncritically on the writings of the Syrian and Byzantine divines, who were living under Muslim rule in the Levant.

The list of Eastern divines who wrote on Islam is a long one. Among the earliest and most famous fathers to attack Islam, "the superstitions of the Ishmaelites", as he calls it, was St. John of Damascus (d.ca.754). St. John devised a "Dialogue Between a Christian and a Saracen", in which the Saracen puts a series of stupid and hostile questions to the Christian concerning the cause of Good and Evil, Christ's birth, life after death and other theological matters. The Christian's answers are elaborate and erudite, and end predictably with St. John's words: "at this the Saracen marvelled greatly, and having nothing to answer the Christian, went away and debated with him no further". According to St. John, Muhammed was a false prophet who, having conversed with an "Arian" monk, devised his own heresy. This, St. John continues, Muhammed wrote down in a book which contained many

ridiculous stories.¹ Heresy is one of the earliest and most consistent charges against Muhammed and appears frequently in the literatures of medieval Europe.² Far from being a catalogue of facts about Islam, St. John's writings are rather a derisive commentary which presents selected events of Muhammed's life in the most uncomplimentary light, and subjects Islam to merciless ridicule.³

A more important work much in vogue was Al-Risalah (message; apology), written by a Christian Arab of the early 9th century known as Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi. From its first appearance in Arabic in Muslim Spain, reinforced by a Latin edition in 1141, the book enjoyed an immense popularity and remained for a long time an accepted model for Western attacks on Islam. As recently as the last century, Al-Risalah was reprinted in London for use in Protestant missions among Arabic-speaking peoples. The author, a member of the subjugated dimma (Ar. covenant) community and living under certain disabilities and disadvantages,⁴ shows some knowledge of the Koran and the Hadith (Muhammed's sayings, traditions) which he sometimes cites verbatim. He bases his argument against Islam

1 St. John of Damascus, Writings, pp. 153 ff. Cf. A Treasury of Early Christianity, ed., A.J. Fremantle (New York, 1953), pp. 321-24.

2 Dante placed Muhammed and his cousin Ali in the ninth circle of Hell for sowing heresy and schism. See The Commedia and Canzoniere, i, 141. See also below pp. 85-86.

3 Norman Daniel, Islam and the West; The Making of an Image (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 3-4. This valuable work is indispensable to any serious study involving Christian-Muslim relations. It contains an excellent and comprehensive bibliography of original and secondary sources.

4 In return for government protection of their lives and properties, non-Muslim subjects had to pay a certain amount of money. The dimmas were not allowed to bear arms, propagate their faith publicly or insult the state religion. Cf. Sir Thomas Arnold, The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith (London, 1913), pp. 143 ff.

on Muhammed's lack of authority, and generously heaps abuses on the prophet. In his emphasis on Muhammed's alleged practice of assassination, his love for concubines and his pilgrimage to the Black Rock at Mecca, Al-Kindi makes violence, sexual laxity and idolatry the distinguishing features of Islam. In short, his picture of Muhammed is absolutely incompatible with any veneration or prophethood. "How could Muhammed with all such pre-occupation [conspiracies, raids, women...] have any time left for fasting, prayer, worship and the concentration of thought on affairs of the life to come? I am certain no such prophet ever existed".⁵

The reliance on such highly partisan Oriental sources certainly helped the Church, particularly in Spain, in its theological fight against the Muslim. But ridiculing the teachings of Islam and turning its leaders into symbols of evil did not solve all the problems which this religion created for the Church. The new "heresy" was unlike anything the Church had experienced before. Generally speaking, Islam accepts the theistic doctrines set forth in the Bible; it holds to the faith as taught by Abraham, Moses, David and the other prophets of Israel. More important, it acknowledges Christ's annunciation and virgin birth, his healings, and his unique status as prophet. But Islam denies Christ's divinity and gives sole authority to the Koran, which intermingles the teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments.⁶ It was difficult to find an easy and neat answer to this baffling duality

5 Risalat Al-Hashimi...Wa Risalat Al-Kindi, pp. 56-8. Sir William Muir translated Al-Risalah into English in 1882.

6 This is a drastic condensation of Southern, Western Views of Islam, pp. 5-6. See also Norman Daniel, "The Development of the Christian Attitude to Islam", Dublin Review, No. 473 (1957), 289-313; S.M. Zwemmer, "Islam a Sevenfold Problem", Muslim World, XXVII (July, 1938), p.217; J. Carmichael, The Shaping of the Arabs (London, 1967), pp. 202, 211.

of "truth" and "untruth".

To this was added the challenge posed by Islam as a culture, which made the task of the Church fathers even more difficult; for the cultural invasion by Islam, which we shall examine in a later chapter, was no less successful than the military. Many Christians, in the Iberian peninsula, Sicily, and Europe in general, showed signs of increasing interest in Islamic philosophy, medicine and literature. In Spain, the study of Arabic began to displace that of Latin. The very term "mozarab" (Ar. Mustarib; Arabised, would-be-Arab) shows the tendencies that were at work. This cultural invasion alarmed the clergy and made them feel how necessary it was to prevent the Christian ideals from sustaining further losses. As early as the mid-ninth century, Alvaro, a noted churchman of Cordova, deplores the extent to which his fellow countrymen were adapting themselves to Muslim ways. Like many of the fanatic Imams of the Muslim East today, who never cease complaining that they have been betrayed by their own children who have become "westernized", Alvaro laments that the youths of his day

delight in the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the works of Muhammedan theologians and philosophy not in order to refute them, but to acquire a correct and elegant Arabic style. Where today can a layman be found who reads the Latin Commentaries or Holy Scriptures? Who is there that studies the Gospel, the Prophets, the Apostles? Alas! the young Christians who are most conspicuous for their talents have no knowledge of any literature or language save the Arabic; they read and study with avidity Arabic books; they amass whole libraries of them at a vast cost, and they everywhere sing the praises of Arabian lore. 7

7 Rheinhardt Dozy, Spanish Islam: A History of the Muslims in Spain, trans., F.G. Stokes (London, 1913), p.268. Cf. Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, pp. 131-144.

On the popular level, the Muslims acquired the reputation of being superior designers and marvellous artists in many fields. The fascination felt by the layman for Oriental objects, wrought in Muslim lands, was an embarrassment to the Church fathers and a source of unease and disappointment to them. To complicate matters even further, many Christians, whether for religious or worldly considerations, abandoned their faith for that of Islam. Worse still, through intercourse with the Muslims some prominent churchmen developed views which the Church considered heretical and blasphemous.⁸

In the face of all these challenges the medieval Church adopted an attitude which strongly discouraged and indeed fought any contact between Christian and Muslim. In 936 the first clerical council was held to consider the best means of preventing contact from "contaminating the purity of the Christian faith".⁹ To inflame the minds of the ordinary Christians, a group of fanatic churchmen in Spain initiated a hysterical religious movement aiming at voluntary martyrdom at the hands of the Muslims.¹⁰ Thus, even in Spain, a country where Muslim and Christian were living side by side, no way was open for the ordinary Christian to intermingle

8 Dozy, Spanish Islam, p. 269; Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, p. 139.

9 Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, p. 139. Commenting on what Southern (Christian Views of Islam, p. 3) calls the Christian's fear of contamination, S.P. Scot, History of the Moorish Empire in Europe (New York, 1904), iii, 80, says that the Spanish clergy constantly refused to "familiarise themselves with the tenets of Islam" and that they preferred to obtain their opinions of Islam from "fanatical monks fully as ignorant as, and even more bigoted than, themselves".

10 Arnold, Preaching of Islam, pp. 141-42; Dozy, Spanish Islam, pp. 278-88; cf. Allan Cutler, "The Ninth-Century Spanish Martyrs' Movement and the Origins of Western Christian Missions to the Muslims", The Muslim World, LV (1965), 321-339.

with the Muslim or to get to know him better. Europeans were brought up to expect their relationship with the Muslims to be one of conflict and violence. As a result, contact with the followers of Muhammed became suspect and the Arabs in Spain remained, to a large extent, an isolated society, unrelated to their Christian environment. The discordant effect of their presence was finally neutralised when Ferdinand and Isabella forbade the practice of Islam towards the end of the fifteenth century. Subsequent monarchs took more stringent measures and by 1603 the last of the Muslims were deported.¹¹

In our enquiry into the anti-Islamic activities championed by the Church, mention should be made of the first Latin translation of the Koran usually attributed to Peter the Venerable, though actually the work of the English scholar, Robert Ketton. Completed in 1143, it remained the standard European version until almost the end of the seventeenth century. In his dedicatory letter, "Fabulae Saracenorum", Peter explained his motives for sponsoring this work: "I was indignant that the Latins did not know the cause of [Muslim] superstitions, and by that ignorance could not be moved to put up any resistance". Peter was, therefore, determined not only to learn what the Koran contained but also to "combat, destroy and crush" this foremost "error of errors, those dregs of all heresies into which all the remnants of the diabolical doctrines have flown together."¹² Although Peter could not decide whether the Muslims were heretics or pagans, he believed that in

11 W.H. Prescott, History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella (London, 1888), pp. 469-474.

12 James Kritzeck, Peter the Venerable and Islam (Princeton, 1964), pp. 30, 43, 141-43.

either case their faith ought to be refuted and ridiculed.¹³

Peter's travels in Muslim Spain and his study of Arabic material made him discard some of the absurd fantasies about Islam. In consequence his attitude was somewhat modified and less malevolent than that of his predecessors, particularly those who wrote during the last quarter of the eleventh century. These carried their attacks on Islam to great lengths and stopped at nothing in their efforts to foster hatred and thoughts of revenge against the Muslim. As a preparation for the Crusades, they began to invent and spread exaggerated and blood-curdling tales about Muslim atrocities. They exploited to the full the heavily spiced tales of the Palestine pilgrims' complaints of Muslim ill-treatment, and spoke at length of the harrowing experiences to which the pilgrims and the Christian residents of the East were subjected.¹⁴

13 Peter's preface set the example for future translations of the Koran. The "fear of contamination" referred to above, p. 18, n. 9, accounts for the inclusion of condemnatory introductions to almost all works which dealt with Islam, particularly the translations of the Koran. In 1541, Theodor Biblander was almost imprisoned for his translation of the Muslim Holy Book. By supplying an unflattering preface on Islam, Martin Luther was able to secure Biblander's release and the publication of the translation. See G. Simon, "Luther's Attitude Toward Islam", *Muslim World*, XXI (1931), 259. The first English translation attributed to Alexander Ross (1649) appeared with "A Needful Caveat, or Admonition for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be Danger in Reading the Al-Coran". In anticipation of the criticism his translation of the Koran might provoke, George Sale wrote: "they must have mean opinion of the Christian religion, who can apprehend any danger from so manifest a forgery". See George Sale, *The Koran* (London, 1734), intro. p. v. Cf. also Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, pp. 29-30.

14 On the crusading propaganda see Dana C. Munro's article, "The Western Attitude Towards Islam In the Period of the Crusades", *Speculum*, VI (1931), 329-343. See also E. Joranson, "The Great German Pilgrimage of 1064-5", *The Crusades and Other Historical Essays Presented to D.C. Munro* (New York, 1928), pp. 34 ff.; J.A. Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary Survey* (Milwaukee, 1962), pp. 3-7.

The mastermind and chief architect of the propaganda war which reached its climax on the eve of what came to be known as the First Crusade (1097-99) was Pope Urban II. With all the eloquence and cunning of a great orator and the insight of an experienced politician, Urban delivered a fiery sermon from a lofty scaffold in the market-place of Clermont on 27 November 1095. There he expatiated upon the suffering and degradation of the Eastern Christians at the hands of the Muslims and announced his grand scheme for saving the Holy Land from the infidel. In his speech, the Pope alluded to the extraordinary opportunities of acquiring personal gain and unbounded glory open to those who might choose to travel the road to the Holy Sepulchre and wrest it from the "unclean, accursed race of the Saracens". "My dearest brethren", the Pope promised:

A station of perpetual safety will be awarded you, for the exertion of a trifling labour against the Turks... The cause of these labours, will be charity; if thus warned by the command of God, you lay down your lives for the brethren, the wages of charity will be the grace of God; the grace of God is followed by eternal life. Go then prosperously: Go, then, with confidence, to attack the enemies of God. For they long since, oh sad reproach to Christians! have seized Syria, Armenia, and lastly, all Asia Minor...and now they insolently domineer...even the sea which is called the Straits of St. George. Nay, they usurp even the sepulchre of our Lord, that singular assurance of our faith; and sell to our pilgrims admissions to that city, which ought, had they a trace of their ancient courage left, to be open to Christians only. This alone might be enough to cloud our brows; but now, who except the most abandoned, or the most envious of Christian reputation, can endure that we do not divide the world equally with them?... To those present, in God's name, I command this; to the absent I enjoin it. Let such as are going to fight for Christianity, put the form of the cross upon their garments, that they may outwardly demonstrate the love arising from their inward faith, enjoying by the gift of God, and the privileges of St. Peter, absolution from all their crimes: let this in the meantime soothe the labour of their journey; satisfied that they shall obtain, after death, the advantage of a blessed martyrdom.

Putting an end to your crimes then, that Christians may at least live peaceably in these countries, go, and employ in nobler warfare, that valour, and that sagacity, which you used to waste in civil broil: Go, soldiers everywhere renowned in fame, go, and subdue these dastardly nations... Rid God's sanctuary of the wicked: expel the robbers: bring in the pious...Blessed are they, who, called to these occupations, shall inherit such a recompense: fortunate are those who are led to such a conflict, that they may partake of such rewards...¹⁵

As the people listened they were swept by emotions of overwhelming power. Thousands cried with one voice: "Deus le volt". The speech aroused religious enthusiasm in the hearts of Christians everywhere and rallied all hesitant spirits. Throughout Europe the bishops were enjoined to recruit the faithful to fight for God's cause. The popular response to this appeal was very great. Fired by the preaching of Peter the Hermit and others, the peasants and the poor were seized with a mania to wander in search of Jerusalem.¹⁶ Men from all quarters of Christendom flocked to the coasts of France, "speaking no recognisable language and only able to communicate their purpose by crossing their fingers in the sign of the Cross".¹⁷

Urban's call for a holy war against Islam became the basis of a tradition in which the Muslim was regarded as Christendom's chief enemy, and which placed conflict with Islam in a completely

15 William of Malmesbury, Chronicles of the Kings of England, pp. 359-63. See D.C. Munro's analysis of the different versions of this epoch-making speech, "The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont, 1095", American Historical Review, XI (1905-6), 231-43.

16 Norman Cohn, "The Appeal of the Crusade to the Poor", The Crusades: Motives and Achievements, ed., J.A. Brundage (Lexington, Mass., 1964), pp. 34-41.

17 R.W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages (London, 1953), p.20.

different category from any other kind of war. This attitude survived long after the Clermont declaration.¹⁸ For three successive centuries there was hardly any potentate in Europe who did not at some time vow with fervour to fight against the Muslim.¹⁹ The popes who succeeded Urban followed his example by playing upon the fears and apprehensions of the Christians in an attempt to prolong the crusading zeal. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a great medieval "iron curtain" was

18 A.S. Atiya, The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages (London, 1938), pp. 463-79; see also F.L. Baumer, "England, the Turk and the Common Corps of Christendom", American Historical Review, LI (1945), 26-48. It is significant that General Allenby (1917) considered himself as a Crusader. His first words when the British troops entered Jerusalem were: "Now have the Crusades come to an end." Quoted by Muhammed Kutub, Islam the Misunderstood Religion (Kuwait, 1964), p.11. However, many modern writers have reflected the same attitude. Cf., for example, the following statement: "It is a noble and elevating thought that after this long lapse of ages the brave soldiers from this little isle of Britain have again rescued the Holy City from the Turk and freed the Christian from their dominations, and at last fulfilled the desire of our Angevin yet English Kings - that Jerusalem should be delivered", in W.C. Meller, A Knight's Life in the Days of Chivalry (London, 1924), p.214. Later still H. Pirie-Gordon wrote an unsigned account of General Allenby's conquest of Jerusalem so that his work might be regarded as the final continuation of William of Tyre's chronicle of the First Crusade. See J.L. Lamonte, "Some Problems in Crusading Historiography", Speculum, XV (1940), 60. Cf. also J.V. Mol-denhawer, "Definition and Defence of Crusade", The Muslim World, XXXV (1945), 173-75.

19 Although some of them favoured the Crusades for no reason other than that assigned by Henry IV in Shakespeare, who for fear of being dethroned by those who had "giddy minds",

had a purpose now
To lead out many to the Holy Land
Lest rest and lying still might make them look
Too near unto my state.
(Henry IV, Part II, IV, v, 210-13)

painstakingly constructed between Christendom and Islam: severe punishments were imposed on those who served the Muslims, or gave them counsel or aid of any sort. Such "traitors" were to be deprived of all their possessions, which were to be confiscated and devoted to the crusade. Further, they were to be the slaves of whoever caught them. Merchants were warned under pain of anathema not to sell iron, wood, or any other material that might be used by the Muslims in building ships or making weapons.²⁰ The writings of Muslim philosophers and scientists were condemned and their circulation strictly forbidden.²¹ All these measures were introduced at a time when crusade preachers were exhorting the masses and denouncing the Muslim everywhere, in the streets and in the market places, as well as in the churches.

To realise how far the Church had succeeded in engraining in the minds of medieval men the idea that the Muslim was God's enemy, and his destruction was a religious duty, we have only to remember the events of July 1099, when Godfrey of Bouillon victoriously entered Jerusalem. Crazed by so great a victory, his followers rushed about the streets and into the houses and mosques, and there they "slewe & smote right down, men, wymmen and children, sparyng none".²² When there were no more Muslims to be

20 In England as in Europe a curse was pronounced "iij tymes in the yere" upon all "that ben euyn helpers of Sarazyns ayenst cristen men". The Customs of London Otherwise Called Arnold's Chronicle, p.176; cf. Brundage, Documentary Survey, pp.216 ff; A.S. Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture (Bloomington and London, 1962), p.99; P.A. Throop, Criticism of the Crusade, A Study of Public Opinion (Amsterdam, 1940), pp. 244-88.

21 For the vigorous opposition of the Church to the writings of such Muslim thinkers as Avicenna and Averroes see H. Daniel-Rops, Cathedral and Crusade, trans., John Warrington (London, 1957), p.326.

22 William of Tyre, Godeffroy of Boloyne or the Siege and Conquest of Jerusalem, trans., W. Caxton, p.273.

Plate 1

A souvenir from the Holy Land. Sir Thomas Shirley (d. 1363) receives the severed head of a Saracen victim from his page. This sculpted panel is one of several showing incidents in the history of the Shirley family. Photographed by permission of the present tenants of Ettington Park, Warwickshire, which had for centuries been the family seat of the Shirleys.



slain, the Crusaders, weeping from "excess of gladness", retired to the Holy Sepulchre to offer their heartfelt thanks and devotions to God.²³ This was not the only massacre to be committed in the name of Christ. Later Crusaders and knights who had vowed to defend the widow and the fatherless revelled in ripping up the bodies of their Muslim victims in search for gold and spitting their heads, noses and ears on their lances and swords as trophies.²⁴

The achievement of the First Crusade did not last long. As a reaction to the establishment of the Latin Kingdom in the heart of Islam, a strong anti-crusading movement (Jihad) was initiated by the Muslim rulers of the twelfth century. The movement culminated in the exploits of Saladin (Salah Al-Din, Rectification of the Faith) who conquered Jerusalem in 1187. From this date on, the spirit of holy war was gradually transferred to the Muslims. To revive the zeal of the First Crusade, new and desperate methods of propaganda were employed.²⁵ These included the use of pictures representing all sorts of alleged Muslim atrocities in the Holy Land designed to appeal to the illiterate and arouse them to a more active participation.²⁶ In one representation Muhammed is depicted as beating Christ and letting His blood.²⁷ In another, a Muslim horseman is shown as trampling the Holy Sepulchre while

23 Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum, pp. 91-3; Roger of Wendover, Flowers of History, i, 433.

24 Malmesbury, Chronicles, p.406; W.C. Meller, A Knight's Life in the Age of Chivalry (London, 1924), pp. 210-11.

25 Steve Runciman, "The Decline of the Crusading Idea", Relazioni, III (1955), 639-40.

26 Handbook of Church History From the Middle Ages to the Eve of Reformation, ed., H. Jedin and J. Dolan, trans., A. Biggs (London, 1970), iv, 84.

27 Immad Al-Din Abulfeda, Kitab al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar [A Brief Chronicle of the Peoples], iii, 76-77

his beast is desecrating the monument with urine.²⁸ Crusade songs which still survive in Latin, French, and German were also written to stimulate support for these campaigns.²⁹ Strange prophecies attributed to renowned seers and astrologers were fabricated and circulated. These assured the Christians that the Saracens would soon be destroyed, and that through divine intervention the Christian faith would triumph over all its enemies.³⁰ Since very little was then known of India and the Orient in general, the propagandists also spread rumours about a powerful Oriental monarch who, they claimed, intended to break the power of Islam and restore Jerusalem to Christendom. This enigmatic Christian monarch was named as Prester John. The rumour gained so much credence in Europe that messengers and letters were sent to the East in search of the non-existent King.³¹ A grand alliance with the Tartars was the hope of the promoters of crusades;

28 Ibn Shaddad, Sirat Salah Al-Din [A Biography of Saladin], pp. 136-37.

29 Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric (London, 1968), p.128.

30 Roger of Hoveden, History of England and of Other Countries of Europe from A.D. 732 to A.D. 1201, ii, 37. Cf. T.O. Wedel, The Medieval Attitude Toward Astrology (New York, 1920), pp. 91-92.

31 I.R. Whitaker, "An Historical Explanation of the Asiatic Myth of Prester John", Asiatic Review, XLVIII (1952), 74-79; R.C. Prasad, Early English Travellers in India ... Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh Univ., 1959), intro., pp. xvi-vii; S. Baring-Gould, Curious Myths of the Middle Ages (London, 1887), pp. 32-54; Southern, The Making, pp. 70-71; P. Lacroix, Science and Literature in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, 2nd ed. (1964), pp. 256 ff. Edward Webbe, an English gunner captured by the Turks in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, had the audacity and naivety to claim that he had been forced by his captors to fight against the forces of Prester John. See Edward Webbe, Master Gunner, His Travails, p.24.

but since vast Muslim territories separated the Tartars from Western Christendom their hope was doomed to remain unfulfilled.³² With these prophecies and vain hopes, aimed at boosting Christian morale in the struggle with Islam, Crusade propagandists persisted in defaming the Muslim. One of the various alarmist reports circulated by them, for example, was the dark rumour that the Muslims had planned a general destruction of the Christians by exporting poisoned spices to the West.³³

All these calculated rumours and propaganda campaigns proved ineffectual: Islam remained as powerful as ever and the streets of Jerusalem were not again trodden by Christian soldiers until the second decade of the twentieth century. They succeeded, however, in making even deeper and widespread the hostile attitude of Europeans towards Islam. Thanks to the propagandists, hatred of the Muslim was carried to the verge of madness.³⁴ It is a sad reflection on the state of Christian-Muslim relations in medieval times that thousands of innocent women and children from the West either lost their lives or ended in perpetual slavery in the East because they had listened to the hysterical preachings of the promoters of crusades. The process of brainwashing reached the height of absurdity when ordinary men were enjoined to

32 See Mathew Paris, English History, ii, 319. As late as the last decade of the fifteenth century, Christopher Columbus was an enthusiastic upholder of such an alliance. The professed purpose behind his voyage round the world was, as he puts it, to seek the help of the "Grand Khan" of India against "the sect of Mahomet". See the dedicatory letter to Ferdinand and Isabella in The Journal of Christopher Columbus. Cf. Walter Raleigh, The English Voyages of the Sixteenth Century (Glasgow, 1910), pp. 16-18.

33 See T.A. Archer and C.L. Kingsford, The Crusades, The Story of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem (London, 1894), p. 439.

34 Cf. Leon Gautier, Chivalry, trans., D.C. Dunning, ed., J. Levron (London, 1965), p.22.

stop growing bushy beards lest they looked like Saracens.³⁵

In Spain, throughout the period of the reconquest, thousands of baths built by the Muslims were destroyed for no other reason than that bathing was an "infidel custom".³⁶

The tremendous influence of crusading propaganda would be hard to exaggerate. The gulf between Christian and Muslim was declared unbridgeable: Islam expanded by force, therefore, Islam must be destroyed by force. Fighting the Muslim was seen as inherently just and was considered a religious vocation in itself. The Muslims were condemned as summa culpabilis, both rebels and heretics, since, it was repeatedly emphasised, they destroyed both body and soul. After centuries of frenzied propaganda, which went so far as to suggest that Christ was tortured by the Muslims and to quote Jesus as saying that Christians must fight the Turks,³⁷ this intolerant attitude became too firmly engrained in the consciences of Christendom to be easily eradicated, as we shall see when we consider the literary heritage of medieval England.

To the great bulk of crusading and polemic traditions which wilfully misrepresented Islam to medieval and early modern Christendom, the chroniclers, the greatest allies of the crusade propagandists, made all too generous a contribution. Their work will now be considered separately.

35 Malmesbury, Chronicles, p.445.

36 J.B. Trend, The Civilisation of Spain (Oxford, 1944), pp. 33, 49. In fact, washing was a practice which the Holy Office considered to be proof of heresy.

37 Wendover, Flowers of History, ii, 62. Cf. R.S. Darbishire, "The Muslim Antagonist According to the Latin Chronicles of the First Crusade", Muslim World, XXVIII (1938), 258-71; Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 109-114.

(iii) The Medieval Chronicler and Islam

We search in vain for an even partially informed or disinterested account of Islam in the chronicles of medieval Europe. It is curious indeed that despite the seriousness and permanence of the Muslim challenge, contemporary chroniclers were unwilling to acquaint themselves with Islam - which they could have done, with little effort, by consulting translations of Arabic works by Peter the Venerable and others. Generally speaking, almost all medieval chroniclers accepted the current anti-Islamic legends at their face value and repeated the familiar fabrications of the propagandists. Inevitably, this rendered their treatment of Islam facile and superstitious. By depending upon traditional rather than self-acquired knowledge they added virtually nothing new to medieval knowledge of Islam.

A fair sample of the superficial and highly partisan treatment of Islam is to be found in the English History written by the celebrated Mathew Paris (d.1259), friend and protégé of Henry III. Paris, who devotes a sizable portion of his work to Islam, makes no secret of the fact that most of his information came from a sermon "which we heard from a celebrated preacher of great renown".¹ It would take too long to go through the mass of anachronisms and misapprehensions which mark Paris's comments, but, to indicate the spirit in which he dealt

1 I, 23.

with Islam, it might be sufficient to quote a brief passage in which he describes the death of that "poisonous dragon", "the inveigler of souls", Muhammed:

It happened one day, when surfeited with feasting and wine, in which, according to his preaching, he greatly indulged, that he fell on a dungheap overcome by illness, assisted, as was stated, by poison administered to him in his food that day by some nobles who were indignant at his pride. There he lay, in tortures, rolling about and vomiting, owing to his sins, and deprived of all consolation from his followers; whilst lying there half dead, he was discovered by an ugly sow, with an unweaned litter of pigs, and being stuffed with food, the smell of which he breathed forth, and parts of which he had brought up in his sickness, he was by them smothered; and for this reason the Saracens till this day hate and abominate pigs more than all other animals. ²

This crude fable was one of the most popular legends about the prophet of Islam. Various chroniclers repeated it with a few variations, and numerous literary men used the melodramatic story in their works.³ It must be admitted that despite the avalanche of abuse which he heaps on Islam, Paris was a little less ignorant than his fellow chroniclers, many of whom knew no more about the Muslims than that they were evil pagans worshipping Satan in so-called "devils' chapels".⁴ Paris also treats Muhammed as a human being, a prophet, albeit a false one. This attitude is in sharp contrast with the tradition followed by some chroniclers who wrote of Muhammed as the "god of the Muslims".

² Ibid., pp. 27-28.

³ See, for example, Higden's Polychronicon, fol. 202 ff. Cf. also Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 102-108. For the literary use of the legend see below p. 87.

⁴ Gesta Francorum, pp. 42, 75.

One such chronicler is Orderic Vital of Shrewsbury (d. 1143?) whose ignorance of the fundamental doctrines and rites of the Muslims is embarrassing. Besides his casual references to Muhammed as the god of the Saracens, Vital had the presumption to include in his Ecclesiastical History of England a Muslim dirge which he supposedly translated from the original. The dirge, sung by the grieved Muslim women who gathered on the roofs of conquered Jerusalem, begins with "Praise be to Mahomet our god...."⁵ Roger of Wendover (d.1236) was unable to decide whether Muhammed was the prophet or the god of the Muslims. In one portion of his Flowers of History, he speaks of Muhammed as "the most unclean epileptic man" who through deceit rose to govern a "kingdom extending to Alexandria in the West". In another part of his work, he suggests that Muhammed was, in fact, the god of the Saracens and that the Muslims worshipped him "as a Christian nation worships Christ crucified". Muhammed's sepulchre, he adds, is in Baghdad (sic), which is to his worshippers "as Rome is of Christian nations".⁶

The peculiar reluctance to enquire into the tenets of Islam did not, however, prevent the chroniclers from concerning themselves with such problems as the origin of the Saracens and the causes of their success. The first problem was solved by some who identified the Saracens, perhaps not without reason, with the descendants of Hagar's son, Ishmael, the wild man of the desert "whose hand was against everyman's".⁷ Others were content

5 Ordericus Vitalis, The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy, iii, 175-76.

6 Wendover, Flowers of History, i, 73; iii, 131.

7 Southern, Western Views of Islam, pp. 16-17.

with the more convenient conjecture that the Saracens were simply the descendants of Sara, Abraham's wife. There was no general agreement among them, and each chronicler adhered to one or the other explanation, according to his preference. The problem had not been solved when Mandeville wrote his Travels in the second half of the fourteenth century. "Ther ben Sarrazines that ben clept Ismaelytenes, and summe Agarynes of Agar, and the othere propurly ben clept Sarrazines of Sarra".⁸

While chroniclers were divided over the question of the Saracens' origin, there was no doubt in their minds as to the causes of Muslim victories. They unanimously propounded the concept of the Muslims as the scourge of the wrath of God. This concept, later taken over by the Renaissance moralists, was extremely useful in helping the chroniclers to console their countrymen and find excuses for their discomfiture. In the light of this theory, Christian losses in the battlefield were attributed not to the better tactics and the stricter discipline of the Muslim armies, but to God's punishment of the Christians for their sins and the decline of their religious zeal. The appellation, "the Scourge of God" was given to almost all Muslim conquerors who achieved victories against the Christians. Saladin was, of course, the most notorious of the "scourges" sent to torment the Christians. Higden calls him "the stronge hamer of Crystenmen".⁹ In his Itinerary of Richard I, Geoffrey of

⁸ Mandeville's Travels, pp. 102-103. Cf. also Mathew Paris, English History, i, 14; St. John of Damascus, Writings, p. 153; Bartholomew Anglicus, Medieval Lore, pp. 73-4. No agreed or final answer has been found to the origin of the term "Saracen". C.C. Murphy reviews the various possible derivations of the name and concludes that its ultimate origin is to be found in the Aramic root srak meaning "empty" or "desert". See his article, "Who Were the Saracens?", Asiatic Review, XLI (1945), 188-90.

⁹ Higden, Polychronicon, Bk. V, fol. 202.

Vinsauf (fl.1200) explains how Saladin was able to expel the Latins from Jerusalem:

The Lord seeing that the land of his birth and place of his passion had sunk into an abyss of turpitude, treated with neglect his inheritance, and suffered Saladin, the rod of his wrath, to put forth his fury to the destruction of that stiff-necked people; for he would rather that the Holy Land should, for a short time 6730 years, as it turned out, be subject to the profane rites of the heathen, than that it should any longer be possessed by those men, whom no regard for what is right could deter from things unlawful.¹⁰

The victories of Saladin, "the public enemy of truth and the cross",¹¹ as Wendover refers to him, were frequently viewed in this light, but some chroniclers allowed him and his brother, Safadin (Safa-al-Din, Purity of the Faith) few virtues to which even their enemies testified.¹² Another instrument of God's wrath was Muhammed II, conqueror of Constantinople. According to contemporary and later chroniclers, the Byzantine capital would not have fallen without the "Divine permission" which chose Muhammed II to act out its will. "Woe unto us Christians in that we have sinned", was the cry reiterated by those who recounted the Muslim conquest of St. Constantine's city.¹³

For the Christians who resisted the Muslims or achieved some victories for Christendom, the chroniclers reserved the most

10 Master Geoffrey de Vinsauf, "The Itinerary of Richard King of the English to the Holy Land", Chronicles of the Crusade, pp. 69-70.

11 Wendover, Flowers of History, ii, 61, 131.

12 See below pp. 149, 164. Cf. Beatrice White, "Saracens and Crusaders: From Fact to Allegory", Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G.N. Garmonsway, ed., D.A. Pearsall and R.A. Waldron (London, 1969), p.175.

13 Ingulph's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland With the Continuations By Peter of Blois and Anonymous Writers, pp. 417-18.

glowing eulogies, and invested them with a halo of glory and romance. Charlemagne, who led only one unsuccessful campaign against Muslim Spain, remembered for the death of Roland at Roncesvalles, was universally acknowledged as the mightiest of all Christian soldiers. The chroniclers represented him as an ideal crusader, and sent him on imaginary voyages to Constantinople and even Jerusalem. There, according to one English chronicler, he came back with a load of Christian relics which he later donated to the churches he had built.¹⁴

Godfrey of Bouillon, conqueror and first ruler of Latin Jerusalem, held another distinguished place in the chronicles of the Crusades. He was hailed as the "noblest prince" and one of the "Three Worthies" of Christendom, the other two being Arthur and Charlemagne. A French version of William of Tyre's chronicle of Godfrey's conquest of Jerusalem was translated by William Caxton, who keenly felt the need for a Crusade in "goddes quarell", as he puts it. The purpose behind his translation of this work was to appeal to the "prynces and hye men" of England to march East and fight for the "recuperacion" of the Holy Land:

I haue achyeued this symple translacion /
that he of moost noble grace wold adresse,
styre, or commaunde somme noble Capytayn of
his subgettes to empryse this warre agayn
the ... turke & hethen peple, to whiche I
can thynke that euery man wyll put hand to
in theyr propre persones / and in theyr
meuable goodes / Thenne to hym, my moost
drad naturel and souerayn lord, I adresse
this symple and rude booke, besechyng his
moost bounteous and haboundaunt grace to

¹⁴ *Gesta Francorum*, p.2; Malmesbury, *Chronicles*, pp. 135-36; John Capgrave, *The Chronicle of England*, pp. 105-106. See also fig. 307, p.373 in Lacroix, *Science and Lit.*, for a medieval representation of Charlemagne's legendary coronation in Jerusalem.

receyue it of me, his indigne and humble subgette, William Caxton, And to pardonne me so presumynge; besechyng almyghty god that this sayd book may encourage, moeue, and enflamme the hertes of somme noble men, that by the same the mescreauntes maye be resisted and putte to rebuke, Cristen fayth encreaced and enhaunced, and the holy lande, with the blessyd cyte of Iherusalem, recouerd,¹⁵ and may come agayn in to cristen mens hondes.

Long before Caxton's somewhat belated call for a Crusade, various chroniclers had been consistently arguing for military action against Islam, assuring prospective Crusaders that they were to face a horde of disorderly and ill-trained miscreants. The regular professional armies of Islam, trained in the best military traditions of the Ayyoubites and the Memluks, the like of which Europe was not to possess for a long time, were commonly described as cowardly and unwarlike. "The Saracens are unwarlike", declares William of Malmesbury, and "being deficient in the active blood, know not how to 'cast off' slavery where once admitted; not being aware, as Lucan says, 'arms were bestowed that men should not be slaves'". The zealous chronicler then contrasts the Muslims with the western nations, whom he describes as "bold and fierce" and disdaining subjugation in any form, "often delivering themselves from servitude and imposing it on others".¹⁶ This misconception, flattering to the Christians of Western Europe, was for them a source of many and great errors and misfortunes in the East.¹⁷

¹⁵ Godeffroy of Boloyne, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶ Malmesbury, Chronicles, p. 379; cf. William of Tyre, Deeds Beyond the Sea, ii, 433.

¹⁷ "Europa norischeth and bryngeth forth men huger and gretter of body, myghtier of strengthe, taller and bolder of herte, and fairer of schap, than Affrica..." F. Harrison, Medieval Man and His Notions (London, 1947), p.220.

We should not linger any further on the writings of medieval chroniclers on Islam. Their influence, it must be seen, was almost entirely to mislead and delude their readers. Instead of widening the horizon of medieval minds with their supposed learning, they subscribed enthusiastically to the popular anti-Islamic falsehoods and legends. In so doing, they not only failed to supply any reliable information about Islam, but also intensified contempt for the Muslim and deepened the unfavourable impressions among Europeans for many generations to come.

The picture of Islam which was taking shape in the medieval minds under the influence of irresponsible reports from the chroniclers and other fanatic propagandists was given additional colouring by the medieval travellers, particularly the pilgrims to Palestine. The first-hand information brought back by them flowed confluent with the Church-sponsored attacks into the medieval imagination, darkening the shades of that picture and adding, at the same time, a few more lurid touches. A review of the reports and tales of those pilgrims is necessary if we are to assess the various factors working upon the medieval literary man when he set out to portray the Muslim in fiction.

(iv) The Medieval Pilgrim in the Muslim East

While busily following the footsteps of Christ and visiting the shrines of the saints and prophets, the pilgrim to Palestine was in a position to observe the native Muslims and to report on them when he returned from his long and hazardous journey. The zealous travellers who went on this voyage

Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage ¹
That highte Jerusalem celestial

were, of course, not motivated simply by a curiosity to see strange lands. They were, rather, prompted by a deep religious feeling which saw in the journey to Jerusalem a form of prayer which won the pilgrim unlimited indulgences. From the doggerel verses of a medieval enthusiast, we learn that the mere sight of the Holy City had a tremendous moral value:

When wee that holy cyte see
For to all that thydyr come
Ys yeve and graunt ful remyssioun.²

The medieval traveller to Palestine was basically a hostile observer. He also carried, in his mind, a body of superstitions and fears about Islam. His general outlook was, therefore, confined and his senses closed to much of the world of Islam.³ Despite these serious but inevitable limitations, the personal narratives which have come down to us show that some of the pilgrims played an important part in providing their contemporaries in the West with valuable information about the various

1 Chaucer, "The Parson's Prologue", 49-51.

2 William Wey, The Itineraries of William Wey, Fellow of Eton College to Jerusalem A.D.1458 and A.D.1462, p.9.

3 See C.R. Beazley, The Dawn of Modern Geography, 3 vols. (London, 1897-1906), i, 12; H.F.M. Prescott, Jerusalem Journey - Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Fifteenth Century (London, 1954), pp. 171-197.

aspects of Islam - the state, the religion and the culture.⁴
 The fact remains, however, that these pilgrims, who could have done a great deal to bring some understanding between Christendom and Islam, were unable - and some unwilling - to achieve this praiseworthy end.

It is difficult to decide when the tradition of Christian pilgrimages from Western Europe to Palestine really began. The traditional view regards the supposed discovery of the Holy Cross by Helena in 326 and the erection of certain buildings by Emperor Constantine (326-335) over and near what was believed to be the Sepulchre of Christ as the beginning of this religious activity. The earliest recorded pilgrimage to Jerusalem was that of a Burgundian Christian who set out from Bordeaux in 333 and followed an overland route, crossing the Alps and passing through Italy, Macedonia, Asia Minor and Syria. The account of his itinerary is, for the most part, a bare list of towns and distances between Bordeaux and Jerusalem. A very brief description of the Holy City and its neighbourhood follows, and there is no reference in his account to the natives of Palestine.⁵ Two years after this pilgrimage in 335, Pope Silvester I gave a fresh impulse to the Jerusalem journey by announcing indulgences for all those who visited the sanctuaries of the Holy Land.⁶ Subsequent Popes continued to encourage these journeys, and the Palestine pilgrimage kept its popularity until the sixteenth century, when it had become comparatively rare.

4 Harrison, Medieval Man, p.185.

5 The Bordeaux Pilgrim, Itinerary From Bordeaux to Jerusalem A.D.333, pp. 18-27.

6 Beazley, Geography, i, 67; E.L. Cutts, Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages (London, 1925), pp. 156 ff.

The first recorded pilgrimage to Palestine by an Englishman was that of St. Willibald (ca.700-786), nephew of St. Boniface and possibly son of Hlothere, King of Kent. Before glancing at Willibald's impressions of Islam, we should mention an earlier Irish monk, Adamnan, whose descriptions of the Holy Land Bede judged "beneficial" to many throughout Europe, particularly to the Anglo-Saxons, who were "far removed from those places where the Patriarchs and apostles lived".⁷ Adamnan himself never went to Palestine but he wrote the pilgrimage story of his guest, the famous Frankish pilgrim, Arculf, who had spent nine months among the Muslims in 670. Bede was so impressed with Adamnan's narrative that he allocated more than two chapters in his Ecclesiastical History to this important story.⁸

Adamnan's account supplied Anglo-Saxon England with its earliest first-hand report of Islam and the Muslims. There are, however, only a few references to the Muslims of Palestine. From these we infer that the Muslims treated Arculf with tolerance: his movements in Syria and Palestine were unrestricted and he voiced no complaint whatever against the natives or the rulers. He even praised the "King of Saracens", "Mavias" (Muawiyah), and told an amusing story showing the caliph's wisdom and his great veneration of Christian relics.⁹ Arculf's only irritation was that the Muslim merchants and tradesmen who flocked to their yearly fair in Jerusalem came with great numbers of horses,

7 Ecclesiastical History, p.503.

8 Ibid., chapters xvi-xvii. A summary of Adamnan's narrative is in Thomas Wright, Biographia Britannica Literaria: Anglo-Saxon period (London 1842), i, 201 ff. The full text is in The Pilgrimage of Arculfus in the Holy Land, trans. and annotated by J.R. Macpherson, P.P.T.S. (London, 1895).

9 Pilgrimage of Arculfus, pp. 14-15.

camels and other beasts of burden. These animals caused no ordinary nuisance to him by strewing the streets of the Holy City with the "abominations" of their filth. As soon as the merchants left Jerusalem, says Arculf,

an immense abundance of rain falls from the clouds on that city, which washes all the abominable filths from the streets, and cleanses it from the uncleanness....and after having thus baptized Jerusalem, this over-abundance of rain always ceases. Hence therefore we must in no negligent manner note in what honour this chosen and glorious city is held in the sight of the Eternal Sire, who does not permit it to remain longer filthy, but because of the honour of His¹⁰ Only Begotten cleanses it so quickly.

Among the English, the story of Arculf's journey roused still greater interest in pilgrimages to the East. Of those who followed his example, Willibald was the first to leave a record of his pilgrimage of 754. Two accounts of Willibald's journey have come down to us. The more valuable of the two is entitled The Hodæporicon of St. Willibald, which he had dictated to a nun and relation of his, "a little ignorant child", as she modestly calls herself.¹¹ Willibald started his journey in Naples on board a Muslim ship from Egypt. Shortly after his arrival in the "territory of the Saracens", Willibald and seven of his fellow Englishmen found themselves in trouble. The suspicions of the Muslims, then fighting against the Byzantines, were aroused by the arrival of these "strangers and unknown men" at Emesa (Hims).¹² They were all imprisoned, but while in captivity Willibald and his companions were allowed to go to

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

¹¹ Both accounts are published in English by the P.P.T.S. in 1895. References in my text are to The Hodæporicon, trans., Rev. Canon Brownlow.

¹² The Hodæporicon, p.13.

Church, to the market-place and also to the public baths in the city. When their case was presented before the caliph "Mirmumni",¹³ he ordered their immediate release: "Why should we punish them? they have committed no offence against us. Give them liberty and let them depart".¹⁴ Once out of prison, Willibald experienced no difficulty in dealing with the Muslims or in moving from one place to another. Indeed, he even abused the tolerance he enjoyed there by involving himself in intricate operations for smuggling contraband goods from Tyre. Perhaps the reverend bishop thought that deceiving pagans was no sin.¹⁵

Like all medieval pilgrims, Arculf and Willibald were above all things adorers of saintly relics on which they must have spent large sums of money.¹⁶ Rather than going out of their path of devotion to communicate with the Muslims, their minds were set on nobler things: visiting the numerous churches in and around Jerusalem, and viewing such sacred articles as the spear which allegedly pierced the side of Christ, the napkin with which He was wrapped in the sepulchre, and other relics which Chaucer's Pardoner might have longed to possess.¹⁷ It is remarkable that the early accounts of the pilgrims who visited Jerusalem before the Seljuk Turks entered the scene in the mid-eleventh century were free from any bitterness or antagonism

13 Ar. Amir Al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful), a common misunderstanding of the title of the Caliph which most medieval pilgrims and chroniclers transformed into the name of the caliph himself.

14 The Hodoeporicon, pp. 13-14.

15 Ibid., pp. 27-28. Cf. below p. 234, n. 16.

16 The selling of relics was "a stable article of commerce" and a good source of income to the native Muslims. Cf. Sir Percy Sykes, A History of Exploration From the Earliest Times to the Present, 3rd. ed. (London, 1949), p. 64.

17 General Prologue, 694 ff.

towards Islam. The "Jerusalem complex" created by the fall of the Holy City in 1187 was yet to make itself felt in the pilgrims' writings; and none of them returned home from Palestine to incite his fellow countrymen to destroy Islam, or

To chase these pagans in those holy fields,
Over whose acres walk'd those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd 18
For our advantage on the bitter cross.

Even in the most difficult times of the eleventh century, Jerusalem, the navel and centre of the earth,¹⁹ never ceased to attract pilgrims from Europe. The flow of pilgrims did not stop despite the Seljuk attacks on pilgrim caravans and the occasional cruelty of the Fatimid rulers, who made local Christians as well as foreign pilgrims feel the weight of their fanaticism. During the fifty years ending with 1100, in which Jerusalem changed hands four times, not a few eminent pilgrims came from England. Ealdred, the famous Archbishop of York who acted as chief prelate at the coronation of William the Conqueror, was among the pilgrims of this critical period. Bishop Gunther and his German followers, whose tribulations in Palestine were wildly exaggerated by the preachers of crusades, visited the Holy Land in 1064-5.²⁰ But the political upheavals in Palestine and the resultant atmosphere of insecurity along the routes to Jerusalem during this period reduced the number of Western pilgrims considerably.

18 Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, i, 24-7.

19 A common medieval notion, significant in its illustration of the unique place this city held in the regard of the medieval west. Cf. Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages, ed., A.P. Newton [and others] (London, 1926), pp. 55-6, 63.

20 Beazley, Geography, iii, 128-29.

After the Crusaders' conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, multitudes of Europeans flocked to see the City of God. The success of the First Crusade is undoubtedly of great significance to the history of the Palestine pilgrimage and indeed to the history of medieval travel in general. To a large extent, the occupation of the eastern coasts of the Mediterranean secured the sea and land routes between Palestine and the West, and consequently the Jerusalem journey grew more popular than ever. The first pilgrim from England to arrive after Bouillon's victory was Saewulf, an old merchant from Worcester who later became a monk in the abbey of Malmesbury.²¹ In the early years of the twelfth century,²² Saewulf landed in Jaffa (Yaffa), the usual port of entry into Palestine, then as now. From Jaffa he took the overland route to Jerusalem which he found unusually "mountainous.... rocky and very dangerous".²³ The embittered Muslims, now living under Christian rule, saw in the endless stream of fresh pilgrims a further reinforcement of foreign rule. Their resentment often took the form of desultory attacks and raids. Many of them took to the lofty mountains along the coast where they maintained themselves in impregnable castles and strongholds. From there they attacked the roads leading to Jerusalem to revenge themselves for the loss of their land. Saewulf suffered from such raids, and from his description the

21 Early Travels in Palestine, ed., Thomas Wright (London, 1848), pp. xx - xxii.

22 No definite date is known for Saewulf's pilgrimage. The question is discussed in Wright, Travels, pp. xix - xx and Lord Bishop of Clifton, Pilgrimage of Saewulf to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, pp. v - viii. Citations in my text are to this edition.

23 Pilgrimage, pp. 8-9.

medieval Englishman learned that:

the Saracens, always laying snares for the Christians, lie hidden in the hollow places of the mountains and the caves of the rocks, watching day and night, and always on the lookout for those whom they can attack on account of the fewness of the party, or those who have lagged behind their party through weariness. At one moment they are seen all around everywhere, and all at once they disappear entirely. Anyone who makes that journey may see this. Oh, what a number of human bodies, both in the road and by the side of it, lie all torn by wild beasts! Some may perhaps wonder that the bodies of Christians should lie there unburied. But it is not to be wondered at at all; for there is very little earth, and the rocks do not easily lend themselves to be dug into, and besides if there was earth, who would be so foolish as to leave his party, and, as it were alone, dig a grave for his companion? If he did so, he would be making ready a grave for himself rather than for his companion. ²⁴

Travelling almost immediately after the First Crusade, Saewulf's mind must have been full of the familiar tales of Muslim atrocities which Christian propagandists, as we have seen, had publicised throughout Europe. In his comments on the conditions in Palestine, he laments that nothing has been left habitable by the Saracen attacks since the country had been devastated by them. To Saewulf, Arabia was a country "most hostile to Christians and unfriendly to all who worship God".²⁴ The impression one gets from his narrative, as a whole, is that the Muslim should never be trusted or tolerated. As a fitting finale to his pilgrimage, his ship encountered a Muslim galley in his homeward journey across what he called the Adriatic (the Mediterranean). It was only through the grace of God, Saewulf

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

asserts, that the pilgrims were delivered from those "enemies of our faith".²⁵

Beside these stories of Muslim antagonism, Saewulf dwelt upon the other dangers which threatened pilgrims traversing the Holy Land. His readers were reminded that apart from the lurking Muslim numerous other hazards were presented by the heat, unhospitable terrain and ferocious beasts.²⁶ Earlier pilgrims had described the strange and fearful animals native to the East. St. Willibald, for one, spoke of his grisly encounter with a lion "with open mouth, roaring and growling", an experience which could, if true, have easily added Willibald's name to the army of martyrs. Just in time, however, Willibald was rescued by the "disposition of Almighty God" who willed that the lion turn another way.²⁷ Saewulf and his successors confirmed such reports, and spoke of Palestine as being rife with "lions, leopards, and an exceedingly fierce beast called an ounce, from whose rage nothing can be safe, and they say even the lion fears him...."²⁸

Such exaggerations were not confined to accounts of the fauna of the Muslim East. In relating their experiences, the pilgrims often adorned their narratives with fantastic stories of the wealth and natural abundance of Islam. Many of the characteristics of the "earthly Paradise" were given to the world of Islam and the marvellous tales continually brought back by pilgrims were to take a firm hold on the imagination of medieval Europe. There were exceedingly beautiful trees of every sort, declared a late twelfth-century pilgrim; some of these trees "are called

25 Ibid., pp. 27-28.

26 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

27 Willibald, The Hodoeporicon, p.27.

28 Anonymous Pilgrims of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, v, pp. 2, 34.

trees of Paradise, which have leaves above two cubits long and half a cubit wide. They have an oblong fruit, a hundred of which grow touching one another upon one bough, and taste like honey. There are.....other trees which bear the fruit called Adam's apple, whereon the marks of Adam's teeth may be right plainly seen... There also is a sort of fig tree which bears its fruit not among its leaves, but on the trunk alone".²⁹

These reports would have aroused little credulity had they not been confirmed by the samples of Oriental luxuries most pilgrims packed in their bales and boxes. The little quantities of silk, spices, perfumes, exotic fruits and plants, and even new words brought back from the East, all served to establish an aura of splendour around the idea of Islam which never completely faded away.³⁰ The notion of magnificence and exoticism was further enhanced during the thirteenth century by the reports of such renowned travellers as Marco Polo, Pian de Carpini, William of Rubruck and others who brought tales of wonders from the heretofore unknown regions of Cathay and East Asia in general. Since in medieval times no clear distinction had been made between Tartar, Turk, or Arab, the glories and splendours of the Far Eastern Khans, improved by the relative civility of these rulers towards the Western travellers, were generally taken in the West to be characteristics of the whole East - Muslim and non-Muslim.³¹

29 Ibid., pp. 34-5.

30 See below pp. 229 ff.

31 However, in their panegyrics on the marvels of the East these travellers never allowed their readers to forget the Christian - Muslim division. See, for example, Marco Polo's comments on the plight of the Christians under Muslim rule in The Book of Ser Marco Polo The Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East, i, chaps. vii-x.

The appearance in 1357 of Mandeville's Travels, perhaps the most popular and influential of all travel books, has a special significance for the present enquiry. Purporting to write a guide book to "The Lond of Promyssioun", the author of this fascinating compilation of truth and fiction embarked upon an extensive description of the two Orients. The first part, with which we are primarily concerned, deals with many aspects of the Near East and Islam in particular. The second part, where Mandeville's fancy has full scope, deals with India, the lands of mythical Prester John and "the contrees and yles that ben beyonde the londe of Cathay". This portion is far more entertaining than the first part, and we can suppose that the description of such people as

the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders, ³²

quickenened the medieval pulse and made Mandeville's readers more curious about the Orient.

In Part I, Mandeville reflects the contemporary attitude towards Islam which could not forgive the Muslims their "usurpation" of the Holy Land. He renews the call for a new crusading spirit "for to conquere oure right heritage and chacen out alle the mysbeleeuyng men".³³ His obsession with the recovery of Jerusalem urges him to produce various military statistics and assessments of Muslim power. He mentions various routes to Jerusalem and seems to consider the conquest of Egypt as a prerequisite to the invasion of Palestine.³⁴ His enthusiasm for

³² Shakespeare, Othello, I, iii, 143-5.

³³ Mandeville's Travels, pp. 2-3; cf. also pp. 58, 99. It might be mentioned that in the early fifteenth century manuscript of his Travels, there is a representation of the author taking leave of King Edward III in which Mandeville is depicted as wearing the sign of the Cross. See fig. 203 in Lacroix, Science and Literature, p. 285.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 33. Cf. A.S. Atiya, The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages (London, 1938), p. 163.

Jerusalem, however, does not mean that he was preaching the destruction of Islam or indeed of any other religion. As Mandeville puts it, "no man sholde haue in despite non erthely man for here dyuerse lawes, for wee knowe not whom God loueth ne who^m God hateth".³⁵ Such a wide tolerance (for which he was later charged with heresy) contrasts greatly with the characteristically narrow outlook of such earlier men as Jacques de Vitry (d.1240), who saw any peace with "Christ's enemies" a blasphemous act.³⁶ In fact, Mandeville enjoyed a friendly relation with the Muslims; and by his account he almost became the Sultan of Egypt's son in law, "yif I wolde han forsaken my lawe and my beleue, but I thanke God I had no wille to don it for no thing that he behighte me".³⁷

In Egypt, where Mandeville claims to have resided a "gret while" in the Sultan's palace, he was introduced to a variety of enchanting wonders. In the course of a refreshing chapter on this country, Mandeville gives an amusing description of the mythical bird of Arabia, the phoenix, of which there was "non but on in alle the world". From the description of this "fulle fair bird", he moves on to write about fabulous gardens whose trees "beren frutes vii tymes in the yeer", including the unique "apple of paradise" which contains an image of "the holy cros of oure lord Ihesu". In Egypt, we are told, precious stones and fair emeralds abound and therefore "thei ben there gretter cheep". The cleverness of the Egyptian farmer who used artificial incubation,

35 Mandeville's Travels, p.214. Cf. J.W. Bennett, The Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville (New York, 1954), p.73.

36 Jacques de Vitry, The History of Jerusalem A.D.1180, trans., Aubrey Stewart, P.P.T.S. (London, 1896), pp. 64-65.

37 Travels, p.24. According to an anonymous fifteenth century poem Mandeville spent two years with the Sultan. See "The Commonyng of Ser John Mandeville and the Gret Soudan", in W.C. Hazlitt, ed., Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England (London, 1864), i, 155.

then unheard of in the West, ensured that chickens were available all year round and the country was "full of hem". But this land of milk and honey was not altogether safe for travellers. In their movements pilgrims might be threatened or devoured by fearful monsters: creatures said by Mandeville to be as "disformed ayen kynde bothe of man or of best or of ony thing elles". He follows this by describing a grotesque parody of humanity which "hadde ii hornes trenchant on his forhede, and...a body lyk a man vnto the navele, and benethe he hadde the body lych a goot".³⁸

A more impressive chapter, though less entertaining to the seeker of marvels and wonders, is entitled "Of the customes of Sarasines and of hire lawe". Here, Mandeville seems to show some genuine acquaintance with Islam. His comments on such matters as the Muslim concept of punishment and reward, the common grounds between Christianity and Islam, and on the contents of the Koran, are indeed sounder than the reputation of his book might suggest. The gross calumnies against Islam and its founder are not repeated, although his short biography of "Machamote...the gret astronomer" is in line with other absurd legends about the founder of Islam current in Mandeville's day.³⁹ Elsewhere in the Travels, however, the author refers to the Koran as a "holy book" and to Muhammed as a "messenger".⁴⁰ A significant aspect of Mandeville's discussion of Islam is his employment of a satiric method through which he criticizes the institutions of his fellow-Christians by contrasting them with

³⁸ Travels, pp. 32-8.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 96-104.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

those of the Muslims whom he affects to praise:

Allas, that it is gret sclaudre to oure feith and to oure lawe, whan folk that ben withouten lawe schulle repreuen vs and vndernemen vs of oure synnes. And thei that sholden ben conuerted to Crist and to the lawe of Ihesu be oure gode ensamples and be oure acceptable lif to God, and so conuerted to the lawe of Ihesu Crist, ben thorgh oure wykkedness and euylle lyuynge fer fro vs and straungers fro the holy and verry beleefe schulle thus appelen vs and holden vs for wykkede lyueres and cursede. And treuly thei sey soth. For the Sarazines ben gode and feythfulle, for thei kepen entierly the commandment of the holy book Alkaron that God sente hem by his messenger Machomet.⁴¹

Mandeville's statement that he wrote the book because a long time had elapsed without a "generalle passage ne vyage" to the Holy Land seems only a pretext to justify his writing a popular book on the East of which many men, in his own words, "desiren for to here speke". We know that the fourteenth century saw a tremendous increase in the number of pilgrims to Palestine. Chaucer's Wife of Bath, for example, went "thries" to Jerusalem. Probably the Knight too had been there, if not after Alexandria "was wonne", then perhaps while he was in the service of the Muslim lord in Turkey.⁴² Indeed, pilgrimages were so common in Mandeville's time that the enterprising Venetians discovered a lucrative trade in offering regular transport services to and from Palestine. These services continued with little interruption until the first half of the

41 Ibid., pp. 101-02. Similar passages of "praise" intended as criticism of contemporary conditions in Christendom are found in many travel accounts. See, for example, The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger, pp. 73, 76 ff; Friar Jordanus, The Marvels of the East, p.55; The Itinerary of Bernard the Wise, p.11. Cf. also F.M. Rogers, The Quest for Eastern Christians: Travel and Rumour in the Age of Discovery (Minneapolis, 1962), p.29. Cf. Barclay's translation of the Ship of Fools (Edinburgh, 1874), p.202: "The Turke to his idols hath gretter reuerence/ And more deuotion to his fals lawe and doctryne/ Than we christen men without obedyence/ Haue to our true fayth and Holy lawe dyuynne".

42 General Prologue, 436, 51, 65.

sixteenth century, when interest in pilgrimages declined.⁴³

A noted English pilgrim of the late fourteenth century was Thomas Swinburne, possibly an ancestor of the poet. Thomas went to Alexandria in the summer of 1391 and from there he took the road across the Sinai desert to Palestine. His brief Itinerarium in Terram Sanctam offers no insight into the Muslim world, and is barely more than an enumeration of holy places and dates of arrivals and departures. Like Mandeville, however, he is fascinated by the beauty of the balsam garden outside Cairo, by the Nile, which springs from "Paradyso terrestri", as he hears, and by the sights of the different beasts in Egypt such as the crocodile, the giraffe and the elephant, "bestiam mire magnitudinis". At the end of his itinerarium, Thomas includes some useful information on the cost of travel by sea and land, prices of provisions, custom duties and other practical details of use to prospective pilgrims.⁴⁴

More detailed and practical information about the Palestine pilgrimage is contained in the writings of the experienced traveller, William Wey, who visited Jerusalem twice in 1458 and again in 1462. Wey, a fellow of Eton College, prefaces his narrative with a "preuysoun" in which he tells his readers what and where to buy the necessary provisions before setting out for the East. He also wrote a long versified account describing the different stations to be visited by those who might make the same journey. He warns intending pilgrims that once ashore in

⁴³ Atiya, The Crusade, p.155; J.J. Jusserand, English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages (London, 1931), p.409

⁴⁴ Thomas de Swynburne, Itinerarium in Terram Sanctam, pp. 380-88.

Palestine they should remember that they are traversing a hostile land and should not be deceived by the seeming friendliness of the Muslims. "Take goyd hede of yowre knyves and other smal thynges that ye ber apon yow, for the Sarsens wyl go talkyng w~~th~~ yow and make goyd chere, but they wyl stell fro yow that ye haue and they may".⁴⁵ The reputation of the Bedouin Arabs in Palestine, for a long time a source of complaint among pilgrims, passed into English literature, and many literary men in later periods associated "the excercise of thievery" and deception with the Arabs.⁴⁶

Wey's visit to Palestine in 1458 is significant in coming only five years after the Muslim conquest of Constantinople. Western lamentations for the ruin wrought by Muslim arms and the fear of further Muslim advance are well reflected in Wey's narrative. He notes with bitterness the fate of the Greek nation who, he hears, were being slaughtered by the Turks, but is delighted to learn of the Turkish loss of some 30,000 men at Wallachia. On the return journey he is alarmed at the news that a formidable Turkish fleet is on its way to assault Rhodes.⁴⁷

A complaint voiced by Wey and his successors was their ill-treatment as travellers arriving at Jaffa. The Muslim officials confined the newly-arrived pilgrims in small caves - apparently for a period of quarantine. This particularly irritated the pilgrims, who were, of course, impatient to reach Jerusalem. Wey's reports of the cruelty of the "pagan" masters

⁴⁵ Wey, *Itinerary*, p.7.

⁴⁶ Cf. Thomas Tomkis, *Albumazar*, p.301; cf. note 3 on pp. 301-2. Cf. also *Mandeville's Travels*, p.36; Shakespeare's Arab with sword in hand is a reflection of the same notion; see *Coriolanus*, IV, ii, 21-25.

⁴⁷ *Itinerary*, pp. 85-6, 101-102.

of Palestine seem to be grossly exaggerated. He himself testifies, perhaps unwittingly, to the high degree of Muslim tolerance when he speaks of the Christians of Bethlehem who "have permission from the Sultan to convert the Saracens to our faith".⁴⁸

A few pilgrims were more sympathetic towards the Muslims and in their accounts ventured to praise some Muslim virtues. The mystic Margerie Kempe (b.1373), who spent some time in Palestine, was grateful to the Saracens for their kindness and help. They were "good onto hir & gentyll", and they "mad mych of hir & conueyd hir & leddyn hir abowten in *ye* cuntre wher sche wold gon".⁴⁹ But such complimentary tributes are far outweighed by irresponsible accusations against "ower Mortall Enimys" who destroyed churches or converted them into "muskeys", threw innocent pilgrims into "stynkyng grottos" or attacked their ships.⁵⁰ Such stock charges should not necessarily be taken to reflect the sincere opinions of those who uttered them. But their repetition indicates that they expressed sentiments expected of those who had lived among the Muslims.

It is some time before the medieval image of the Muslim fades. When some sixteenth-century pilgrims visited Jerusalem and failed to find any example of Muslim ill-treatment, they

48 Ibid., p.128. See also "The Stasyons of Jerusalem" in C. Horstmann, Altenglische Legenden, p.365. Cf. G. Dickinson, "The Journey to the Holy Land in the Sixteenth Century", French Studies, VIII (1954), 52.

49 The Book of Margery Kempe, p.75.

50 The Pylgrymage of Sir Richard Gylforde for the Holy Land A.D. 1506, pp. 25, 31, 58, 74. Ye Oldest Diarie of Englysshe Travell Being the Hitherto Unpublished Narrative of the Pilgrimage of Sir Richard Torkington to Jerusalem in 1517, p.23.

copied, at times verbatim, whole passages of complaint compiled by earlier travellers. One such plagiarist was Richard Torkington, who visited Jerusalem in 1517. Unable to voice or invent any fresh tales of Muslim atrocities he copied what his predecessor, Sir Richard Guilford (1455?-1506) had written about the "paynyms" and tried to pass it off as his own sad experience.⁵¹

In his Introduction of Knowledge, written about 1541, Andrew Borde, physician and traveller, devotes a whole chapter to the description of "the natural dispositions of the Turks". His treatment of Islam is, in many ways, medieval in spirit and substance. He sees it as a militant form of paganism whose followers worshipped the superstition of "Alkaron", which "Macomyt, a false fellow made".⁵² Borde's chapter on the Turks, however, is not entirely misleading. He has learnt some knowledge of the dietary regulations imposed by Islam, as he shows by this satirical jingle:

I am a Turk, and Machamytes law do keepe
I do proill for my pray whan other be a slepe
My lawe wyllith me no swynes flesh to eate
It shall not greatly forse for I have other meate.⁵³

Later English travellers brought back more details of Islamic life, with less partiality in their reports. After the establishment of the Levant Company in 1581, scores of learned diplomats, traders and scholars visited the Near East and returned with favourable impressions of Islam. The accounts of John Sanderson (1584-1602), George Sandys (1610), Pynes Moryson (1617), Sir Henry Blount (1636) and others increased the Englishman's

51 Cf. Guilford's account (pp. 36, 16, 52) with Torkington's (pp. 47, 24, 31). Torkington (p. 70) does however make his own contribution to the existing knowledge of Islam, such as his claim that the Muslims worshipped a "Rokke of Stone", which is perhaps a reference to the Black Stone in Mecca.

52 Andrew Borde, The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge, ch. xxxvii.

53 Ibid., p. 214.

knowledge of Islam and also disillusioned him about many of the legends which his predecessor had taken for facts.⁵⁴

From this brief survey of the accounts of the English pilgrims to Palestine, it becomes clear that religious barriers and the pilgrim's unwillingness to overlook racial differences were responsible for a failure to seize an opportunity of coming to terms with Islam.⁵⁵ The medieval pilgrim, viewing as "unnatural" the Muslim rule of Jerusalem, and fearful of further Muslim expansion, fell into the habit of ascribing innocent procedures and harmless differences of religion or social customs to calculated defiance and hostility. This supposed hostility was, as we have seen, amply repaid in his account of his pilgrimage.

Among the more educated or experienced readers the travellers' tales won little credulity. Indeed, the leading literary figures of the age made no secret of their doubts; Langland complains of the "un-wyse tales" of "pylgrimis and palmers" who behave as though they had "leve to lye al hure lyfe-tyme".⁵⁶ Chaucer's reference to the crowd of folk in the House of Rumour

⁵⁴ For their accounts, see The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant 1584-1602; George Sandys, A Relation of a Journey Begun A.D. 1610; Fynes Moryson, An Itinerary By Fynes Moryson; Sir Henry Blount, A Voyage Into The Levant (London, 1636). Richard Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, Hakluyt Society, 12 vols. (Glasgow, 1903-5) and Samuel Purchas, Hakluytus Posthumus, His Pilgrimages, Hakluyt Society, 20 vols. (Glasgow 1905-7) contain numerous accounts of earlier travellers to the Islamic world. S.C. Chew, The Crescent and the Rose (New York, 1937) reviews the accounts of all the important English travellers to the Near East in the first half of the seventeenth century. See also W.G. Rice, "Early English Travellers To Greece and the Levant", Essays and Studies in English and Comparative Literature, Univ of Michigan Publications, X (1933), 211 ff.

⁵⁵ M.J. Barber, "The Englishman Abroad in the Fifteenth Century", Mediaevalia et Humanistica, II (1957), 76.

⁵⁶ William Langland, The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, I, 47 (C.).

must reflect the attitude not only of his enlightened contemporaries, but of simpler folk for whom travellers' tales were proverbially dishonest:

And, Lord, this hous in alle tymes
Was ful of shipmen and pilgrimes
With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges
Entremedled with tydynges
And eek allone be hemselve. 57

But not all medieval Englishmen were Chaucers and Langlands.

57 House of Fame, 2122 ff.

Chapter II. The Horrible Saracen in the Non-Dramatic Writings in Middle English with particular reference to the Romances.

(i) Descriptions of the Saracen's Physical Appearance

An inquiry into the place of the Saracen in medieval fiction might well begin by considering his physical portrayal, since a cursory reading of any romance will show that writers and poet-entertainers made much of his alien appearance.

Distance and the lack of any real contact between the audience and the Muslim world left the medieval romance writer free to depict the Saracen as fancy directed. It is not claimed here that the English romancers were thoroughly original or imaginative in their treatment of the Saracens. When romances were first written in English, their composers drew heavily upon French models, and, in many cases, the same themes and plots were used. The English medieval romancer owed a great many of his ideas and techniques of delineation to the earlier chansons de geste in which by tradition the Muslim was always treated as the villain of the piece.¹ This indebtedness, however, does not invalidate the great corpus of Middle English romances as material for the study of an attitude, which can

1 See W.W. Comfort's articles on the Saracen in European popular poetry listed below p. 337 (Bibliography). See also Meredith Jones, "The Conventional Saracens of the Songs of Geste", Speculum, XVII (1942), 201-25.

properly be called English in its own right.²

The Saracen antagonist, whether a principal or a secondary actor, is usually given general physical characteristics which would shock and horrify even the most heroic of the "douzepers". His most familiar image is one of fierce and ugly grossness. References to the Saracen's unshapely body, enormous mouth, thick lips, filthy beard, bushy eyebrows and white teeth contrasting with a swarthy face are very common. His features, twisted and mutilated to suit the author's taste for the grotesque, are often compared to those of monsters and devils - and indeed some Saracens are presented entirely as monsters. A great army of Saracens, some with heads like leopards and others with boars' tusks rising from the corners of their ferocious mouths, fill the pages of Middle English works. To see how freely and grotesquely the Saracens were presented, we might consider their portrayal in the early fourteenth-century poem, Cursor Mundi, where descriptions of four Saracens are given:

pat sagh men neuer of na cures
 Sa misshapen creatures
 Of paire blaknes hit was selcoupis
 On paire brestes stode paire moupis
 paire browes ware growen side with heres
 And razt alle a-boute paire eres
 paire moupis wide paire eyen brade
 Vn-frely was paire fas made
 In paire forheued stode paire sizt
 And loke muzt pai nozt vp-ri3t
 paire armys hery wip rungilt hide
 Ware sette to pe elbows in paire side
 Wip crumpeled knees and brokin bak. 3

2 Cf. D. Everett "A Characterization of the English Medieval Romances", Essays and Studies, XV (1929), 98-122; A.H. Billings, A Guide to The Middle English Romances (New York, 1901), pp. xix-xx; Margaret Schlauch, English Medieval Literature and Its Social Foundations (Warsaw, 1956), p.175; cf. Dieter Mehl, The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London, 1968 [1969]), p.2; W. Thomas, "The Epic Cycles of Medieval England and their Relative Importance", The French Quarterly, X (1928), 196.

3 Cursor Mundi, 8075-87 (F.).

Similar distortions and parodies of the truth can be found whenever a Middle English poet describes Saracen features. Examples might be compiled ad nauseum, but any work listed in "Appendix B" below contains instances of this tendency. The insistence on the fantastically distorted features of the Saracens is clearly prompted by an overriding desire on the romancers' part to mock and caricature the features of their enemies.

To emphasize the ugliness of the Saracen antagonist, romance poets occasionally make their heroes express feelings of surprise and puzzlement in their initial reaction to the sight of a Saracen. Thus, when Guy of Warwick first meets the Sultan's champion, Amorant, he "stode & loked on him / Hou foule he was of chere / 'It is' seyde Gij, 'no mannes son: / It is a deuel fram helle is come'".⁴ In the romance of Richard Coer de Lion, when the hero first glimpses a Saracen face with its usual "swart vys", "blacke berd" and "whyte teep", he cannot help starting and crying "what deuyll is þis?" and "gan to lauze as he were wood".⁵

Richard's immediate association of the Saracen's appearance with that of the devil is a notion widely reflected in the literature of the period. In fact, it was customary for romance poets either to begin or end their elaboration on Saracen features with this unflattering image. The Saracen bridge-warden in Sir Ferumbras was, for example, "noȝt a

4 Guy of Warwick, st. 95, ll.10-12 (A.)

5 Richard Coer de Lion, 3211-15. Even Charlemagne expresses astonishment at the sight of Vernagu, the like of whom he "ne hadd y-sen bifore" (Roland and Vernagu, 495).

godes helf" but "þe deuyl he semede al hym-self / y come þo
 rizt of helle". Galafre in Charles the Grete "semed better
 a deuyl than a resonable persone". In Huon of Burdeux, one
 Saracen "admyral" looked more like a "fende of hell then any
 humayne creature".⁶

With the notion that all Saracens resemble "Belsabbubis
 lyne" we must associate an equally popular and persistent
 literary tradition in which the Saracens were invariably
 presented as black. The two notions exist side by side and,
 in fact, complement each other. In folklore as in romance
 the devil is always painted in black.⁷ It is only natural
 that the Saracens, his children and companions, should inherit
 this symbolic colour, which contrasts greatly with the white-
 ness of the Christian warriors. In the metrical and prose
 romances, there is hardly any sultan or ^{Saracen} warrior who is not
 described at some point as black, e.g. "blac he is as

6 Respectively: Sir Ferumbras, 4441-2; Charles the Grete,
 p.165; Huon of Burdeux, p.506.

7 Cf. A.B. Lewis, Descriptions of the Devil And His Works
 in Early English Literature And the Relation of These
 Ideas to Doctrine, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (London Univ.,
 1939), pp. 136 f; W.C. Curry, The Middle English Ideal
 of Personal Beauty; As Found In the Metrical Romances,
 Chronicles, And Legends of the XIII, XIV, And XV Centuries
 (Baltimore, 1916), p.88; M. Rudwin, The Devil in Legend
 and Literature (London and Chicago, 1931), p.30.

brodes brend" or as "blake as more".⁸ Further, when Christian knights are forced to disguise themselves as Saracens the first thing they do is to blacken their faces and hair.⁹ The emphasis on the blackness of the Saracen not only underlines their horrid appearance, but points to their moral inferiority and further suggests their eventual place of abode in hell.¹⁰ Their blackness, however, is not always proof of their descent from the devil. Heat and exposure to the sun were sometimes seen as primary explanations. It is frequently said of Ethiopians that they are black "for hete of the sonne".¹¹ In Blanchardyn and Eglantine when the Christian knight came back from Saracen land his friends could not recognise him at first "by cause he was made blak, disfigured & sore chaunged of face by strengthe of the sonne / but trowed that he had ben a sarrasyne as other were".¹²

8 Respectively : Guy of Warwick, st. 62, 10 (A); The Sowdone of Babylone, 1005; Shakespeare must have envisaged the Muslims as black too. Cf. Carlisle's words in Richard II:

Many a time hath banish'd Norfolk fought
For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,
Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross
Against black pagans, Turks and Saracens
(IV, i, 92-5).

Cf. Midsummer Night's Dream, III, ii, 257 and 264. See also J.W. Draper, "Ethiopian in Shakespeare", Anglia, LXXIII (1955), 66. The more recent term "wog", a disrespectful name for a Middle Easterner (possibly derived from or short for "gollywog") indicates that the notion has not completely died out.

9 Guy of Warwick, 6105-10 (C); Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.98.

10 Rudwin, The Devil, p.46.

11 Caxton's Mirror of the World, p.94.

12 Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.128. Cf. Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, II, i, 1-3.

The constant search for grotesque and novel incident accounts for the presence of some Saracens who do not conform to this otherwise invariable rule. These are presented as having not black but oddly-coloured skin. In the Fillingham Firumbras, for example, one Saracen appears with a neck "blo and yolw".¹³ A most spectacular array of colourful Saracens is found in The Sowdone of Babylone, where we are told that the sultan has gathered

Thre Hundred thousand of Sarsyns felle
Some bloo, some yolowe, some blake as more.¹⁴

Prejudice against Moorish features and colour was very great. "More" or "blackamore" was a term of obloquy to medieval Europeans and served as the index of all loathsome beings.¹⁵ The Saracens who suffered most at the hands of medieval poets were those whose origin was Moorish or African. The romances commonly refer to Saracens as coming from Africa, a result no doubt of the Moorish occupation of Spain and their subsequent incursions into Southern Europe. This association of the Saracens with Africa is typically illustrated in The Foure Sonnes of Aymon. At one point in this "right pleasant and goodly historie", printed by Caxton about 1489, Charlemagne dismisses Aymon and threatens to kill his brave sons. Outraged by Charlemagne's intention, Aymon vows vengeance on the Frankish monarch: "For yf he make my children to deye by such grete vengeance as he hathe sayd / yf I sholde be-come a sarrasyn, and

¹³ L. 1254.

¹⁴ ^{ll} 1004-5.

¹⁵ Among the recurrent terms of abuse heaped by Skelton on Sir Christopher Garnish are "Moorish manticore", "Murrion" ^{and} "Saracen all black is your ble". Skelton's singular collection of abusive epithets include many connected with Islam and Muhammed. See "Poems Against Garnische", Works, pp. 120 ff.

dwelle in affryque all the dayes of my liff, I shall stryke of his hede".¹⁶

In attributing black faces to the Saracens, medieval poets were under the influence of a mass of legends and inherited traditions. From time immemorial, the differences in colour and features between the Negro and the European had been a subject of various naive and hostile interpretations. The classical accounts of the primitive inhabitants of the Dark Continent consistently emphasized the strange, the shocking and the degraded qualities of the black natives, as though determined to alienate their readers from Africans.¹⁷ Pliny, for one, speaks of Africa as being rife with misshapen creatures and beasts. He describes most Africans as being half men, half beasts, creatures who have lost all characteristics of humanity. The Nile basin, Pliny adds, is inhabited by various monsters ranging from people who walk on all fours to others who have their mouths and eyes in their chests.¹⁸ The writings of Herodotus helped to propagate the myth that Africans possessed unnatural features. Descriptions of headless men, dwarf tribes, dog-faced people and other grisly parodies of human beings punctuate the discussion of Africa in his History.¹⁹ Even a medieval traveller such as Friar Jordanus, who had seen Africans in the course of his two journeys to the East, assured his fourteenth-century contemporaries that the Moors had "hideous

16 The Foure Sonnes of Aymon, p.436.

17 Katherine George, "The Civilized West Looks at Primitive Africa 1400-1800: A Study in Ethnocentrism", Isis, XLIX (1958), 62-72.

18 The Natural History of Pliny, i, 378-9, 383, 405. Cf. Harrison, Medieval Man, pp. 207 ff; Bartholomew Anglicus, Medieval Lore, p.76; Caxton's Mirror, p.94.

19 History of Herodotus, ii, 50-51; 129-35; iii, 142 ff., 165-7.

countenances" and that they were, in fact, "wild men".²⁰

It was impossible for the medieval poet to rise above such age-old notions, which had become part and parcel of contemporary outlook and belief. The facts that the Moors played little or no part in the Jihad (Muslim holy war) movement, and that they were in a state of steady decline in Spain, did nothing to soften the medieval attitude towards them: prejudice against the Moors and what they stood for remained as blatant as ever. Their ugliness was seen as much in their paganism as in their physical blackness. Occasionally their colour was made to seem the result of their lack of true faith, so that it disappeared on their conversion, leaving them whiter than a dove.²¹

In the proverbially ugly countenance of the Moor medieval poets often saw an embodiment of the features of the "Loathly Lady" of folklore. The repulsive old hag, who figures prominently in the familiar tale of Chaucer's Wife of Bath and the Wedding of Sir Gawain, among other English versions of this ancient story, is often envisaged as or likened to a Moor. Gower's description of the hideous lady in the "Tale of Florent", yet another adaptation of the same story, will best illustrate this tendency. The old woman, we are told, is the ugliest that "evere man caste on his yhe",

Hire Nase bass, hire browes hyhe
Hire yhen smale and depe set
Hire chekes ben with teres wet

20 Friar Jordanus, The Marvels of the East, p.43.

21 The most famous example of this sudden change of colour occurs in the romance of The Kyng of Tars (854-55), where we are assured that the sultan of Damascus whose "colour that lodlich and black was / Hit bi com feir thorw godes gras". Cf. Cursor Mundi, 8119-21.

And rivelen as an emty skyn
 Hangende doun unto the chin
 Hire Lippes schrunken ben for age
 Ther was no grace in the visage
 Hir front was nargh, hir lockes hore 22
 Sche loketh forth as doth a More.

The same attitude is reflected in a poem entitled "Of An Blak-Moire" or "My Ladye With the Mekle Lippis" written by William Dunbar for the entertainment of the courtiers of James IV. In this rather unusual poem, Dunbar describes an enslaved negress who was in fact a resident at the Scottish court:

Lang heff I maed of ladyes quhytt
 Nou of ane blak I will indytt
 That landet furth of the last schippis
 Quhou fain wald I descryve perfytt
 My ladye with the mekle lippis.

The poet then goes on to describe her features in some detail. She is, we are told, spout-jawed "lyk ane aep", and gapes like a toad, "gangarall". When she is dressed in "reche apparrall", she will glint like a "tar barrell". The day she was born, the sun "tholit clippis". As a punishment, the knight who "receaves shaem" in the field shall "cum behind and kis hir hippis".²³

22 The English Works of John Gower, 1677-86. Cf. Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, 6 vols. (Copenhagen, 1955-58): D732. Medieval prejudice against the Moors can further be demonstrated by the fact that the familiar mis-shapen baby of folklore, allegedly born to innocent heroines, was sometimes described simply as black or Ethiopian. See The Romance of Emaré, intro., pp. xlix f.

23 The Poems of William Dunbar, pp. 66-67. Cf. Tom Scott, Dunbar, A Critical Exposition of the Poems (London and Edinburgh, 1966), pp. 67-68. Moors and Africans in general were often brought back to Europe by the early voyagers. In England as in Scotland this practice must have been common. "There be manye Moores brought into Christendome, in to great cytes & townes, to be sold", says Andrew Borde, "and Christenmen do by them, and they wilbe diligent, and wyll do al maner of seruice; but thei be set most comonli to vile thynges...whan a Marchaunt or anye other man do by them, they be not al of one pryce, for some bee better cheepe then some". See Introduction of Knowledge, p. 212.

Dunbar's merciless depiction of the Moorish girl, like Gower's description of the Loathly Lady is, no doubt, intended to amuse. In medieval times, there was a great liking for details of anatomical freaks and grotesque faces, a taste which finds full expression in the art and architecture of the period as well.²⁴ In romance, however, the tendency to caricature Moorish or Saracen features for comic effect was at times carried to great lengths and often produced dark and grim humour. Richard Coer de Lion, to be discussed later²⁵ offers many examples of such crude entertainment, though it is also apparent in other romances. In Rowland and Otuell, for example, a Christian knight kills Clariel, a Moorish Sultan. After he cuts off one of the Moor's cheeks, the brave warrior apostrophizes the mutilated corpse:

.....Clariell, als mote þou thee
 Whi grynnes þou nowe so one mee
 As þofe þou wolde me byte?
 Alphayne thi lemman white & fre
 Thare neuer 3erne to kysse the
 þerfore I maye nott hir wyte.²⁶

Before concluding the consideration of the treatment of the African Saracen and the implications of his blackness, it might be pointed out that the Englishmen's awareness that "ther be wyte mores and black moors"²⁷ did not develop until contact with North Africa increased in the sixteenth century. Yet some

24 Irena Janicka, The Comic Elements In the English Mystery Plays Against the Cultural Background (Poznan, 1962), pp. 23 ff; Thomas Wright, A History of Caricature and Grotesque In Literature and Art (London, 1865), pp. 144, 152.

25 See above p. 60 ; cf. below pp. 150 ff .

26 Rowland and Otuell, 1321-26.

27 Andrew Borde, Introduction of Knowledge, p.212.

early romancers managed to represent the Moor not as "black as ink", another favourite medieval comparison, but merely as a "brown more".²⁸ But whether the Moor was black or brown he was always made to seem shockingly ugly and repulsive.

We should now move on to consider a familiar figure in romance: the Saracen giant, against whom Christian warriors often tested their courage, and from whose clutches it might occasionally be necessary to rescue Christian ladies. The general description of the Saracen giant is not essentially different from that of his warrior brother, though the romancers emphasized the size of the former along with his hairiness, a sure sign of the savagery and ferocity of the wild man.²⁹ Their description could be short and generalised: "Of heyght was XV fote long, and wyth-all right foul and hydouse for to see".³⁰ It could also be lengthy, with more or less conventionalised details. In Octavian Imperator, for example, the Sultan has a

...fowl geant
Of Egypte; he hette Guymerraunt
Greet as an ok
No dosyper n'as so auenaunt
To stonde hys strok.
He was of lengthe twenty feet,
And two elle yn brede with scholdrys greet
Ech day he wold et a neet
And messys more
Twey tuxlys out of hys mouth set,
As of a bore.

28 Sir Perceval of Galles, 2034. Cf. Curry, Ideals of Beauty, pp. 86-87.

29 Richard Bernheimer, Wild Men In the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p.46.

30 Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.56. However, exaggeration in stature is extended to Christian heroes as well. In such cases it is intended to emphasize physical strength rather than hideousness or grotesqueness. Cf. the description of Charlemagne in Charles the Grete, p.25.

A greet fot was betwex hys brym
 Hys browys as brystles of a swyn
 Betweene hys forto³¹ and hys chyn
 Length of an elle
 With blake yghen, as seyde the Latyn 31
 He lokede felle.

It is obvious that the exaggerations in this description are introduced to excite wonder and enhance the physical prowess of the knights. For Christian warriors are habitually presented as the divinely ordained vanquishers of these bulky creatures who are hated for their malice and wickedness, so characteristic of the progeny of Cain and the fallen angels.³²

Giants, commonplace in folklore, are almost as populous in medieval romances.³³ Exploiting the popular fear and resentment of the Muslims, medieval poets rendered their giants more credible and formidable simply by presenting them as Saracens or by associating them with Saracen countries. In Cursor Mundi, the biblical giant Goliath is depicted as a wretched heathen and Saracen who has made a vow to his God,

31 Octavian Imperator, 920-36. Cf. Lybeaus Desconus, 1310 ff (L.).

32 Rudwin, The Devil, p.20. Cf. O.F. Emerson, "Legends of Cain, Especially in Old and Middle English", PMLA, XXI (1906), 921.

33 We might mention here that medieval travellers filled the Muslim East with giants. Schiltberger who visited Asia and Africa (1394-1427) speaks credulously of a bridge he crossed in Egypt which was made out of a shin-bone of a great giant. The shin-bone, we are assured, is more than an "arrow's flight" long. "And if it were not true, or had I not seen it, I would not have written about it". See The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger, pp. 64-65. A later English traveller-adventurer, Edward Webbe (fl. 1590) who visited Constantinople claimed to have seen a wild giant in the Sultan's residence which was chained to a post to hinder him from devouring human flesh except what he was given after capital executions. See Bernheimer, Wild Men, p.94.

Muhammed, to kill Saul and triumph over all the Jews.³⁴ In Malory's Morte D'Arthur, Arthur kills a giant at Mount Michael, and, to excite further admiration for this feat, Malory follows the description of Arthur's fight with an interesting remark: "For this was a freysh gyaunte and mykyll of strength, for I mette nat with suche one this fyfteene wyntir sauf onys in the mounte of Arrabe I mette with suche another, but this was ferser; that had I nere founden, had nat my fortune be good".³⁵ Like Malory, Spenser was aware that even to Renaissance readers, Saracen giants might seem more dreadful than those found on European or English soil. The first adventure in his Faerie Queene is the encounter between the Knight of the Red Cross and the "Faithlesse Sarazin", Sans Foy, "full large of limbe at euery ioint".³⁶

The employment of the Saracen as a symbol or embodiment of loathsome qualities had, as pointed out earlier, been evident long before Spenser's day. To some degree, of course, all the Saracens in medieval romance are abstractions of ugliness and perfidy and are used in much the same way as the evil characters of Morality plays. A particularly significant example of the Saracen as a symbol is found in The Turke and Gowin, a metrical romance written about 1500. The plot of this poem belongs to a well-known type of popular tale whose hero is enchanted and condemned to assume a hideous appearance from which he can be

34 Ll. 7458 ff. It is noteworthy that in the doggerel Tale of Sir Thopas in which Chaucer burlesques contemporary romances, the "greet geaunt" Olifaunt is presented as a Saracen. This we learn from his characteristically Saracen oaths (1997 ff.).

35 La Morte D'Arthur in The Works of Sir Thomas Malory, i, 205.

36 The Works of Edmund Spenser, I, ii, 12, 6.

freed only by decapitation.³⁷ Until he is relieved from his enchantment, the victim remains a murderous demon in the shape of a monster, a toad, a serpent or some other repulsive creature. In The Turke and Gowin, instead of being given one of these shapes, Sir Gromer, the enchanted knight, is transformed into the shape of a Turk:

He was not hye, but he was broad
& like a Turke he was made
Both legg & thye

38

The Turke and Gowin is of particular interest in the present investigation. As the title suggests, the Muslim plays a very important part in the romance. Reflecting the development in the part played by the contemporary Muslims, The Turke and Gowin also illustrates the gradual displacement of the Saracen and the emergence of the Turk as the new antagonist in literature. But the poem has further significance: it shows how readily the deformed image of the Muslim had been adapted to the accepted myths of medieval England, and how naturally it became part of the rich heritage of Arthurian literature. The traditional giants, who were firmly believed to have inhabited the Isle of Man, the locale of the Turke and Gowin, are here presented as Muslim giants "strong & stout / & uglie to looke uppon".³⁹ The giant king of the island is also transformed into a "heathen soldan" who because he refuses to "agree unto our law", is cured of his sin by Gawain and "flung into the fyer".⁴⁰

37 G.L. Kittredge, A Study of Gawain and the Green Knight (Gloucester, Mass., 1916), pp. 200 ff. Cf. Thompson, Motif-Index: D711ff.

38 The Turke and Gowin, 12-15.

39 Ibid, 131-133. Cf. A.W. Moore, The Folk-lore of the Isle of Man (London, 1891), ch.v; V.J. Harward, Jr., The Dwarfs of Arthurian Romance and Celtic Tradition (Leiden, 1958), pp. 90-98.

40 The Turke and Gowin, 259, 264.

The decapitation motif accords with the general hostile attitude towards contemporary Muslims. While under the spell, Sir Gromer has no soul in his Turkish body. As such, he belongs not to the class of ordinary humans, but to that of monsters and animals which must be decapitated so that they may be brought back to their human shape and restored to life. The assignment of the Turk to the role of the repulsive soulless creature is a manifestation of the crusading spirit which persisted well into the Renaissance, and which saw the Muslim as a follower of the devil who must either agree to be converted or put to death. These are the alternatives offered to the giant sultan, whose monstrous size is made more frightful by association with a supposedly diabolical faith.

The eminent seventeenth-century orientalist, John Selden (1584-1654), was fully aware of this prejudice. Writing on the subject of "Warr", he prefers the following charge against the early English crusaders: "When our Countrymen come home from fighting against the Saracens & were beaten by them, they pictur'd them with huge bigg terrible faces (as you see still the Signe of the Saracens head is) when in truth they were like other men, but this they did to save their owne creditt".⁴¹ Selden's words point clearly to an old oral tradition which imputed monstrous and distorted features to the Muslims.

A few romances do feature an idealised description of the Saracen; these are, naturally, the exception to the rule. Where the Saracen is favourably described he is usually destined to

⁴¹ Table Talk of John Selden, ed., Sir Frederick Pollock (London, 1927), p.136. Cf. Chew, Crescent and Rose, pp. 145-7.

see the light of Christianity and renounce his faith. One Saracen who does not share the traditional ugliness is Sir Firumbras:

Of such another herde 3e nere, nowar þar 3e han gone⁴²
Of strenȝ, of schap, of hugenys, of dedes of armes bolde.

The notion of Saracen ugliness persisted in English literature for long after the medieval period. This fact is recognised by the Oxford English Dictionary when it includes under "Turk" the meaning, "a hideous image to frighten children", and by many passages in post-medieval poetry which make the ugliness of a Saracen a proverbial point of comparison. Any physical features or characteristics which offended Western standards of personal beauty were almost automatically identified with Turk and Saracen. A number of such references have been gathered by Samuel Chew from Elizabethan and Jacobean literature; among them "the nose of Turk" thrown into the witches' cauldron in Macbeth, which must have evoked in Shakespeare's audience the same distorted image of the Saracen which medieval poets had handed down to them.⁴³

Writing in 1664, Samuel Butler compares the unprepossessing features of the bear Bruin to those of a "rugged Saracen" or a "Turk of Mahomet's own kin".⁴⁴ Such unflattering comparisons continued to appear as late as the mid-nineteenth century, when

42 Sir Ferumbras, 51-52.

43 Crescent and Rose, pp. 147-8.

44 Hudibras, ii, 236-40. Cf. B.P. Smith, Islam in English Literature (Beirut, 1939), p.36, which however attributes the notion of the Saracen's ugliness to a much later source: George Sandy's remark that the Muslims were branded "for the sin of their seducing ancestor".

Saracen features were still being held up to ridicule.

"The Ingoldsby Penance", a ballad satirising the life of a Crusader-knight, ends by making a comic juxtaposition between the face of a beautiful bride and the shocking ugliness of a Saracen:

For think how annoying 'twould be, when you're wed,
To find in your bed, on the pillow, instead
Of the sweet face you look for - A SARACEN'S HEAD !⁴⁵

The grotesquely unkind references to the physical appearance of the Muslim which persisted over so many centuries are rivalled only by the no less wilful misrepresentation of his faith and religious belief.

⁴⁵ Thomas Ingoldsby [Richard Barham], The Ingoldsby Legends or Mirth and Marvels (London, 1864), p.28.

(ii) Islam and the Religious Practices
of the Saracens

Idolatry

Chief among the religious matters which received a colossal amount of comment was the Saracen's supposed idolatry and his worship of Muhammed, "Mahoune" or "Mahounde", as he is commonly called in Middle English. The imputation of idolatry to the Muslims, insisted upon in romance after romance, is the most ironic of all misconceptions or accusations from which Islam suffered during medieval times and beyond.¹ Muslims often pride themselves on their "rectification" of Christianity by eliminating such "idolatrous" aspects as the worship of idols (the Cross), and images (of Christ and Mary) and by condemning the "polytheistic" character of the Christian God which they see in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.² Furthermore,

- 1 The term "Muhammedan", used even today to describe a Muslim, is in fact a relic of medievalism and carries with it the implication that Muslims worship Muhammed. Muslims in general object strongly to being called Muhammedans. Their theologians and scholars prefer "Muslim" as opposed to "Moslem" to avoid any possible association the term "Moslem" might suggest with the recent movement of the "Black Moslems" in America. Cf. the following note (2).
- 2 Medieval travellers were sometimes surprised to find out how strongly Muslims detested idolatry which was so hated that it was almost taboo to speak of. See The Journey of William Rubruck To the Eastern Parts of the World 1235-55, p.143. However, the same traveller adds in a later section of his book (p.221) that Saracens worship idols in what he calls "mahumeries". A familiar objection on the part of Muslim theologians is to the translation of the Arabic term (Allah) as God. They insist on keeping the transliterated form Allah, since the Trinitarian nature of the Christian "God" is incompatible with the rigidly monotheistic concept of the Muslim divinity.

the Islamic attitude towards idolatry is such that Muslim designers and artists were forbidden by Muhammed to introduce representations of human figures or living creatures into their works, as these were held to be evidences of paganism and idolatry.³

The source of this charge is not difficult to find. Apart from the scurrilities of medieval polemics against Islam, the crusading propaganda and the strong influence of the chansons de geste, there was an unconscious association of ideas by means of which Muslim beliefs and practices were often assimilated to Christian ways. Just as in Christianity Jesus is both divinity and man, so, medieval writers thought, must Muhammed be to the Muslims. But while Jesus is the incarnation of God, Muhammed, they reasoned, was the incarnation of the devil or Antichrist. Indeed, in the vernacular romances, Muhammed was often referred to as the devil himself and his followers were naturally shown to be living under the yoke of the demons to whom they were closely related.⁴

3 Further still, Muslim coins for centuries bore nothing except the value of the piece on the obverse and the Muslim formula of Shihada (testimony of faith = No Deity But Allah) on the reverse. See Sir Thomas Arnold, Painting in Islam: A study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture (New York, 1961), pp. 1-14; and, by the same author, The Old and the New Testament in Muslim Religious Art (London, 1932), pp. 17ff. For a more detailed study, consult Ernst Kühnel, Islamic Art and Architecture, trans., Katherine Watson (London, 1965).

4 Cf. Rudwin, The Devil, p.21; Southern, Views, p.32. Alessandro D'Ancona, "La Leggenda Di Maometto In Occidente", Giornale Storico Della Letteratura Italiana, XLII (1889), 229, 259. In The National Scottish Dictionary (in progress) Mahoune is defined as a "name given to the devil". In this connection we might add that the Elizabethan Mahu or Maho, who appears as "the generall Dictator of hell" in Samuel Harsnet, A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, p.50, and who is alluded to in Shakespeare (King Lear, III, iv, 140) and Spenser (Works, VIII, p.486), is the Mahoun of medieval literature. Cf. Chew, Crescent and Rose, p.396.

danse macabre is concluded, Muhammed then calls for a Highland pageant and the poem ends with a mock tournament between a tailor and a shoemaker.⁸

The contest between the two jousters, a burlesque of the outdated code of chivalry and the custom of jousting, proves a traumatic experience to the prophet of Islam. At one point in the tournament the frightened shoemaker

about the Devillis nek
Did spew agane ane quart of blek.⁹

Later, when the harness of the tailor's horse breaks, the shoemaker's horse runs to Muhammed, who stands well on one side lest he be spewed on again:

He thocht he wald agane debait him
He turned hir ers and all bedret him¹⁰
Evin quyte from nek till heill.

This, of course, enrages Muhammed, who finally decides to deprive the two jousters of their knighthood and send them to a dungeon for the rest of their lives.

In another poem, "The Devillis Inquest", written, like "The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis", in the dream convention, the poet "wes agast" to see the Devil, Mahoun, in his dream, tempting all the people in the market-place to "renounce thy God and cum to me".¹¹ In this vision, Dunbar is dismayed to see how perjury, corruption and deceit reign supreme in the market-place, which is, of course, a symbol of ordinary human life. Courtiers, merchants, tailors, priests, minstrels

⁸ Ibid., 109ff.

⁹ "The Sowtar and the Tailyouris War", 58-9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 82-84.

¹¹ "The Devillis Inquest", 5.

and men of all other trades and crafts are shown as blasphemers and hypocrites. The devil, Muhammed, moves invisibly from one corner to another revelling in this scene of spiritual decline:

Me thoct the Devillis, als blak as pik
Solistand wer as beis thik
Ay tempand folk with waxis sle;
Rowand to Robene and to Dik
"Renunce thy God and cum to me".¹²

The practice of diabolising Muhammed was, of course, in vogue throughout the Middle Ages and dates back a long time before Dunbar. Romance poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries regarded him as a devil worshipped not only by the Muslims but also by all other pagans. Whenever a hated antagonist (Saracen or otherwise) is introduced, he is almost immediately made to swear by Muhammed, the almighty, omnipotent god. "By Mahonet", "By Mahoun my lord", or by "mi god mahun",¹³ are among the conventional oaths repeated in almost every romance with little or no variation. Muhammed's name was used in curses too. "Mahounde gyfe hem myschaunce", or "Mahound zeue *pe* wrake",¹⁴ are typical forms of imprecation which do not, in fact, differ from the way Christian knights phrase their curses except in the substitution of Christ's name for Muhammed's.

Despite the ubiquitousness of Mahoune's name in Middle English there is, on the whole, nothing to suggest that romance poets had any real knowledge of Mahoune beyond the fact that he

12 Ibid, 106-110. Cf. Scott, Critical Exposition, pp. 81-84.

13 Respectively: Sir Ferumbras, 82; The Fillingham Firumbras, 1651; Otuel, 327.

14 The Sodobne of Babylone, 962; Otuel, 1183.

was some sort of deity or an idol connected with the Saracens and all non-Christians. This is not at all surprising at a time when chroniclers, leading literary figures and even 'crusaders who settled among the Muslims could not decide who or what exactly Muhammed was. This ignorance, however, did not stop romance poets from describing him or attributing to him the ugliest features possible, so characteristic of his worshippers. A detailed description of a creature envisaged as Muhammed is found in The Destruction of Troy. In this romance the poet presents us with a repulsive picture of the classical fabulous monster, the centaur, which he identifies with Muhammed. This fearful "Mawhown" is said to have the face of a man, yet⁵ hairy all over and neighs like a horse:

His Ene leuenaund with light as a low fyn,
With stremys full stithe in his stepe loke.
He was a ferfull freke, in fas to beholde;
And mony ledes with his loke laithet full euyll.¹⁵

More common than these occasional and indirect descriptions of Mahoune are his recurrent appearances in the form of an idol. As a rule, when Mahoune's idols are described, they are usually made of "fyne golde and garnyshed full richely with grete perels and precyouse stones".¹⁶ The frequency with which Muhammed was referred to as an idol made the very term Muhammed in its simplified form "muamet" or "maumet" mean an idol. Thus, the preacher of rigid Unitarianism and the destroyer of the idols of pagan Mecca was himself presented as an idol. Unaware of the

15 The Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy, 7758, 7723-26; cf. Curry, Ideals of Beauty, p.122, for other references to Muhammed's appearance.

16 Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.126.

irony and anachronism suggested by his use of the term "maumet", the author of Cursor Mundi declares that when Mary took Jesus to Egypt, all the maumets there fell down.¹⁷ Similarly, medieval preachers exhorted their congregations to fight covetousness and avarice and to avoid making "worldly goodes here mawmentes and here fals goddes".¹⁸ Chaucer, whose references to Islam are reasonably accurate and informed, speaks of "mawmets" as worshipped idols. "What difference is betwixe an ydolastre and an avaricious man", asks Chaucer, "but that an ydolastre, per aventure, ne hath but o mawmet or two and the avaricious man hath manye? For certes, every floryn in his cofre is his mawmet. / And certes, the synne of mawmettrie is the firste thyng that God deffended in the ten comaundmentz..."¹⁹

17 Al paire mawmettes in a stounde
grouelinges fel vn-to pe grounde. (11759-60)
Cf. Middle English Sermons, p.316. Conversely, some medieval travellers alleged that the Saracens believed that the day Muhammed was born one thousand and one churches fell of themselves "and that happened as a sign of the injury he would do to Christianity in his time". See Schiltberger, Bondage and Travels, p.78.

18 Medieval English Sermons, p.107. Cf. The Psalter of Psalms of David, p.345.

19 Parson's Tale, 745-49. Shakespeare's "mammet" is also a doll or puppet. In this sense Old Capulet uses it in Romeo and Juliet, III, v, 184. Cf. also Hotspur's words to his wife:

I care not for thee Kate, this is no world
To play with mammets and to tilt with lips.

(I Henry IV, II, iv, 88-9).

Muhammed's idols are either permanently erected in "maumetries" and "synagogues"²⁰ or carried about, placed on the maintop of ships,²¹ put up in make-shift temples or installed in the sultan's or emir's tent.²² Pictures of Muhammed appear in most Saracen crests and are also painted on their shields and armours.²³ Like his idols, these pictures are usually made "off gold gayly gilte".²⁴

Fictional Saracens, of course, highly revere Muhammed's images, to which they turn for help in danger or sickness.²⁵ Marriage rites are also performed before these "ymages of Mehouné",²⁶ and when Saracens die they pray to Muhammed to receive their souls.²⁷ To these decorated images Saracens

20 With the exception of Mandeville's use of mosque in the form of "moseak" or "moseache" (Ar. masjid or masgid), the term remained practically unknown in English until the first part of the sixteenth century. This is not surprising when Muslim places of worship were often called synagogues even by people who had been to the East and had no doubt heard of the word. Cf. Rubruck, Journey, pp. 221, 273. Consult also the O.E.D., s.v. "mosque".

21 But this could cause the Saracens considerable trouble at sea. While a destructive storm was raging and tossing a Saracen ship from side to side, the hero of Blanchardyn and Eglantine told the Saracens that God had sent the storm because of the Saracen idols on board. The moment these "maumetys" were cast into the water "the see became swete and amayable / and became as a lytyll ryuer" (p.137).

22 In Rowland and Otuell, 1214ff, one hundred Saracen knights are employed to carry the idols for the sultan.

23 The Foure Sonnes of Aymon, p.512; Valentine and Orson, p.160. Other Saracen gods may also be painted; cf. Charles The Grete, p.60.

24 Lybeaus Desconus, 1338 (L.).

25 Roland and Vernagu, 851; The Fillingham Firumbras, 232 ff.

26 Valentine and Orson, p.234.

27 Ibid., pp. 263-4; Roland and Vernagu, 854 ff.

give generous sacrifices such as "precious stoones",
 "milkehony"²⁸ and "bred & wyn, and corn plentee, & gold, &
 syluer".²⁹

Muhammed's idols are occasionally presented as being inhabited by demons who may or may not give responses to their worshippers. The curious notion that idols are the abode of evil spirits is, of course, an old one. The early Christian fathers believed that demons hid inside them to perform miracles in order to deceive their followers.³⁰ In the alliterative romance of Joseph of Arimathie, a Saracen prays to his "mawmet" for a prophecy but is disappointed at the answer the idol gives: "Of new þing þat is to come...con I not telle".³¹ In Lydgate's Pilgrimage of the Life of Man (1426), Satan himself is presented as dwelling inside the great "mawmet" which the old hag "Idolatrie" possesses. To mislead people, the mawmet always gives answers with a double meaning:

Ffor Sathan - that ys cloos with-Inne
 To infecte hys soule wyth synne,
 And hys wyttys to entrouble,-
 Yiveth an answer wych ys double
 Wych hath (to marren hys entent,)
 A maner off double entendement
 And leueth hym euere in none-certeyn,
 Or kepeth hym Muët off dysdeyn;

28 The Sowdone of Babylone, 946, 2521.

29 Sir Ferumbras, 5129. Cf. The Sege off Melayne, 944; Octavian Imperator, 1720.

30 Arthur Dickson, Valentine and Orson: A Study in Medieval Romance (New York, 1929), p.192. The origin of the dwelling of evil spirits inside Muhammed's idols is based on some verses in the Bible: St. Mark 1X,25; XVI,9. See Leo Jordan, "Wie man sich im Mittelalter die Heiden des Orients vorstellte", Germanisch Romanische Monatschrift, V (1913), 394.

31 Ll. 400 ff.

And hys requeste doth refuse
 To make the fool more for to muse 32
 Lose hys tyme, off wyllfulnesse.

The most celebrated fiend-infested mawmet in the metrical
 romances is undoubtedly that which Muhammed himself had built
 in Spain:

As a man y-schapen he was
 & held a glaive on hand
 Mahoun maked him wip gin
 & dede mani fendes per in
 As ich vnderstond
 For to susten þe ymage
 & sett him on heiz stage
 For no man nold he wond. 33

This unique idol, we are assured, would never fall except when
 a king brought Christianity to Spain. As might be expected,
 the honour of destroying this great monument is reserved for
 the "gode charlmain", who with Bishop Turpin's help smashes not
 only this idol but all the "mawmets" in Spain, "sum purch

32 Ll. 20897-907.

33 Roland and Vernagu, 333-40.

miracle & sum purch fize".³⁴

The notion that Muhammed was an idol worshipped by Saracens and heretics alike was given wider currency in the early fourteenth century following the trials and suppression of the erstwhile champions of Christendom, the Knights Templars. Among other charges, they were accused of being secret allies of the Muslims and, above all else, of absorbing certain Eastern religious practices, particularly their worship of the idol Baphomet. Despite the fanciful explanations given to the origin of the term, Baphomet is an obvious variant of Muhammed.

34 Ibid., 318ff. The medieval legend of the oracular "maumet" endowed with the power of speech and inhabited by a demon reappears in Robert Greene's Alphonsus King of Arragon. The brazen head of Muhammed, the Muslim god "of peerles power", in Greene's words, plays an interesting part in the play. Like the "maumet" in Joseph of Arimathie, referred to earlier, the head refuses to give any prophecy to the distressed Sultan, Amurack, but agrees in the end to speak to the "Princes of Turkie", who were kneeling down before it. The assembled emirs of Islam were happy to learn of their future victory:

What, know you not how that it is decreed
By all the gods, and chiefly by my selfe,
That you with triumph should all Crowned bee?
(Ll. 1328-30).

But the prophecy proves a false one and the Turks are defeated by the valiant soldiers of Alphonsus. When Amurack is told of the defeat, he rages and rails at Muhammed and his unreliable oracles:

Is this the Crowne which Mahomet did say
He should with triumph weare vpon his head?
Is this the honour which that cursed god
Did prophesie should happen to them all?
(Ll. 1531-34).

It might be mentioned here that Grene assigns a conspicuous role to a "Brazen Head" in his Frier Bacon and Frier Bungay. But the head here is not specifically referred to as that of Muhammed. In Robert Daborne's A Christian Turn'd Turke, a speaking head of Muhammed also appears. Cf. Dickson, Valentine and Orson, pp. 201-202, notes 94-5. See also Chew, Crescent and Rose, p. 345. In his Faerie Queene, Spenser describes the devil as hiding inside an idol in a heathen temple. When struck by Arthur, the idol, like Muhammed's Head in Alphonsus, begins to issue forth clouds of smoke. For the relevant passage and commentary see T.A. Spalding, Elizabethan Demonology (London, 1880), pp. 39-40. Cf. pp. 282 n.³⁶, 297.

Plate 2

A late medieval ink drawing of Muhammed showing him carrying the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other. Bibliotheque Nationale, MS Latin 16274, f. 10 verso. Reproduced in Norman Daniel, Islam and the West (Edinburgh, 1960), p. 134.

This identification is supported by certain ceremonies and rituals the Templars were said to have performed. In their initiation rites it was alleged that the would-be Templar had to abuse the Cross by spitting and trampling upon it. He was then led to the idol of Baphomet amid cries of "Yalla, Yalla !", which is very close to, indeed identical with the most common Muslim form of addressing Allah, "Ya Allah" (O, Allah). Representations of Baphomet show him as having a monstrous head, hooves of a goat, the bosom of a woman, a belly covered with scales, and hands upheld pointing to two crescents, the upper white and the lower black.³⁵

The more enlightened medieval writers, admittedly few in number, knew that Muhammed was not a Saracen idol or a false god but a prophet - though from their own point of view, a false one. Chaucer, for one, was aware of the Muslim view of "Makomete" as the man through whom "Goddes message" was delivered.³⁶ While it is difficult to detect signs of anti-Saracen feelings in Chaucer's references to Islam or its promulgator, it is quite easy to show how bigoted his contemporary literati were against Islam and Muhammed in particular. Most poets of Chaucer's day wrote of Muhammed as a low-born upstart who unscrupulously schemed his way into power and maintained it by his use of magic and pretended revelations.³⁷

³⁵ See E.J. Martin, The Trial of the Templars (London, 1928), pp. 32-3, 47; Dennis Wheatley, The Devil And All His Works (London, 1971), pp. 215-16; A.L. Constant [A. Levi], Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual, trans., A.E. Waite (London, 1923), pp. 375ff, 386; J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans., Jack Sage (London, 1962), p. 267. Cf. also O.E.D., s.v. "Baphomet".

³⁶ The Man of Law's Tale, 332-3

³⁷ Muhammed "constrayned them [the princes of Arabia] by force and by swerd to & alle their subgetts to obeye to his commandemens and to byleue in his lawe".
(Godeffroy of Boloyne, p. 18)

William Langland reflects one of the common medieval views that Muhammed was a frustrated cardinal seeking to become the Pope of Christendom, "prynce of holychurche" and "mayster ouer all po men", as Langland puts it.³⁸ Having failed in his ambition, Muhammed returned to Syria (presumably from Italy), where he propagated his heresy and misled all the Syrians "as well lered as lewed". Like Dante, Langland consigns Muhammed to Hell, where he takes his place among the infernal demons.³⁹

More detailed information about Muhammed is found in the poetry of John Lydgate (1370?-1451?). In his Fall of Princes, the poet includes an extensive account entitled "Qff Machomet the fals prophete and how he beyng dronke was deuoured among swyn".⁴⁰ Lydgate, who is proud to declare at the outset that he culled his material from "bookis olde", begins his story by charging the prophet with being a "magicien". When Muhammed grew up, we are told, he was admired by his fellow countrymen for teaching them how to use camels for carriage. From his frequent journeys to Egypt, Lydgate continues, Muhammed "lerned the Olde and Newe Testament". Anticipating Othello by centuries, this "cursid fals man" won the love of a distinguished lady called Cardigan (Ar. Khadidga) through magic:

He wrouhte so be his enchauntementis
And be fals menis off nigromauncie
Hir enclynynge toward his ententis;
For bothe he koude riht weel flatre & lie.⁴¹

³⁸ Piers Plowman, XVlll, 166 ff. (C).

³⁹ Ibid.,^{xviii} 182, XXl, 295-96. Cf. Capgrave, Chronicle, p.94; D'Ancona, La Leggenda, pp. 200, 202f, 280-81.

⁴⁰ Lydgate, Fall of Princes, pp. 920-23.

⁴¹ Ibid., 71-74.

Muhammed made many new laws and "like Moises hymself he dide feyne". These laws were written by a clerk of his called Sergius and "thei be set in his Alkeroun". Collecting armies from the Persians, "Arabiens", "Sarsyns", "Turkis" and "Hismaelites", Muhammed then made war on Heraclius and captured "Alisaundre with many mo cities". He was a despicable hypocrite and told his people to "drynke watir & good wyn to lete", although he always got himself drunk on wine. Indeed, his immoderate indulgence in alcohol (Ar. Al-Kuhl) brought about his shameful end. For Muhammed

Lik a glotoun deiiede in dronkenesse
Bi excesse of mykil drynkyng wyn⁴²
Fill in a podel, deuoured among swyn.

Lydgate denies Muhammed any claim to prophethood or revelation and dismisses his miracles as "fals decit to gotten hym a name". He was never instructed by Gabriel or any other angel, but had cunningly trained some doves to pick grain from his ears. This, Lydgate goes on, Muhammed tried to pass off as proof of his divine inspiration:

On his shuldres were ofte tymes seyn
Whan he to folkis shewed his presence
Milk whit doves, which that piked greyn
Out of his eris; affermyng in sentence
Thei cam be grace of goostli influence
Hym to visite, to shewe & specefie⁴³
He was the prophete that callid was Messie.

The legend of Muhammed's white dove proved very popular in England and survived for a long time. Leading men of letters and poets made frequent references to it. Thomas More spoke

⁴² Ibid., 152-54.

⁴³ Ibid., 92-98.

of the dove as "Muhammed's familiar" which, in the Muslim view, deserved admission into Paradise.⁴⁴ Among the numerous references to this legend in the Elizabethan age, Shakespeare writes

Was Mahomet inspired with a dove? ⁴⁵
Thou with an eagle art inspired.

The association of Muhammed with black magic and miracle-mongering, present in Lydgate's treatment of the Prophet, is of course a widespread notion popularised by the clerical writings of the age.⁴⁶ In Goddefroy of Boloyne, Muhammed is referred to as a customer of the devil and his "agent".⁴⁷ In Charles the Grete, a magician who causes great damage to the Christian knights is given the suggestive name Mahon.⁴⁸ The most interesting reference to Muhammed as a supernatural being occurs in an early Scottish song entitled "the Gyre-Carling". In this song, Hecate, the evil Mother Witch of the Scottish peasants who "levit vpoun Christiane menis flesche", is driven out of Scotland by the King of Fairies because of a crime she had committed. She sails across "the Greik sie" and takes refuge among the infidels:

The Carling now for dispyte
Is mareit wth Mahomyte

As a result of this marriage, the Great Hag is proclaimed the "quene of Jowis".⁴⁹

44 Poetical Works (New York, 1845), p.535; quoted in Smith, Islam, p.188.

45 I Henry VI, I, ii, 140-41. For more references to this legend in the age of Shakespeare, see Arden edition, ed., A.S. Cairncross, 3rd ed. rev. (1962). Cf. also Dryden, "The Hind and the Panther", in Works, vol. x, p.259. "Mawmet" is a name given to a kind of pigeon famous for its great black eyes in the 17th and 18th centuries. Consult O.E.D. s.v. "mawmet".

46 Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 27, 87.

47 Goddefroy of Boloyne, p.18.

48 Charles the Grete, pp. 141-42.

49 David Laing, ed., The Popular Poetry of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1895), i, 18-20.

In an age when anti-Islamic legends and calumnies were freely circulating and multiplying, it was inevitable that Muhammed should also be identified with such biblical figures, as the false prophets of Baal and other men against whom Christ had warned. David Lindsay (1490-1555), reflecting one of the commonplaces of religious attacks, says that there are many Antichrists on earth but none more harmful than Muhammed:

Quha wes one greter Antichrist
And more contraryous to Christ
Nor the fals Propheit Machomeit
Quilk his curste lawis maid so sweit?⁵⁰

Other writers saw in Muhammed the embodiment of that elusive biblical figure, Magog. According to John Bale (1495-1563), one of the champions of the cause of Reformation in England, the Magog against whom Jesus warned the faithful is none other than that "tyrant", Muhammed, whose Koran is "a mean law" designed to seduce men by encouraging vice and "voluptuous pleasures". It might be mentioned that Muhammed's partner in deceiving the people in the four quarters of the earth was no other than the "Romish Pope", who was identified as Gog.⁵¹

Other Gods

Besides Muhammed, the Saracens were credited with a long and incongruous list of gods such as Belzabub, Apollo, Jupiter, Termagant, Nero, Ascorat and other mythical, biblical and historical figures. The so-called Saracen gods are of course fabrications of the romance writers and are quite unknown among

50 "Ane Dialog Betuix Experience and Ane Courtier", 5197-200.

51 John Bale, Select Works, pp. 569-72.

those of Muslim faith. A romance writer included even the Koran among these supposed gods:

He defyed Mahounde and Apolyne
Iubiter Ascarot and Alcaron also.⁵²

This, however, is one of the rare references to the Muslim book. The scarcity of references to the Koran is, no doubt, based upon the common notion that Islam was not a revealed religion and did not therefore have a holy book.⁵³

It has been suggested that in the eyes of medieval men Mahoune, Termagant and Apollin composed an unholy Muslim Trinity analogous to the Christian concept of God. This, however, is unlikely since Mahoun usually appears the most conspicuous figure of an entire pantheon and not always one of three.⁵⁴

Of the three gods, Saracens sometimes swear by Apollin alone, but romance writers do not seem to have associated any particular characteristics with him.⁵⁵ Not so Termagant. Unlike Apollin

52 The Sowdone of Babylone, 2761-62; cf. 2271-72, where the Koran is said to be the "bibill" of the Saracens.

53 See Y. and Ch. Pellat, "L'idée de Dieu chez les Sarrasins des Chansons de Geste", Studia Islamica, XXII (1965), 18-19.

54 The derivation of these words has for a long time been a subject of debate. The origin of Termagant is most likely to be found in Arabic Al-Rajim, a term applied to the devil. Apollin may not be the Apollo of ancient mythology but Arabic AL-A'een (cursed). Both these forms were used by the Christians in Spain, who preferred Arabic-derived terms of abuse in their reference to Muhammed. See Ch. Pellat, "Mahom, Tervagan, Apollin", Primer Congreso de Estudios Arabes E Islamicos Actas, Cordova, 1962 (Madrid, 1964), pp. 265-70. See also Pellat's "L'idée de Dieu", pp. 28-9.

55 His picture is occasionally painted on their shields. Cf. Charles the Grete, p.60. In Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, we are given a description of this "foul fiend". He was "cloathed with scales like a Fish (and they are his pride), he had Wings like a Dragon, feet like a Bear, and out of his belly came Fire and Smoak, and his mouth was as the mouth of a Lion". From Christian's conversation with this demon, it becomes clear that Apollyon, like Dunbar's Mahoune in "The Devillis Inquest", is a tempter of souls and a sour enemy to Christianity. See John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, pp. 56ff.

and the other Saracen deities, Termagant, who continued to appear in the literary scene centuries beyond the period with which we are concerned, had recognizable qualities - he was always envisaged as a thunderous and tumultuous being. For his giant, Olifaunt, Chaucer most suitably chose Termagant to swear by.⁵⁶ Later poets, including Shakespeare, employed the word Termagant either as a violent Saracen god or as an equivalent of a savage and most overbearing person.⁵⁷ Curmudgeon, a term applied to an avaricious, ill-natured, grumbling man is perhaps the same as Termagant. That there is no reference in medieval literature to Allah, the one deity by whose name Muslims most frequently swear, now as then, may perhaps be explained by the fact that Saracens were commonly believed to be pagans, worshippers not of one but of several gods.⁵⁸

In times of crisis the Saracens flock to their temples or congregate "a-myd the toun" and offer collective prayers to their gods. In so doing, they behave like their Christian counterparts, who are always presented as seeking help from God or Mary. Quite frequently Saracen prayers are contrasted with those of the Christians: "As Beues bad helpe to Marie / To

56 The Tale of Sir Thopas, B.2000. Cf. Lybeaus Desconus, 1301(C.).

57 Cf. Hamlet's words to the players: "I would have such a fellow whipp'd for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod. Pray you avoid it". (III,ii, 13-15). Falstaff describes Hotspur as a "hot termagant Scot" (I Henry IV, V,iv, 115). More references are gathered by Chew, Crescent and Rose, 389-90, n.1. Cf. also "Termagant" in O.E.D.

58 There are, however, those who spoke vaguely of the "God of the Saracens". Cf. Chaucer, Man of Law's Tale, 332. In his Travels, p.103, Mandeville uses the term Alla when he transliterates - rather inaccurately - the Muslim religious testimony of faith (shihadah). Mandeville's reference to Allah is not recorded in the O.E.D. where the earliest use is given as late as 1702!

Teruagaunt Yuor gan crie",⁵⁹ "þe Crystene made here
 prayers to Mary sone, þa Sarsynys cryde all yn fere hare
 god Mahoune",⁶⁰ are typical expressions and clichés used in
 this connection. Longer prayers, in the form of an address
 to one or other of their gods are also introduced. In Otuel
and Roland, the Saracens, including their Sultan and "alle
 the sarsins of renoun", gather to implore Mahound's help for
 one of their champions who is on his way to fight a Christian
 knight:

"Mahound, we the by-seche,
 To-day thou be oure alder leche,
 And on clarel haue mercy
 As thou art god, ful o mucche myzt
 That he mowe sle otuel in fyzt
 That dozth the so mucche vylonye".⁶¹

But for all the earnest prayers and sacrifices which the
 Saracens lavish upon their idols, their gods remain unmindful of
 the plight of their followers, with their "eyen al a-slepe", as
 one Christian knight describes these lifeless images.⁶²

The great multitude of Saracen gods are often enumerated when
 romance writers indulge themselves in describing scenes in
 which these idols are smashed to pieces either by enraged
 Saracens or by pious Christian knights. These episodes were
 popular enough to be included several times in the same romance.⁶³
 The recurrent motif, which is highly stylised and follows a
 fairly definite pattern, must have provided the audience with

59 Beues of Hamtoun, 4144.

60 Octavian, 1089; quoted in Beues, Appendix, p.xlix, where
 numerous other examples are cited.

61 Otuel and Roland, 1253-58.

62 Charles the Grete, p.126.

63 G. Bordman, Motif Index of the English Metrical Romances
 (Helsinki, 1963): V127.1, V211.2.4, V356.

great entertainment and a high sense of religious superiority. Graphic descriptions of embittered Saracens taking their revenge on one or more of their gods who had failed to assist them against the Christians are a familiar feature of the romances. "Mahoun, þow art myswent, for now am y vndon and schent", begins the enraged Balan, at a moment of pique:

þou art nozt worþ a flye.
Wyckede god, þou dost amys, Suppe þow wilt suffrye þys
My worschip to wyþdrawe.
Fyrumbras my sone dude ful wel Wan he for-sok þe euery del,
þer-of may he beo fawe. ⁶⁴

Such insults and threats to forswear Islam are, as a rule, followed by hysterical fits of violence, usually culminating in an orgy in which all the images in the temple are destroyed. "Fy on ow everichon", cries the Sultan of Damascus at his gods after their failure to bring his dead baby to life. Impatient with their impotence he

hente a staf with herte grete
And al his goddes he gan to bete
And drouh hem alle adoun
And leyde on til that he con swete,
With sterne strokes and with grete,
On Jovyn and Plotoun
On Astrot and sire Jovin
On Tirmagaunt and Appolin
He brak hem scolle and croun
On Tirmagaunt, that was heore brother
He lafte no lyme hole with other
Ne on his lord seynt Mahoun. ⁶⁵

Equally common are the episodes in which Christian heroes destroy Saracen idols, usually following some battle between the defenders of the true faith and the Saracens. The popularity of these scenes is of course closely connected with the emergence of a new concept of heroism in which discomfiting

⁶⁴ Sir Ferumbras, 4929-34.

⁶⁵ The Kyng of Tars, 623-34.

the Muslims was considered among the most chivalrous exploits. What was more heroic than destroying the very gods which the greatest enemies of Christendom worshipped? Before embarking upon this ennobling deed, Christian knights usually give a short sermon on the futility and utter blindness of placing one's faith in a lifeless image. Thus, when Beves arrives at Damascus after a long and arduous journey from Armenia, the zealous hero meets with a crowd of Saracens who have just offered their devotion to Muhammed:

"What devill do ye?
 Why make ye Mahound this present
 And so dissprice god omnipotent?
 I shall wytt, so haue I roo,
 What Mahound can say or doo!"
 Beues lepe to Mahoun
 And pullid hym right to the ground
 And caste hym in myddus the myre
 And he bad hem take her syre.
 The Sarzins, that be Beues stode
 For Ire and tene waxid wood
 And they swore all, he shold abyge
 For dissprysinge of theire mawmentrye. ⁶⁶

One variation of this conventional episode occurs in the romance of Sir Ferumbras. Here, instead of tumbling the Muslim gods into the ditch,⁶⁷ a favourite way of disposing of them, the Christian knights make excellent use of the images before they eventually destroy them. Besieged in a captured Saracen castle and having no weapons with which to defend themselves, the Christian warriors rush inside the castle temple,

⁶⁶ Beues of Hamtoun, 1162-74 (S).

⁶⁷ In the earlier French epic poem, La Chanson de Roland, the images of Muslim gods, particularly that of Muhammed, suffer from a nastier fate. The Christians first beat them with thick cudgels and then

Into a ditch they boot away Mahound
 For pigs and dogs to mangle and befoul.
 (The Song of Roland, 2590-91).

Christ vs. Muhammed.

A recurrent motif closely connected with the medieval view of Islam is the single combat between a Christian and a Saracen knight to prove which religion is the superior one.⁶⁹ This episode offered the romance writers ample opportunities to degrade Islam and ridicule its teachings. Just before the two warriors engage in fighting or during a pause in the combat, a doctrinal debate between the adversaries is introduced. In these religious discussions the Christian knight explains his creed and elaborates in detail various theological points while the Saracen disputant is allowed to voice only stupid and spiteful objections. As a rule, the Saracen's chief objection to Christianity is shown to centre on Christ himself, more specifically his crucifixion. In Saracen eyes a god that can be overcome by ordinary men is unworthy of worship or reverence.⁷⁰ Other matters such as baptism, ascension and the Holy Trinity are particularly difficult for the Saracen disputant to comprehend.

The Roland-Vernagu debate is perhaps the best known example in medieval romance.⁷¹ To Vernagu, the death of the

69 Bordman, Motif-Index: V351.

70 So when Firumbras implores his father to follow his example and renounce Islam, the father replies:
 "Sone", sayde þe Amerel þan" By Mahoun þou art a nycy man
 þat þou dost me rede,
 To by-lyue on such a mon þat was on a croys y-don
 for ys owe mysdede".
 (Sir Ferumbras, 5843-46). Cf. Valentine and Orson, p.218.

71 Medieval art attests its popularity. See T.S.R. Boase, Kingdoms and Strongholds of the Crusaders (London, 1971), p.55, where a late twelfth-century sculpted panel representing the combat is reproduced.

Christian god upon the Cross and his resurrection are impossible and incredible:

For i nist neuer no man
 pat aros after pan
 When pat he ded was
 & 3if he godes sone were
 He no mizt nouzt dye pere
 Tel me now pat cas...⁷²

Roland is, of course, only too eager to seize this opportunity to dwell upon the countless merits of Christianity, in the hope that Vernagu might be converted to the True Faith through persuasion. As a last resort, Vernagu, who has lost the theological fight with Roland, insists on testing the two religions on the battlefield:

Now ich wot
 3our cristen lawe eueri grot
 Now we wil fizt
 Wheper lawe better be
 Sone we schul y-se
 Long ar it be nist. ⁷³

And indeed, before dark, the wounded Vernagu, expiring on the ground, calls pathetically on his gods to help him and heal his fatal wounds. At this sight, Roland vindictively

...lou3 for pat cri
 & syd, "mahoun, sikerly,
 No may pe help nouzt
 No Iubiter, no apolin
 No is worth pe Brust of a swin ⁷⁴
 In hert no in pouzt".

The Christian-Muslim disputations do not always end up with a duel. Occasionally, the debate is unexpectedly terminated in favour of the Christian party by means of some heavenly intervention, when God can no longer tolerate any more

72 Roland and Vernagu, 749-54.

73 Ibid., 785-90.

74 Ibid., 857-62.

blasphemous questioning or debating from the Muslim. Thus, when the Saracen clerk in Joseph of Arimathie denies the Holy Trinity, he is suddenly stricken blind and, further, we are assured that his eyes "flowen out of his hed and biforen him fallen".⁷⁵

Medieval romance abounds in examples of the miraculous power of the Christian God and His immediate response to the prayers of the Christian.⁷⁶ This is often contrasted with the futile prayers of the Saracens, to whom heavenly providence is absolutely and axiomatically denied. A great sense of complacency and religious superiority must have been derived from the Saracens' admission of the ineffectiveness of their gods and their awareness that while the cause of Christian successes is their faith in Christ, their own religion brings nothing to them but failure and destruction. The following exclamation reflects the dismay and bewilderment of Sultan Balan at the invincibility of the Christian soldiers, and how it must have delighted the medieval audience!

Fful Welle waketh for hem god *þ*at thay louen ay,
And oure falce mametrye slepyn nyzt and day
Thorow the trust *þ*at we han on hem, we ben schent
Ffalsely they ous swyke and they ben worthy to be
brent. 77

Despite their ranting and raging against their gods, and their repeated threats to forsake Islam, many Saracens are most

75 Joseph of Arimathie, 362. Cf. The Sege off Melayne, 469ff., where the Saracens are blinded by the flames which burst out of the rood which the Sultan was trying to burn.

76 Cf. Bordman, Motif-Index: V52ff; Norbert, Religion, p.18.

77 The Fillingham Firumbras, 769-72.

unwilling to renounce their religion even when faced with the punishment of death. This, of course, is one of the negative aspects of the treatment of the Saracen and constitutes an obvious inconsistency in characterization. The puzzling obstinacy of Sultan Balan in Sir Ferumbras is a case in point. Throughout the romance we are led to believe that Balan enjoyed nothing better in life than abusing his gods and smashing their idols. But when the victorious Christian Knights towards the end of the romance offer him the choice of baptism as an alternative to death, he strongly refuses to be converted and commits a most wanton outrage by spitting on the holy water which Bishop Turpin had prepared for his baptism:

Y diffye hym her and alle hyse, By Mahoun y nolde 3yue a pyse
for cryst ne al ys myzte
Nel y neuere on hym be-lyue, Ne beo y-fulled on my lyue 78
to dye þarfore her rizte.

Conversions

A glance at the relationship between Christian and Saracen will show that the only perspective through which they viewed each other was religion. There was on the Christian's part an obsession with converting Saracens to Christianity. Until he has changed his religion, the Saracen is declared anathema and a contaminator with whom no co-existence is possible.⁷⁹ To

78 Sir Ferumbras, 5874-50. Cf. Norbert, Religion, p.55; George Kane, Middle English Literature (London, 1949), p.40. Similarly, the Sultan of Granade in Huon of Burdeux, pp.622-23, declares that "I had rather be slayne all quycke then to leue my holy law and to take that byleue".

79 Cf. Norbert, Religion, p.54. This tendency, however, is not confined to "the Crusading stories". See Bordman, Motif-Index: V331ff, V345.1, Q24f.

procure conversion Christian knights often resort to promises of every kind: kingdoms, lands, beautiful wives and other worldly gains. The Saracens who resist these temptations are of course put to immediate death.⁸⁰

But conversion can more easily be achieved through divine intervention when some miracle is performed in the presence of infidels.⁸¹ The smashing of idols by Christian knights frequently leads to conversion, and many Saracens, dismayed at the evident inferiority of their gods in meeting a crisis, renounce Islam at this sight.⁸² While the most common way of securing conversion is to threaten the Saracens with death, there are a few instances of voluntary acceptance of Christianity, prompted either by love at first sight or by the desire to marry a Christian girl. Almost all the Saracen princesses and a number of enamoured sultans abjure Islam for one of these two reasons. Only on very rare occasions are such opportunistic conversions rejected.⁸³

Conversion to Christianity was a matter of great significance to the knights of medieval romance, not only because it was looked upon as a proof of the superiority of their faith but also because it meant the humiliation and defeat of their enemies. Generally speaking, conversions were treated with

80 Bordman, Motif-Index: V335.2.

81 Ibid.: V331.1.

82 Ibid.: V331.1.3.1.

83 Ibid.: V331.5., V331.1-2. In Partonope of Blois, 1.11889, the sultan of Persia's offer to embrace Christianity is rejected because it was motivated by "luste and covetise".

appropriate seriousness. Occasionally, however, they were employed for comic effect. The christening of the Saracen giant Ascopard in Beues of Hamtoun is a well-known example. When the Bishop of Cologne brought a large cask in preparation for the giant's baptism, Ascopart "lept out vpon the benche" protesting loudly that he was "to moche crystened to be". At this, the bishop was grieved but "the folke had gode game and loughen".⁸⁴ In Sir Ferumbras, much comedy is provided by undressing an old sultan who was trying to stop the knights from baptizing him:

Wan ~~pay~~ by-gunne ys cloyys of-do Myche strif made ~~pe~~ Amerel tho
 And tornde & wende faste
 Ac Roland and Olyuer hulde hym so, That whather he wolde
 ys cloyys of thay caste.⁸⁵ per no,

After baptism, the heretofore embodiment of iniquity and evil undergoes a quick and intense spiritual transformation. Converted Saracens become instantly the model of piety and faith and even more zealous about spreading the gospel than the Christian knights who brought about their conversion. One Saracen, who, before baptism, had a habit of slaughtering popes, "cardynals, abbotes & pryours, monekys & frerys eke / & all clerkes of honours", became one of Charlemagne's peers immediately after he had been cleansed of his pagan qualities,⁸⁶ and in another romance, dealing with the same character, we are

84 Beues of Hamtoun, 2305-16 (S). Cf. George Ellis, Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, revised by J.O. Halliwell (London, 1848), p.264; H.L. Creek, "Character in the Matter of England Romances", JEGP, X (1911), 587-88; G.M. Bordman, The Folklore Motifs in the Matter of England Romances, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Pennsylvania, 1958), p.43.

85 Sir Ferumbras, 5715-18.

86 Ibid., 61-62, 1092ff. Cf. Rauf Coilgear, 953.

told that he in fact became a "saynt and god shewed for hym myracles".⁸⁷ Another newly converted Saracen declares that he will not get married until he defeats his erstwhile fellow Saracens and captures or kills his ex-King.⁸⁸

Prior to their conversion Saracens are as enthusiastic about Islam as the Christian knights are about their faith. Their hatred of Christianity is equalled only by the Christians' abhorrence of Islam. To the Saracens, the sight of a Christian praying to his God is a grievous affront to religion and may be punished only by death.⁸⁹ When converts to Christianity are caught they are instantly killed and deprived of all their possessions.⁹⁰ In proselytising, Saracens employ much the same methods as those of their Christian counterparts, placing even more emphasis on the worldly rewards conversion to Islam will bring. In one romance the Muslim Sultan promises Charlemagne the kingdom of "Inglonde", and Normandy if the Frankish monarch will "vn-cristen be".⁹¹ In another, Oliver is offered a Kingdom and a Saracen girl, "the fayrest of moder born", if he becomes a Muslim.⁹² In his captivity, Roland is promised his freedom

⁸⁷ Charles the Grete, p.85.

⁸⁸ Otuel, 644-50. However, a few Saracens show some sense of pragmatism and falsely pretend that they have accepted Christianity while they remain Muslims in secret. But they are soon discovered and punished by death (Huon of Burdeux, p.423).

⁸⁹ Beues of Hamtoun, 1591 ff.

⁹⁰ Valentine and Orson, p.228. Cf. Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale, 226, 428ff, where the Sultanness kills her own son for his conversion to Christianity.

⁹¹ Roland and Otuell, 234 ff.

⁹² Charles the Grete, p.73. A similar offer is made to the hero of Beues of Hamtoun, 559ff. Cf. Huon of Burdeux, p.147, where Huon was offered at one point an emir's "syster", who is described, perhaps ironically, as being "a fote gretter than I [the emir] and blacke as cole".

if he renounces the "false lawes of Fraunce". To this offer he responds by asking his captors to abandon their superstitions and place their faith in

þe Fader and þe Son and þe holy goste
thire thre are alle in one:
þat Borne was of Marye free
Sythen for vs dyede one a tree.⁹³

Like their Christian counterparts, Saracens offer their enemies no alternative to conversion other than death. At one point in The Sege off Melayne, Charlemagne is threatened that if he does not "to our lawe be sworne / He sall be hangede or oper morne / And with wylde horse be drawn".⁹⁴ But it is, of course, unthinkable for a Christian knight to renounce his faith for any reason and "turn Turk or Saracen". However, when Mandeville writes that occasionally "Cristene men becomen Sarazines outhur for pouertee or for sympleness or elles for here owne wykkedness", he is, in fact, stating an historical truth which the Church had for a long time viewed with anxiety and consternation.⁹⁵ A rare example of conversion to Islam occurs in Huon of Burdeux, where one Christian renounces "the feythe of our lord god" and embraces "the paynyms law". This renegade becomes such a fanatic Saracen afterwards that "yf he here any man speke of our lord god, he wyl presaunt him to the dethe".⁹⁶

93 The Sege off Melayne, 409-12.

94 Ibid., 55-7. Cf. Valentine and Orson, p.59.

95 Travels, p.103. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many Christian malcontents renounced their Christianity in favour of Islam. The career of Captain John Ward (fl.1602), who was rumoured to have become a Muslim, was dramatised by Robert Daborne in A Christian Turn'd Turk (1612). See Chew, Crescent and Rose, pp. 347ff.

96 Huon of Burdeux, p.81; cf. p.83. Another example is of course that of the princess who was converted to Islam through force in The Kyng of Tars, 453ff.

The Afterlife

Being infidels, all Saracens are expected to join the devil after death and languish with him in hell. Instead of the heavenly angels who attend the departure of Christian souls, romance writers often assign infernal demons to escort the souls of the dead Saracens to the banks of Styx and Acheron. "Goo thy waye to helle", shouts a Christian knight after killing a sultan, "the devylle spede the, and bare felishyp to thy predessours that went afore the".⁹⁷ In another romance it is related that the souls of the dead Saracens were carried off to dance with the devils in hell.⁹⁸ In Otuel and Roland, the devils confide to Bishop Turpin that they were in the battlefield to fetch the soul of Mansour, the dead sultan of Spain.⁹⁹

The conviction that all Saracens are doomed to live perpetually in hell explains the scarcity of references to a Saracen Paradise in medieval literature. The Koranic Firdaws (Ar. = Paradise), the garden of delights with its gushing waters, mild air, thornless shady trees and fair houris (Ar. beautiful [virgin] damsels) with "wide lovely eyes like unto hidden pearls", as the Koran describes them,¹⁰⁰ find little or no expression in the romances of medieval England. Mandeville, however, provided his contemporaries with a brief description of it. From his popular Travels, the medieval reader learned something about the Muslim concept of reward which to them

97 The Foure Sonnes of Aymon, p.512. Cf. Goddefroy of Boloyne, p.268; The Sege off Melayne, 316ff.

98 The Sowdone of Babylone, 3188.

99 Otuel and Roland, 2463-4.

100 Sura 56:12-40.

looked purely sensual and plainly contrary to the natural and divine laws:

And yif a man aske hem what paradys thei menen, thei seyn to Paradys that is a place of delytes, where men schulle fynde alle maner of frutes in alle cesouns and ryueres rennyng of mylk and hony and of wyn and of swete water; and that thei schulle haue faire houses and noble, euery man after his dissert, made of precyous stoness and of gold and syluer; and that euery man schalle haue iiii.^{xx} wyfes alle maydenes, and he schalle haue ado euery day with hem, and yit he schalle fynden hem alleweys maydenes. 101

101 Travels, p.96. It might be mentioned here that the Muslim concept of Paradise was often used in medieval polemics to prove that Islam was devoid of any spirituality. "What will Paradise be, but a tavern of unwearied gorging and a brothel of perpetual turpitude?", asks one theologian. Another thought that Muslim paradise was ridiculous: "To eat gluttonously, to wanton and lie with women indefinitely". See Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 148-52. See also plate 4 on p.228 for an illustration of the sensual nature of the Islamic Paradise.

(iii), Love, Marriage and Sexual Mores

Sensuality and lustfulness are among the most persistent characteristics in the portrayal of the Saracens in medieval romance. The conventional sultan invariably approaches women with unrestrained lust and violent desire. Like the monsters and giants of folklore he can never adopt a refined attitude of humble adulation and worship, for this attitude demonstrates the ability to restrain desire for the sake of some noble or civilized ideal - a virtue the Saracen is most emphatically denied. To the Saracens, love simply means physical pleasures and promiscuity. Generally speaking, they do not scruple to renounce their religion to win a beautiful virgin. Their unbridled lust for women, usually young Christian princesses, often prompts them to wage wars against Christian kings, who naturally refuse to countenance the impossible and unnatural union of their daughters with those "heathen hounds".¹

The recurrent motif of the rejected Saracen suitor who resorts to war to enforce his demand conforms with the medieval conception of the Islamic character in which force has a prominent place. Likewise, the insistence upon the Saracen's indulgence in carnal pleasures reflects a common view which sees in Islam a dangerous conspiracy encouraging sexual laxity

1 For the popularity of the motif of the enamoured sultan waging war to enforce his demand for a maiden's hand, see Bordman, Motif-Index: T104ff. See other examples in the prose romances, Blanchardyn and Eglantine, pp.55ff; The Three Kings' Sons, p.80; Melusine, pp.121ff; Valentine and Orson, pp. 78ff. Cf. also the fifteenth-century ballad, "King Estmere" in Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, ed., Thomas Percy. Cf. Bernheimer, Wild Men, p.120; The Legacy of the Middle Ages, ed., C.G. Crump and E.F. Jacob (Oxford, 1926), p.405.

as an instrument for its expansion and the destruction of Christendom.² In order to discuss the medieval literary traditions concerning the Saracen's sexual mores and their attitude to love and marriage we should turn to a group of romances about saintly women whose careers are analogous to that of Nicholas Trivet's heroine, Constance. Through her marriage to a Saracen or as a result of his rejection, the Christian heroine of such romances as The Kyng of Tars, Le Bone Florence of Rome, Gower's Tale of Constance, Sir Isumbras and Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale undergoes great hardships and persecution, but at last withstands all sufferings and dangers by her exemplary patience and faith in God.

Like most popular motifs in romance the episode of the rejected Saracen suitor is highly stylised and usually follows the same sequence of events. The sultan or emir sees or hears of the unearthly beauty of the Christian girl; he then proposes to her or sends his emissaries with fabulous Oriental gifts to her father to bribe him into accepting the intended match. Then the messengers deliver either a stern warning that the Christian Kingdom will be destroyed if their demand is rejected, or a much milder message that their infatuated master might even be prepared to consider baptism if that would secure a union with the Christian girl. The girl refuses strongly, at first, but finally accepts the Saracen, either after the sultan has been converted or after a long siege of

2 Cf. Southern, Views, p.30; Daniel, Islam and the West, pp. 135ff. Interestingly, in the romance of Kyng Alisaunder, 6382-84, King Solomon renounces his God and serves Muhammed for love of a woman (Queen of Sheba). The same notion is reflected in Confessio Amantis, VII, 4993ff.

her father's domain which compels her to volunteer to marry the Saracen and save the kingdom.

The Sultan of Syria in The Man of Law's Tale, perhaps the most refined enamoured Saracen in romance, hears of Constance's beauty from his native merchants, who usually supply him with "tiydynges of sondry regnes".³ At the mere report of her excellent beauty, the sultan falls madly in love with her, summons his privy council, and commissions them to ease his heart by devising a plan which should obtain for him the hand of the princess. Many are the arguments and difficulties raised by the counsellors: among others, the great difference in religion between Syria and Italy; they conclude that no Christian would wed his daughter with a follower of "oure lawe sweete / that us taught by Mahoun, oure prophete".⁴ The sultan, however, overrules this objection by declaring that

rather than I lese
Custance I wol be cristned, doutlees
I moot been hires, I may noon oother chese.⁵

The consequences of the sultan's passion for Constance prove tragic and he pays for it with his life. Constance's parents, after long deliberations, agree to wed their daughter to the sultan and send her with a large retinue to the "Barbre nacioun". Upon Constance's arrival, the sultan's mother, the "serpent under femynynytee", prepares a wedding feast to which she invites all those who accompanied Constance. While the guests are still at table, the servants of the sultaness

³ The Man of Law's Tale, 181.

⁴ Ibid., 224. There is anachronism here. Tiberias, emperor of Constantinople (not of Rome as Chaucer makes him) died in 582 when Muhammed was but twelve years old. See Skeat's note on this.

⁵ The Man of Law's Tale, 225-27.

surprise them and put them all to death, including the bridegroom himself. Constance alone survives the mêlée, but is hurried into a vessel which has no rudder, and there the Saracens

han hir set, and bidde hire lerne saille 6
Out of Surrye agaynward to Ytaille.

In its broad outline, the story of the sultan's love for Constance is but another version of the episode of the infatuated Saracen. Unlike the conventional treatment of the Saracen suitor, however, there is nothing to suggest that Chaucer is mocking or attacking the sultan or his coreligionists for their unruly desires or excessive licence, which Islam was rumoured to have encouraged. It is noteworthy that in Constance's intended union with the sultan, Chaucer sees a good opportunity for the "destruccioun of Maumetrye" and the "encrees of Cristes lawe dere".⁷ This remark is of some significance to our enquiry in its reflection of the missionary zeal which resulted from the failure of the Crusades to destroy Islam by force. In the hope of winning new converts to the Christian fold, preachers of the missionary movement did not object to and indeed encouraged intermarriage with Saracens, so that Islam might perhaps be undermined through the resultant conversion of its rulers.⁸

6 Ibid., 440-41

7 Ibid., 236-37. Cf. "Tale of Constance", in Confessio Amantis, II, 634ff. However, Chaucer is simply following his source here. Cf. Nicholas Trivet, "The Life of Constance", Originals and Analogues of Some of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed., F.J. Furnivall, E. Brock and W.A. Clouston (London, 1872). The relevant passages are conveniently reproduced in The Man of Law's Tale, ed., N. Coghill and C. Tolkien (London, 1969), pp. 48-9.

8 See L.H. Hornstein, "Trivet's Constance and The King of Tars", MLN, LV (1940), 356, and, by the same writer, "The Historical Background of the King of Tars", Speculum, XVI (1941), 410. Cf. Archer and Kingsford, Crusades, p.429.

In the romances which include the same motif, mockery and ridicule usually mark the romancer's attitude towards the Saracen suitors. In these romances, the Saracen usually appears as an old lecher who has no object in life other than to indulge in carnal pleasures with girls who are occasionally said to be two or three generations younger than he is. When his suit is refused he raves and rants like a madman, threatening, with a barrage of abuse, havoc and destruction to all those who stand between him and the fulfilment of his desires. Thus, in The Kyng of Tars (early 14th C.), when the sultan of Damascus learns the disappointing news that the Christian king would never wed his daughter to him, "as a wod mon he ferde",

His robe he rente adoun
 He tar the her of hed and berd
 And seide he wolde hir wive with swerd
 Beo his lord seynt Mahoun
 The table adoun riht he smot
 In to the flore foot hot
 He lokede as a wylde lyon
 Al that he hitte he smot doun riht
 Bothe sergaunt and kniht
 Erl and eke baroun. 9

More entertaining than The Kyng of Tars is Le Bone Florence of Rome (late 14th C.). In this romance, the aged sultan of Constantinople, Garcey, who is "a hundurd yerys olde / and some boke seyth mar", is presented as burning with desire for Florence, the fifteen-year old daughter of the emperor of Rome. Garcey, we are told, is so decrepit that his blood is cold, his lips are blue and his flesh trembles constantly. He is more in need of "gode fyre / ... a softe bath, a warme bedd / than

any maydyn for to wedd".¹⁰ But these and other weaknesses seem not to have deterred the old sultan from proposing to Florence. His instructions to the forty messengers he sends for this purpose are explicit and straightforward. They are to tell her father that she

...schall lygg be my syde,
And taste my flankys with hur honde
That ys so feyre y understonde
Yn bedde be me to byde
Sche schall me bothe hodur and happe
And in hur lovely armes me lappe
Bothe evyn and morne tyde
Byd hur fadur sende hur to me
Or y schall dystroye hym and hys cyte 11
And thorow hys remes ryde.

Neither the eloquence of the messengers, the costly presents from Constantinople, nor the sultan's threats produce any result. The emissaries return with Florence's resolution that

We had levyr the warste bachylere
In all my fadurs thede
Then for to lye be hys bresyd boones
When he coghyth and oldely grones 12
I can not on hys lede.

After his failure as a lover, the sultan determines to prove a villain. He therefore summons formidable armies to carry out his repeated threats to destroy all her father's lands and their inhabitants "everychon". His soldiers march towards Rome, besiege it, and a catastrophic battle is about to take place when Florence intervenes. To prevent future bloodshed,

Florence declares that she has changed her mind and is now willing

¹⁰ Le Bone Florence of Rome, 92-101. In Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.186, the converted daughter of the sultan taunts her old father for doting upon younger girls: "O, full ryght false and olde tyrante...thou haste that berde of thyne ouer whyte therto / thy face is to mykel wonne / and that olde skynne of thyn ys ouer shronken to gyder; put thy selfe in to some fayre hermytage and medel thou nomore wyth loue".

¹¹ Le Bone Florence of Rome, 108-117. Such realistic declarations of intent are common enough in the romances. In Huon of Burdeux, p.620, after Clariet rejects the proposal of the Sultan of Granada, the latter replies: "Fayre demosell, now ye be here your denyall shall not auayle you, for this nyght ye shall lye with me al naked...whether ye wyl or not ye must suffer my pleasure / for I wyl not depart fro ye tyl ye haue lyen with me one nyght/ and that I may holde you in myne armes".

¹² Le Bone Florence of Rome, 245-49.

to accept the old Garcy:

Put me owt to olde Garcy
Yf all thes men schulde for me dye
Hyt were a dolefull wrake. 13

Fighting however breaks out, and through the singular heroism of Florence's young lover, Emere, the siege is ended and the sultan breaks camp and returns to Constantinople. In accordance with the rules of poetic justice, which reigns supreme in romance, the old lecher is made to pay dearly for his folly. Emere chases him as far as Constantinople, captures him and brings him back to Rome, where the sultan finally dies in prison.¹⁴

The imputation of purely sexual motives to the Saracen's desire for marriage, and the presentation of his attitude towards women as devoid of any spirituality, are closely related to the fact that the medieval man neither appreciated nor understood the Muslim concept of marriage or the place of women in Islam.¹⁵ The cry against Muslim depravity and licentiousness dates back to the early period of Arab occupation of Spain, where Spanish divines spared no effort to defame Muslim private morals and their institutions of marriage. "This enemy of our Saviour [Muhammed]", moans Alvaro (mid 9th Century), "has consecrated to feasting and debauchery the sixth day of the week which, in memory of our Lord's passion, should be a day of mourning and fasting. Christ preached chastity to his

13 Ibid., 580-82. Cf. Melusine, p.122: "Loue hath so moche of myght that it maketh coward [Saracens] to be hardy and to doo right gret enterpryse".

14 Le Bone, 1588-89.

15 E. W. Lane's discussion of the position of women in Islam and the Muslim's attitude towards marriage makes very good reading. See his Arabian Society in the Middle Ages, ed., S.Lane-Poole (London, 1883), pp. 207ff, 222ff, 240ff.

disciples; Muhammed to his preached gross pleasures, impure delights, even incest. Christ preached marriage; Muhammed revelry and gluttony. Christ...has ordained that on fast days a man should hold himself aloof from his lawful wife, Muhammed has dedicated such days, above all, to carnal pleasures".¹⁶ What made such statements popular and credible was, no doubt, the practice of keeping harem (Ar. haram, forbidden[woman]) by the wealthy Muslims, the buying and selling of girls and, of course, the concept of polygamy, which Islam allowed but did not encourage.

In presenting the sultans as great admirers of European girls even if these were as "dumme as eny stone",¹⁷ romance writers were naturally flattering themselves and complimenting the beauty of their own women.¹⁸ There is, however, some truth in this from the standpoint of the medieval Muslim. Women with fair hair and white skin were in great demand in the markets of Cordova, Alexandria and Baghdad. Furthermore, the desert warriors who settled in Spain and southern Europe brought no wives with them and had to depend upon native women for marriage.¹⁹ It is inevitable that in the literature of the period these practices should only be deformed and exaggerated. And so in their seraglios (Turk. and Per. serai=palace) Saracen sultans are presented as having numerous "maydyns white as swan" for

16 Quoted in Dozy's Spanish Islam, p.270. Cf. N. Daniel "The Development of Christian Attitude to Islam", Dublin Review, No. 473 (1957), 299.

17 Sir Gowther, 383. Cf. Robert the Deuyll, 886ff.

18 However, there are some sultans who are less particular in their choice of women and easily become enamoured of Saracen girls. Cf. Beues of Hamtoun, 705-16 (C.); Guy of Warwick, 843ff. (C.); Generydes, 1716ff.

19 See Trend, Civilisation of Spain, pp. 4ff; J.B. Glubb, The Empire of the Arabs (London, 1963), p.324.

their pleasure as well as for the entertainment of their guests.²⁰ One sultan is said to marry a new wife every year.²¹ Even ordinary Saracen warriors are shown to welcome nothing better than a gift of a few "clene maydens faire".²² On account of their failure to win the admiration or love of women, Saracens are frequently shown to pay astronomical sums of money for their purchase. One emir pays seven times the weight of a Christian woman in gold so as to consign her to his populous harem.²³

An interesting aspect of the treatment of the institution of marriage among the Saracens is the imputation of Western feudal customs completely alien to Muslim society, such as the practice of offering the vassal's bride to the feudal lord in recognition of the latter's "right of the first night". And so before a Saracen girl is wedded to her prospective husband, the sultan is made to claim this right:

Of alle þe dameseles bryghte & schene
 þe sowdane hade hym selfe I wene
 þaire althere Maydynhede
 By þam ilkone he laye a nyghte
 And sythen Mariede hir vn-to a knyghte
 þay leffed one hathen lede. 24

20 The Sowdone of Babylone, 2750. Cf. Floris and Blancheflour, 661ff.

21 Floriz and Blaunche flour, 601 (T.).

22 Sir Ferumbras, 1737. Cf. The Sege off Melayne, 844-46.

23 Floris and Blancheflour, 530. See Malory's Morte D'Arthur, i, 385, where the frustrated lover Sir Palomides "the Saracen" showers "La Beale Isode" with various costly gifts. Cf. P.E. Tucker, "Chivalry in the Morte", Essays on Malory, ed., J.A.W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), p.74.

24 The Sege off Melayne, 868-73. Cf. Herrtage's note (p.143) on the passage: "In Scotland and the north of England in the feudal times the lord claimed the right of first night's lodging with his vassal's bride. This usage was abolished by Malcolm III about 1080, and, instead a mark was ordered to be paid by the bridegroom to his lord". Cf. Generydes, 3421ff., where the King of Babylon promises to give Clarionas to Generydes after he has first enjoyed her. Interestingly, the author of The Sege off Melayne, 874-78, attributes the defeat of the Saracens in war to their immoderate indulgence in sex: "So mekill luste of lechery / Was a-mong þat cheualry / þat þay myghte noȝte wele spede".

Another characteristic of these sensual Saracens is their practice of abducting women. The fact that the kidnapped woman is married or a mother does not prevent them from carrying out this cruel act. In one romance a father is killed before his helpless daughter, to whom the sultan has taken a great fancy.²⁵ In Sir Isumbras, the sultan is consumed with desire the moment his eyes fall on Isumbras's wife:

The sowdane sawe that lady thare
 Hym thoghte als scho an angelle ware
 That ware commene owte of hevene
 He saide, "Wille thou selle thi wyffe to me?
 And I wille gyff the golde and fee
 3aa more than thou kane nevene
 I salle the gyffe tene thowsand pownde
 Of florence that bene rede and rownde 26
 And gud robes sevene".

To this shameless offer Isumbras responds by asserting that he would rather be slaughtered than part with his wife, with whom he vowed to live "in wele and waa". Having heard their master's bargaining with Isumbras, the sailors then force the wife to come on board, beat the husband until his "rybbis braste" and sail away with her towards Saracenland.²⁷

This last episode depicts the Saracen fulfilling an important literary function: providing a parallel to the ogres and giants who according to medieval legend have a strong desire to obtain mortals and enslave them in their castles or strongholds. When abducting Sir Isumbras's wife and whisking her to his distant abode in the East, the sultan, in fact, acts like an enamoured giant carrying off a woman.

There are striking parallels between the sultan's abduction

25 Floris and Blancheflour, p.8; see also notes 1 and 3 on p.69.

26 Sir Isumbras, 288-96.

27 Ibid., 308ff.

of Lady Isumbras and the fairy king's kidnapping of Heurodis²⁸ in the much praised romance of Sir Orfeo (early 14th C.). Both women are carried off to a place which remains unknown to the hero for a long time; and both are recovered by their disguised husbands, whose long adventures and wanderings in the wilderness finally bring them to their wives. Sir Orfeo enters the land of Pluto and recovers Heurodis, Sir Isumbras enters Saracenland where he is reunited with his wife.

In the Arthurian legends, the Saracen sultan takes his place beside the monsters and giants who are repeatedly presented as ravishing ladies or besieging them. The hero of Sir Perceval of Galles rescues a lady from a siege by a Saracen sultan.²⁹ In The Turke and Gowin, which embodies certain superstitions of the Isle of Man, the king of giants who, according to legend, had inhabited the island, is presented as a heathen sultan holding "17 ladys cleere" in his castle. The fair captives are liberated by Sir Gawain and his companion, who kill the sultan and restore the wives to their lawful husbands.³⁰

The sensual nature of the Saracens is sometimes reflected in their use of wine and women as an effective weapon against the Christians. In preparation for a surprise attack on

28 Sir Orfeo, 191-2.

29 Sir Perceval of Galles, ll.984ff; 1329 ff. (L.). In Huon of Burdeux, the Saracen giant Angolafer kills Huon's uncle and imprisons his daughter "this VII yere". It did not take Huon long to liberate his fair cousin (p.101). Cf. "Tale of Constance", Confessio Amantis, ll.1084 ff.

30 The Turke and Gowin, 312ff. Cf. Elizabeth Willson, The Middle English Legends of Visits to the Other World and Their Relations to the Metrical Romances (Chicago, 1917), pp. 22, 24; Helaine Newstead, "The Besieged Ladies of Arthurian Romance", PMLA, LXIII (1948), 814.

Charlemagne's soldiers, the sultan in Charles the Grete waits until the Christian knights have enough wine and lie "by the wymmen sarasyns", before advancing against them.³¹ The same design is used in Godeffroy of Boloyne, where Saracen "wymmen of euil" pose such a menace to the Christian armies that their leaders decide to put to death all those "taken in adulterye or in fornycacion".³² In the fragmentary Song of Roland we are told that Saracen prostitutes caused many misfortunes to Charlemagne's soldiers because the latter used to leave the battlefield and hurry to

...the women þat wer so hend
That wer sent fro saragos of sairsins kind.³³

Despite their use of such base and immoral tactics the Saracens invariably lose before their heavenly-ordained vanquishers, the Christian soldiers. To the consideration of the Saracens' conduct in war we must now turn.

31 Charles the Grete, p.232.

32 Godeffroy of Boloyne, p.150.

33 The Song of Roland, 73-74.

(iv) The Saracen on the Battlefield

Herkney boye zinge & olde
 Dat willen heren of batailles bolde
 & ze wolle a while duelle
 Of bolde batailles ich wole zou telle
 Dat was sumtime bitwene
 Cristine men & Sarrazins kene.¹

While the long adventure of Western Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean never became one of the great "matters" of medieval romance, the fact remains that many romances are, in one way or other, only recitals of the formidable struggle over the Holy Land. And whatever subject-matter romance poets dealt with, they frequently turned to the period of the Crusades for new details and a new spirit which might be infused into their material. The subject of many English romances is the Saracen and his interminable engagements with the Christian knight, and it is even reflected in romances which are not descended from the chansons de geste.

Holy War

In their presentation of the Christian-Muslim conflict, romance writers were simply reflecting the clerical view of the struggle as a Holy War to punish aggressors who had for long oppressed the true believers and usurped lands which rightly belonged to Christians.² From an historical point of view, it is naive to think that this mighty religious urge was present in all who actually took the Cross and marched East.

1 Otuel, 1-6.

2 Daniel, Islam and West, pp. 109 ff.

But when romance writers portray the wars against the Saracens, Christian warriors are always said to be fighting for a glorious cause and motivated by no impulse other than their hatred of paganism and their ardent desire "for to susteyne the feyth of Jeshu cryste".³ In so doing, romance writers were under the influence of the Crusade propagandists and military theorists of the day, who glorified the fight against Islam and continually incited their contemporaries to "vaynquysshe and destroye the enemyes of the crosse/by the swerd".⁴

With the impulse to defend the faith went the knight's expectation of eternal salvation if he should fall martyr in battle against the Saracens. This pious hope, popularised by writers on chivalry,⁵ shows itself again and again in the romances, particularly in the prayers before or during engagements with the Saracens and also in the speeches delivered by the Christian leaders to comfort their followers or boost their morale.⁶

3 Melusine, p.140. Cf. C. Moorman, A Knyght There Was, The Evolution of the Knight in Literature (Lexington, Kentucky, 1967), p.14; Gautier, Chivalry, pp. 21-22. So, Richard in Coer de Lion, 1668, leads his armies across the seas simply because he wants to "wreke Jesu". Addressing himself to God, Roland in Otuel, 2425-6, says he has left his home country in order to fight the Saracens of Spain "for þe loue of þe / And thy moder dere".

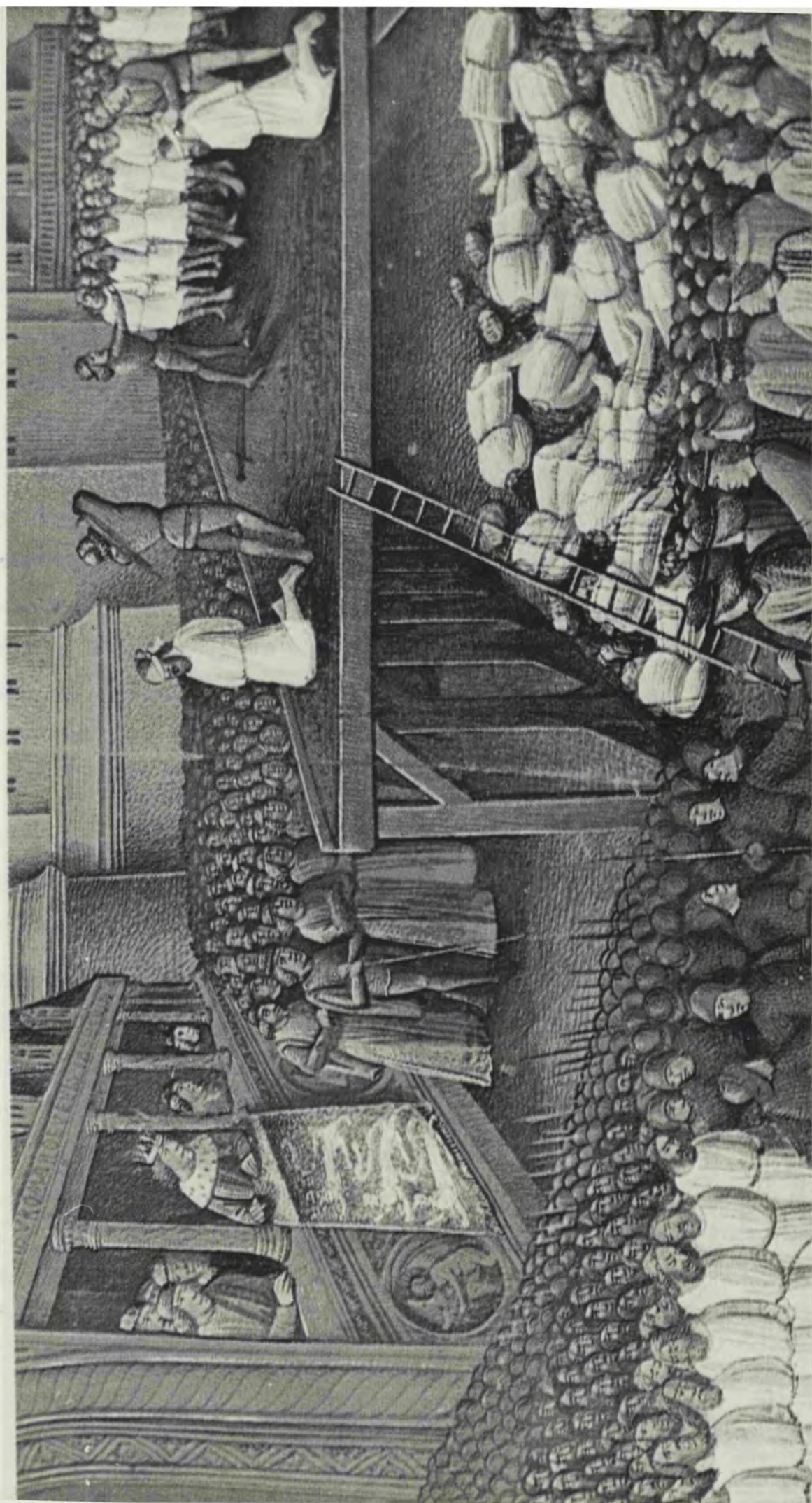
4 Caxton's Book of the Ordre of Chyualry, p.77.

5 "Wythout doubte...the knyght or the man of armes that deyeth in the werre ayenst them of euyl byleue ...he goeth strayghte as a martyr vnto heuen". The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye, p.282.

6 Cf. Richard Coer de Lion, 5028-30; Melusine, p.140; Otuel and Roland, 2439ff; Song of Roland, 624-26.

Plate 3

Deus le Volt. King Richard I supervises the
massacre of the Saracen hostages in Acre.
Bibliotheque Nationale, Service Photographique.
Reproduced in Jay Williams, Knights of the
Crusades (London, 1962), p. 79.



Conspicuous among the medieval attitudes towards the Saracen is the militancy which applauded, above all things, the mass slaughtering of the Saracens. To the staunch and uncompromising romancers, Christianity and the love of God simply meant the extermination of the Saracens "for goddys grace".⁷ "Ich wold for me lordes loue", says Beves to a group of Saracens, "Fizte wiþ 3ow euerichon".⁸ This straightforward attitude informs numerous romances, particularly the grim Richard Coer de Lion, where the hero at one point appears wearing a crest of a red hound whose tail is pointing downwards. In case the symbolic meaning of Richard's crest is lost on the reader, the poet explains that the hound's tail signified Richard's intention "the hethen folke to brynge downe,

Them to slee for Goddes loue
And Crysten men to brynge aboue".⁹

In short, the attitude which the preceding quotations illustrate justifies any act of aggression against the Saracens, whose faith alone provides the romance heroes with the casus belli. This is well borne out by an interesting remark in Melusine, where a Christian knight explains that although the Christians attack the Saracens "vnto their owne lande", "we ought to doo soo, for they are enemyes of god".¹⁰

As if war against the Saracens needed any further justification, romance writers occasionally present the Saracens as

7 Syr Triamowre, 132.

8 Beues of Hamtoun, 616-18 (A).

9 Richard Coer de Lion, 341-42.

10 Melusine, p.128.

attackers, and a constant source of troubles to Christians. This is true, not only of the Charlemagne romances, where King Charles seems to have no preoccupation other than dispatching forces to rescue his fellow Christian rulers, but also in many other romances where various sultans and emirs appear at the head of their armies marching or sailing on this European city or that, hoping, vainly, "Cristendome to wyne".¹¹

In the wars against the Saracens the clergy are frequently shown as organizers and leaders of the campaigns. This, no doubt, is another reflection of the actual historical role played by the Church and such militant orders as the Templars and Hospitallers in promoting the cause of the Crusades and recruiting men for the army of God. The prominent place of Bishop Turpin in the Charlemagne romances as the mastermind of many campaigns may best illustrate this tendency. In The Sege off Melayne, despite the initial emphasis on Charlemagne, "he heghe kinge of all", as a vanquisher of "hethyn men", the Bishop turns out to be far more enthusiastic than the French King about executing God's judgment on His enemies. Turpin recruits 100,000 priests and is ready and armed for the march on Milan long before Charlemagne and his douzepers.¹² His army of clerics is, furthermore, the spearhead in the first battle against the Saracens.¹³ When wounded, Turpin vows to receive no salve for his injuries; he also vows not to eat

¹¹ Sir Isumbras, 227. Cf. ll.417-22. Scenes in which Saracens besiege European cities are abundant in medieval romance and are no doubt, based on the historical Muslim sieges of the Middle Ages. The poet of King Horn presents the Danes as Saracens besieging and attacking the city of London (ll.41ff). Cf. W.W. Comfort, "The Siege of Paris by the Saracens", The Nation, No.189 (1919), 44-46.

¹² The Sege off Melayne, 625 ff. cf. Mehl, Middle English Romances, pp. 154-55, for a convenient summary.

¹³ The Sege off Melayne, 925 ff.

or drink until the Saracens are defeated. When Charlemagne begs him to have his wounds attended to, the Bishop refuses, saying that

Criste for me sufferde mare
He askede no salue to his sare
Ne no more sall I this tyde.¹⁴

In the Sege off Melayne, the Bishop is supposedly Charlemagne's adviser, but from the beginning it becomes clear that there is no doubt as to the superiority of Turpin's word to the emperor's earthly power. Turpin's crusading zeal is revealed in his clash with Charlemagne when the latter delays a counter-attack on the Saracens. He accuses the emperor of being a heretic, worse than a Saracen, and even takes the surprising step of excommunicating him:

And here I curse the, *pou* kynge
Be cause *pou* lyffes in Eresye
Thou ne dare noghte fyghte one goddes Enemy...
Nowe arte *pou* werre *pan* any Sarazene
Goddess awenn wedirwyne
Of sorowe now may *pou* synge.¹⁵

Further, the Bishop taunts Charlemagne with cowardice, defies him and, assembling his clerics, advances to besiege him in Paris, which he threatens to "bryne and breke down". The confrontation, however, is avoided when Charlemagne finally recants, humbles himself before the Bishop and collects his forces in compliance with Turpin's wishes.¹⁶

Besides the alacrity with which he assembles his priests under the banner of Christ and the eagerness with which he exchanges his staff and mitre for arms and armour, Turpin's conduct on the battlefield indicates that he is envisaged as

¹⁴ Ibid., 1348-50.

¹⁵ Ibid., 687-689; 694-696.

¹⁶ Ibid., 781 ff.

an exemplary Crusader. For he dedicates all his time to God's work - destroying the descendants of Satan. When once he glimpses his squire despoiling a dead Saracen, he indignantly 'reproaches him for placing personal gain before the highest form of worship:

To wyn the golde þou arte a fole
 þou bygynnes sone for to spoyle,
 Loo, 3onder comes moo
 Thou settis more by a littill golde
 þat þou sees lye appon þe molde
 þan to fighte one goddes foo
 Loo, 3onder comes Sarazenes in þe felde
 Go kill þam down vndir thi schelde
 Slyk worchippes wer gude to do. 17

Instances of clerical participation in the military operations against the Saracens are abundant in medieval romance.

In Richard Coer de Lion, the Archbishop of Canterbury leads another army of clerics who rescue the besieged Christians in Acre.¹⁸ In The Sowdone of Babylone, the Pope leads the Roman army against the Saracens. Wearing a military uniform, the Pope remains unknown to the Saracens until he is unhorsed and thrown down to the ground, when they see his tonsure.¹⁹ In Malory's Morte D'Arthur, the Pope has great sway over Arthur's knights and can command them "uppon payne of cursynge" to help him in his efforts "for to make warre uppon the Saresyns" to

17 Ibid., 985-93.

18 Richard Coer de Lion, 2808 ff

19 The Sowdone of Babylone, 559 ff

expel them from Jerusalem.²⁰

Regardless of the historical period the writers claim to describe, the Saracens of medieval romance are invariably presented as the opponents of Crusaders.²¹ ~~the Crusaders were fighting then.~~ The white banner emblazoned with a red cross, the sign adopted by the Crusaders following Urban's suggestion at Clermont, is worn by almost all who fight against the Saracens. The symbol the hero of Richard Coer de Lion chooses is "a red cross on his shoulder".²² The banners at the top of the Christians' ships in Huon of Burdeux are "all of whyght and ther~~in~~ red crosses".²³ In Octavian Imperator, the sign of the Christians is "as whyte as flowr / Therynne a croys of reed colour".²⁴ The more zealous heroes have this sign cut into their flesh. In Sir Isumbras, we are told that

20 Morte D'Arthur, p.677; cf. pp. 216,224. Malory ends his work by sending four knights on a Crusade to Jerusalem where after "many bataylles upon the myscreantes, or Turkes" the four die on a Good Friday "for Goddes sake" (p.1260). In 1634, a black letter edition of Malory's Morte D'Arthur appeared with the following sub-title: "The most ancient and famovs history of the renowned prince Arthur, King of Britaine. Wherein is declared his life and Death with all his glorious Batailes against the Saxons, Saracens, and Pagans, which (for the honour of his Country) he most worthily atchiued...". Furthermore, Robert of Brunne implies that Arthur was a Crusader when he makes him fight against the kings of Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Babylon, Libya, Tyre and Africa. See The Story of England, i, 1194ff.

21 In some romances, guns were used by the Saracens and against them. See The Sege off Melayne, 1288ff. Cf. W.W. Comfort, "The Character Types in the Old French Chansons de Geste", PMLA, XXI (1906), 409; and by the same author "The Heroic Ideal of The French Epic", Quarterly Review, CCVIII (1908), p.555.

22 Richard Coer de Lion, 389 ff.

23 p.472.

24 Ll. 1610-1611.

the hero

With a knyfe son gerte he schare
A crose appone his schuldir bare. ²⁵

Following the medieval notion that the knight can do no better than fight in a campaign against the Saracens, Chaucer makes his Knight an ideal Crusader. The lengthy catalogue of battles in which the Knight fought is highly significant in this connection. For most of them are directed against the Muslims "for oure feith". The campaigns against the Moors in Spain and North Africa include the battles of Grenade, Algezir, Belmarye and Tramysene. The Knight also fought against the Saracens in the Eastern Mediterranean at Alisaundre, Leyeys and Satalye.²⁶ Chaucer, it seems, was not primarily concerned with enhancing his Knight's prestige - which he could have done by placing him in the more illustrious victories scored by the English chivalry such as Crecy, Poitiers and Najera. Rather he is emphasizing the Knight's role as an ideal Christian warrior, a Crusader who directs his weapons not against his fellow Christians but against Christendom's enemy. The message contained in the Knight's portrait could not have been easily missed by Chaucer's contemporaries, to whom Crusading was a very real concern: true worthiness and wisdom were best demonstrated through crusading.²⁷ In this connection it is profitable to recall that in the Man of Law's Tale Chaucer shows that no results can be achieved by attempting to undermine

25 Ll.135-36. Cf. W.C. Meller, A Knight's Life (1924), p.201.

26 Prologue, 55 ff.

27 Cf. T.J. Hatton, "Chaucer's Crusading Knight, A Slanted Ideal", Chaucer Review, III (1968), 77-87; Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London, 1971), pp. 221-23.

Islam through conversion. On the other hand, by taking the Cross the Knight and his fellow soldiers succeed in harassing the Muslims, over whom they score decisive victories in many battles.

The darkest aspect of the flagrant crusading spirit which no romance writer attempted to hide or even restrain is the exultant tone in which the sights of mutilated Saracen corpses, heaped or strewn in the field, are described. This may be projected on to the romance heroes to whom such macabre scenes are most pleasing:

And whenne the Sarazennes were alle slayne
The Crystene Kynges were fulle fayne 28
They made thame gamene and glee.

The Cowardly Hordes

The Saracens whom we meet at every turn in medieval romance are very strange warriors indeed. They do very little fighting and the moment they glimpse the Crusaders' banners they take to their heels and run about aimlessly like frightened rabbits:

Whanne all thes baners wer arered
The Sarsyns wher sore aferd
The soudan quakede body and berd. 29

Christian knights, as a rule, chase them "als the howndes dose the hare"³⁰ and their cowardice is likened to that of a "flocke of shepe".³¹ Occasionally, romance writers make

28 Sir Isumbras, 464-66.

29 Octavian Imperator, 1711-13.

30 The Sege off Melayne, 1559.

31 Huon of Burdeux, p.515.

the Saracens admit their own cowardice. A Saracen leader in Sir Ferumbras warns his followers that the French soldiers are far superior to them and that the worst among them ~~is~~ "of ous ys worp an hundred".³² There are scenes of sultans reproaching their fleeing soldiers, which, no doubt, provided some entertainment to the romancer's audience. "Hoursons ! why do ye flee thus away", cries the discomfited Sultan of Persia, "knowe ye not that I am your lorde, that shall defende you agenst this vnhappy cristens".³³ We may find that as soon as the Saracens engage in close fighting with the enemy their brains begin to splash like rain and their heads fall off hopping "als dose hayle-stones abowtt one *pe* gres".³⁴

In order to gain a military objective Saracens do not scruple to resort to trickery³⁵ or treason.³⁶ But espionage seems to be their speciality. Saracen spies disguised as merchants or converts are frequently met with. They are found "in everi cristen reaume" covering Asia and Europe as far north as Scotland.³⁷ They are taught foreign languages and sent over to

32 Sir Ferumbras, 3198.

33 The Foure Sonnes of Aymon, p.514.

34 Sir Perceval of Galles, 1189.

35 In The Sowdone of Babylone, 312-43, the Saracen Lukafer by carrying Roman banners gains permission to enter the city towers. It is, however, strange that the Romans could not recognize the easily distinguishable and monstrous looking Saracens.

36 In The Foure Sonnes of Aymon, p.500, the Saracens conquered Jerusalem not by their valour but "by tresyon".

37 The Three Kings' Sons, p.28. Of the courtiers of the Sultan of Egypt Mandeville says they knew Europe "als wel as thei had ben of the same contree" (Travels, p.101). It might be mentioned here that during the Crusades the Muslim rulers made extensive use of agents, some of whom had joined the Crusaders' fleet in Europe. See Ibn Shaddad, Sirat Salah'Uddin, p.143; cf. pp. 12, 131, 135, 212.

the West to gather information for their leaders. One spy was working for years in Charlemagne's household and all that time he "was neuer knowen".³⁸ The list of Saracen spies is a long one: the French leaders in Richard Coer de Lion are all but agents for the Saracens.³⁹ Ganelon, whose betrayal of Charlemagne causes the death of many Christians, is a Saracen-sponsored spy.⁴⁰ The use of spies, however, is not confined to the Saracens alone,⁴¹ but their work makes a convenient means of accounting for some minor defeats or temporary retreats in the Christian camp.

It would take us too long to recount the barbarities and unethical practices which the Saracens are made to commit. Romance writers imputed to them cruelties and crimes of every description. They devastate cities and lay them waste.⁴² They destroy churches, plunder relics and slaughter the unarmed clergy.⁴³ They ill-treat their prisoners by throwing them into dungeons⁴⁴ or starving them to death.⁴⁵ They refuse ransom for prisoners,⁴⁶ blind their enemies⁴⁷ and vent their wrath on

38 Huon of Burdeux, pp. 457-58

39 Il.2694, 3466; cf. Il.4049.

40 The Sowdone of Babylone, 3243 ff.

41 Before leading his men against Saladin, Richard with two companions disguise as palmers and go on a daring espionage mission to the Holy Land in order to see how they "myzt wyne it to here hand". See Richard Coer de Lion, 648ff.

42 The Sege off Melayne, 16.

43 Orson and Valentine, p.56; Sir Ferumbras, 59 ff.

44 Beues of Hamtoun, 1566 ff.

45 Huon of Burdeux, p.132; The Sowdone of Babylone, 1535 ff.

46 Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.170; cf. p.146.

47 Ibid., p.113.

helpless women whom they hang by the thousand.⁴⁸ Being experienced in black magic Saracens employ necromancers, giants and monsters in their attacks on Christians.⁴⁹ Once they fight with arms bathed in the river of hell.⁵⁰ Poison also is a weapon which they unhesitatingly use against their enemies.⁵¹ In these evil designs the devils stand by them and do all in their power to help them.⁵²

Saracens often prefer ambushing their enemies or taking them by surprise rather than fighting them face to face,⁵³ despite their incredible numerical superiority. By their emphasis on a presentation of Saracens which shows them as forcing battle against greatly outnumbered Christians,⁵⁴ romance writers are, of course, stressing the cowardly spirit and unheroic character of their enemies, a notion popularised, as has been demonstrated, by many chroniclers and propagandists.

The proportion of Saracens to Christians on the battlefield is sometimes given in figures. In Charles the Grete, fifteen

48 The Sowdone of Babylone, 224 ff.

49 Orson and Valentine, p.108; Goddefroy of Boloyne, p.268. Cf. Malory, Morte D'Arthur, pp. 193-94.

50 Guy of Warwick, 8175-76 (Caius).

51 Richard Coer de Lion, 2885. This they, no doubt, extract from the snakes and beasts' blood on which they are said to live. See The Sowdone of Babylone, 648ff. Snakes must have been in great demand among the Saracens. Besides their value as foodstuff and as a source of poison, it is stated in Charles the Grete, p.169, that Saracens use as their armour "the hyde of olde serpent[s] harde and maylled".

52 Richard Coer de Lion, 5523; Godeffroy of Boloyne, p.27. Cf. S. Tonguc, "The Saracens in the Middle English Charlemagne Romances", Litera, V (1965), 23.

53 Sir Ferumbras, 812, 4576.

54 Cf. Bordman, Motif-Index: L325, L325.1.

thousand Saracens are sent to chase one of Charlemagne's peers.⁵⁵ In Blanchardyn and Eglantine a Saracen king "wexed full of wrathe" and reproached his four thousand warriors 'for not being able to win the battle against Blanchardyn alone.⁵⁶ More often, however, romance writers conventionally indicate the size of the Saracen army in miles rather than numbers of men. In Sir Ferumbras, their army is said to be "four myle in lengye" and three "on brede".⁵⁷ In another romance a small detachment of Christians fights against Saracens occupying "four myle of space",⁵⁸ and in The Foure Sonnes of Aymon, the Sultan of Persia attacks Palermo "wyth soo grete folke that all therth is covered wythall".⁵⁹

No matter what the odds against them are, Christian soldiers are ever eager to fight against these unruly hordes. When one soldier complains to Turpin that they are too few "to fighte with slyke a grete menze", the Bishop replies that the more Saracens, the greater honour:

A, sir, whare þay are sexti thowsande men
And if þay were mo bi thowsandis ten
Bi God þat made all thyng
The more powere that thay be
The more honour wyn salle we
We dowte noghte þam to dyng.⁶⁰

55 P.156.

56 Pp. 87-8; cf. p.190.

57 L.4305.

58 Charles the Grete, p.122.

59 P.526.

60 The Sege off Melayne, 1507-12.

The Bishop's last words are true enough. The Saracens' numerical superiority is of little or no avail to them.⁶¹ For they are fighting no ordinary soldiers, but men to whom God always grants victory, regardless of circumstances. In The Song of Roland, after a weary battle in which an immense host of Saracens is routed, Turpin remarks:

This lorde that we serue, louyth his own 62
That so few of his fellid so many.

A natural result of this belief is that whenever Christians find themselves in trouble, they automatically expect some form of divine intervention in their favour; and, as a rule, they receive it just at the appropriate moment. In one episode in Richard Coer de Lion, Richard prays for Heavenly help against Saladin's forces. As soon as the impending battle begins, no other than St. George, the patron Saint of England himself, appears:

In armes whyte as þe fflour
Wiþ a croys off red colour
Al þat he mette in þat stounde
Hors and man he felde to grounde.⁶³

The ramifications of the popular motif of divine intervention⁶⁴ on the Christian side are extravagant and spectacular. In one romance, the sun stands still for three days to provide

61 Cf. Melusine, p.128: "One grayne of peper alone", says a Christian before engaging a huge Saracen army, "smertith more on mans tong than doth a sacke full of whette / ne victorie also lyeth not in grette multitude of peuple / but in good rule & ordynaunce".

62 Ll. 812-3.

63 Richard Coer de Lion, 4891-94. The chronicles of the Crusades contain numerous legends of St. George's appearances on the Christian side in battle. See Wendover, Flowers of History, ii, 96. Cf. T.H. Newman, The Saint George Legend in England Up to the Seventeenth Century, Unpublished M.A. Thesis (Durham University, 1966), pp.15ff.

64 Bordman, Motif-Index: V230 ff.

Charlemagne with the required amount of "dayes lyzt / for to sle hys Enemys".⁶⁵ In another, when a Christian knight is caught between a river "dep, brod & wyde" and a formidable army of pursuing Saracens, a milk-white hart, which knows the way to cross the river, is sent by God to lead the fugitive to safety.⁶⁶ Angels bring down arms and equipment to the Christians,⁶⁷ while crusading fairies too may occasionally appear to help them. The Fairy King Oberon and his men in Huon of Burdeux helped the hero in his struggle against Islam and "slewe downe" so many Saracens that "it was meruayll to se the blode ron downe the stretes lyke a ryuer".⁶⁸ Small wonder, then, that the Saracens should fail to achieve any significant victory against their enemies when they are placed not only against redoubtable heroes but also against God, His angels, and fairies too.

In contrast with the poor sportmanship among the Saracens, Christian warriors are presented as clean fighters who do not resort to the unknightly practice of fighting against fewer numbers. When Firumbras challenged twelve of Charlemagne's best knights, only one of them, Oliver, who as it happened was wounded and fatigued, took up the challenge and rose to meet him in single combat.⁶⁹ In the ensuing fight, which is also recounted in Charles the Grete, Oliver's horse was killed, and

65 Otuel and Roland, 2564-65.

66 The Fillingham Firumbras, 1056ff. Cf. Charles the Grete, p.158, where the same miracle is related.

67 Robert the Deuyll, 915 ff.

68 Huon of Burdeux, p.95; cf. p.153.

69 Sir Ferumbras, 102.

when the bystanding French knights wished to help Oliver, Charles forbade them "for to mayntene hys honour & hys trouth".⁷⁰

This knightly attitude towards the Saracens, however, is not always observed. Like their counterparts, Christians may fight unarmed Saracens, slaughtering all they meet with "as well olde men as women & chyldren".⁷¹ Safe-conducts to Saracens are not always respected because "the sarrasyns ben generall enemyes of al crystianyte / And it is a thyng of trouthe and also wryton that noo crysten man ought not to receyue any maner enemye of the lawe of gode".⁷² This attitude allows the Christians to be absolved of the sin of breaking a covenant⁷³ and also renders any cruelty against the Saracens, however barbarous or indiscriminate, praiseworthy and noble. Thus, the ambushing of an unarmed Saracen caravan and the

70 P.69. Cf. Gist, Love and War, p.158. The famous Guy of Warwick - Amoraunt duel provides a notable example of the contrast between the chivalrous conduct of the Christian knight and the perfidious nature of the Saracen. When, in the course of combat, Amoraunt becomes thirsty and asks his opponent leave to drink some water Guy immediately grants his request. When later on Guy asks for a similar respite, Amoraunt basely refuses, breaks his promise and attacks Guy whilst the latter is drinking water. See Guy of Warwick, ll. 826lff. Cf. Lybeaus Desconus, 1398ff. (L.).

71 Huon of Burdeux, p.200.

72 ^{Book of the} Rayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye, p.249. In his intensive study of The Moral Traits of Christian and Saracen As Portrayed by The Chansons de Geste (Colorado Spring, 1935), pp. 124ff., M. Skidmore shows that in spite of the set purpose to defame the Saracens and extol the Christians, the poets failed to make good their claim either for their heroes or against their enemies. Moorman, A Knyght There Was, p.25, commenting on The Song of Roland, says that Christians and Saracens are "indistinguishable even in that area where they should differ profoundly, the conduct of war".

73 Valentine and Orson, p.240.

slaughtering of all its members is related as a "well fayre aduenture":

What helpeth hit to telle or more to saye,-
Thay smyten of the heuedes and leddyn forth the pray.⁷⁴

To most medieval men Islam is incompatible with knightly behaviour, magnanimity or mercy. To them Saracens are, by definition, wicked, untrustworthy and cruel. Explaining what a "barbaryn" is, Robert of Brunne defines it as a "Sarazyn straunge / To mercy *p*at wil nere turne ne chaunge".⁷⁵ Even Chaucer in The Man of Law's Tale seems to be glancing at this notion. Constance shudders to think of her future life among the barbarous Saracens of Syria:

Allas! unto the Barbre nacioun
I moste anoon, syn that it is youre wille.⁷⁶

An interesting remark in Malory's Morte D'Arthur throws even more light on this general attitude. "I mervayle greatly of one thyng", confides Sir Tristram to Palomides the Saracen, who refused, at first, to embrace Christianity, "that thou arte so good a knyght, that thou wolt nat be crystynde".⁷⁷

In their portrayal of Saracen warriors, the bigoted romance writers were completely blind to the Muslim practice of futuwa (Ar. horsemanship; chivalry). The truth that the medieval world of Islam provided memorable examples of magnanimity and chivalrous spirit finds no expression in the romances of the age. Romance writers seem entirely ignorant that nothing was more

⁷⁴ The Fillingham Firumbras, 425, 432-33.

⁷⁵ The Story of England, 16061-62.

⁷⁶ ^{ll.} 281-82.

⁷⁷ Pp. 841-42.

appreciated by the Muslim fityan (Ar. knights) than the war-like qualities of their own adversaries which aroused admiration and respect.⁷⁸

Vainglory and Insolence

When a Saracen is first introduced, he is usually made to speak "not like a man of God's making".⁷⁹ His bombastic language, generally speaking, contrasts with the humility of his Christian counterpart. The conventional method of emphasizing the Saracen's vaunting is to show him boasting in the most arrogant manner of such matters as his past exploits, his sultan's bravery, the invincible powers of his gods and his own desire to fight any number of Christian knights. Such expressions as "mekill of pride"⁸⁰ or "moche prydefull"⁸¹ are frequently used in the description of his character. Shouting with "soo hye a voys vpon the valyaunce of hys persone"⁸² is another quality romance writers associate with the Saracen.

To blacken the Saracen antagonist even further, romance

78 Saladin, "the flower of Muslim chivalry", used to honour his brave enemies by receiving them with great ceremony and presenting them with lavish gifts. See C.J. Rosebault, Saladin, Prince of Chivalry (London, 1930), pp. 220-22. Among the noteworthy Muslim knights who admired Western chivalry and made friends with the Crusaders is Usama ibn Munquidh. His memoirs are valuable for any study of the Christian-Muslim relations during the Crusades. See P.K. Hitti (ed. and trans.), An Arab Syrian Gentleman and Warrior ... Usamah ibn Munkidh (New York, 1929).

79 Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii, 524.

80 Rowland and Otuell, 61.

81 Valentine and Orson, p. 115. In Huon of Burdeux, p. 149, the hero unhorses and disarms a Saracen who thought of himself as "the moost puyssaunt man that reyned on the erth".

82 Charles the Grete, p. 42.

writers often added incivility and rudeness to his vainglory. In the Charlemagne romances the Saracens' insolence is usually directed against the French king, whom they abhor and detest. For *they* refer to him as a "foole",⁸³ or an "olde dotard",⁸⁴ and greet him with such insults as "fyre bryne *pi* berd".⁸⁵ Their vociferous aim is to defeat him in battle and chase him "fer out of France".⁸⁶

A recurrent motif in the Charlemagne romances is the dispatch of a Saracen messenger to Charlemagne demanding his conversion to Islam if he cares to keep his head on his shoulders. "Y am garcies messenger", begins Otuel, whose words may be taken as a sample of the grim messages delivered by the Saracen emissaries to the French King:

In alle thys world nys hys peer
He hath me sent the tulle
The wylde fyre that ys so sterne
Thyn hore lokkys there schulle berne
Ffor thyn dedes ylle...
Garcy sent me the tulle
And sayde that he wyl thy body spyllle
ffor the wynnyng off Spayne.
By-leue on hys god mahoun
Iubiter, & syre platoun
Thou mayst be ful fayne. ⁸⁷

83 The Sowdone of Babylone, 1139.

84 Charles the Grete, p.172.

85 Rowland and Otuell, 95.

86 Rauf Coilzear, 906. As might be expected these insults are amply repaid by the Christian knights, who treat the sultans "wythoute ony reuerence". See Charles the Grete, p.107. In Guy of Warwick, 3654, the hero greets the sultan with his wish that God may give him "malysone". In Sir Ferumbras, 1796 ff., Roland delivers a message to the sultan which begins with "*pe* deucl *pe* for-drawe", and then as a gift, he throws down the heads of seven Saracens whom the redoubtable knight and his companions had killed the day before.

87 Otuel and Roland, 79-83, 117-22.

Such arrogant speeches which abound in the romances⁸⁸ are not, of course, introduced to arouse horror in the heart of the readers. Nor are they solely intended to enhance the prowess of the Christian knights who are only too happy to take up the Saracens' challenge and as soon vanquish them. Rather, they are, like the speeches of the braggart soldier of classical drama, introduced for comic effect, since in medieval romance it was a matter of course that the ranting Saracen should fail to carry out the least of his threats. The titular hero of Sir Ferumbras, who indulges in a lengthy recital of his past exploits and who threatens to pound Charlemagne and his knights "al to douste", finds himself entrapped by his own words. At first he thinks that his Christian foe is not even "wory a lous" and no more harmful than a "flye". Soon, however, he discovers the truth when he realises how invincible Oliver is. Unable to resist the baneful blows of his opponent, Firumbras humiliates himself by kneeling down and begging for mercy in a most servile manner:

Haue mercy of me, iantail knyzt, for Marie sone pat mayde
 & For his loue pat al may see, y pray pe, sle me nozt
 Hit is my wille cristned to bee, certis pat is my pozt.
 My godes pat y me affied on, buy nozt to haue on mynde
 pay moze no more do pan a ston, & pat y now auynde
 3if hit by-tidep so pat y may, be y-wareschid of my wounde⁸⁹
 Y schal scape hem nize & day, pat bileuey on Mahounde.

While romance poets insist on presenting the Saracens as invariably losers and incapable of scoring any significant

88 See Charles the Grete, pp. 53, 101, 173; Valentine and Orson, pp. 129-30; Rowland and Otuell, 139 ff, 772 ff; The Sege off Melayne, 1316ff.

89 Sir Ferumbras, 753-59. For comic scenes of Saracen boasting, cf. H.M. Smyser, "The Sowdon of Babylon and its Author", Harvard Studies and Notes In Philology and Literature, XLII (1931), 212-13, 216.

victory in their large-scale engagements with the Christians, they nevertheless occasionally allow them to fight well or put up some tough resistance, particularly when single combats are described. It is very doubtful that in so doing the romancers are acknowledging the historical evidence of the Jihad (Ar. Muslim Holy War) and the rebirth of the Muslim empire under the vigorous Turks. The minute descriptions of the gruesome fights between a Christian and a Saracen knight which might go on for days are introduced, in the main, to satisfy the taste for sensation and warlike adventure which that fighting age fostered.

The exception to the rule, the handful of Saracen warriors who are presented as brave or "full curteys"⁹⁰ and who can put up a good performance in their duels with the Christians are, generally, too good to remain blind to the true faith. Soon they are married off to young maidens, usually blood relations of the person who procures their conversion or some other female beauties of notable lineage.⁹¹ In battle, these few Saracens behave much the same way as the Christian warriors and are also credited with knightly qualities of generosity, honesty and courage. Unlike their fellow Saracens they believe in the ideal of fair play, show courtesy towards a

90 Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.25.

91 Otuel in Otuel and Roland, 597ff., for example, marries Belisent, Charlemagne's daughter. Magog in Rauf Coilyear, 930ff., marries Dame Jane of Anjou "appeirand air / To twa Douchereis". Cf. H.M. Smyser, "The Taill of Rauf Coilyear and its Sources", Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, XIV (1932), 136.

weaker enemy and refuse to take advantage of the weaponless or the wounded.⁹² Before such worthy Saracens are won over to Christianity, romance writers on occasion honour them with brief compliments in the form of conventional exclamations such as: "Had he ben in cryst be-leued.../A bettre knyzt þan he was preued, þo was þer non lyuand".⁹³ Other forms of compliment may be given through the earnest prayers of the Christians for the salvation of the Saracen's soul and his conversion: "O glorious vyrgyn marie moder of god, pray our lord Ihesu Cryste thy son that he may byleue in the crysten fayth for by hym it may be moche enhaunced."⁹⁴

But such a softened or restrained attitude is rare in medieval romance and restricted only to those who are likely to convert to Christianity. A much less charitable spirit informs the portrayal of the great majority of Saracens, who are presented as revelling in the slaughter of Christians whenever opportunity allows. It is interesting that just as exterminating the Saracens is seen by the Christian knights as a religious ritual through which salvation is attained, the

92 Clariell in Rowland and Otuell, 960 ff, sends his wounded Christian enemy to a Saracen lady to look after him. The hero of Otuel kills Roland's horse but refuses to attack a fallen enemy:

He stod al stille
And leet roulond risen at wille (493-94).

93 Sir Ferumbras, 548-9.

94 Charles the Grete, pp. 75-6. Such worn out exclamations and statements are common enough in the chronicles of the Crusades. The author of Gesta Francorum, p.21, to cite a solitary example, writes that if the Muslims "had stood firm in the faith of Christ and holy Christendom ...you could not find stronger or braver or more skilful soldiers".

Saracens are also made to attach the same significance to the killing of their Christian enemies. This obvious projection of the Christian knight's attitude onto Islam is reflected in numerous romances, but one example should suffice here. In The Sowdone of Babylone the old sultan instructs his son that if he cares for "Mahoundes loue" he should attack the Christians and

Destroye vp bothe man and place
Spare nothings that is alyve
Hows, Toure ner walle
Beest ner man Childe ner Wife
Brenne slo and distroye alle. 95

From the references pointed out earlier it becomes clear that the historical warlike Saracens are, in the main, presented as cowardly and gullible clown figures filling the romances in which they appear with little more than sound and fury. They are treated with jocular barbarity and seem more like puppets than real human beings. The enduring popularity of the Saracen as antagonist is of course based on the constant nature of the Christian-Muslim conflict. The Saracens not only ensured keen interest in the romancers' stories but also served as a butt for the Christian knights' most popular game of Saracen bashing, through which much of the hatred and

95 Ll. 413-18. Cf. also Charles the Grete, p.100; The Sege off Melayne, 13 ff; Huon of Burdeux, p.87; Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.112, where a Saracen leader commands that all the inhabitants of an island be "slayne and brought to deth" upon his discovery that they are "crysten peple, enmy of his lawe".

prejudice against the Saracen is sublimated:

"Fful merry it is" thouzt roulond

"To fyzt a-zen the sarsins and to don hem schond".⁹⁶

Today, the crimes and evil characteristics imputed to the stereotyped Saracen may seem exaggerations created by paranoic fantasy and the transference of Western barbarities to them. But such cowardly and craven behaviour in the Saracen must have been taken for granted or, at least, credited by the greater part of the medieval Christian public, who knew the Saracens mainly through these romances and through the many-sided war of words raging against them in the West.

96 The Fillingham Firumbras, 1418-9. In Huon of Burdeux, p.50, Charlemagne sends the hero on the quest of going to the East and tearing off a handful of the sultan's beard. A similar situation occurs in Shakespeare where the King in Henry V, V, ii, 204-9, flirting with Kate, says: "Shalt not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard". Saracen bashing may simply be regarded as a stimulating career, as when Sir Eglamour decides to go to the Holy Land to while away his time in fighting "agayn þem þat lyued wrong". See Sir Eglamour, 1020.

(v) Saladin and his Followers

To medieval Christendom 2 October, 1187, was a disastrous day of mourning and indignation. The golden Cross which had been on the top of the Dome of the Rock for eighty-eight years was cut down by the Muslim mujahidin (Fighters for Alla's cause): Jerusalem fell into the hands of a little known, middle-aged, Kurdish warrior named Salah-Uddin, Saladin (Rectitude of the Faith). The reaction to the woeful news was one of utter shock and disbelief, and a chorus of lamentation rose from all Christians throughout the West. Two days after Pope Urban II had learnt of the loss of the Holy City, he lay dead.¹ His successor, Gregory VIII, laboured in all possible ways to rescue the City and speedily proclaimed a Crusade. Upon his death, a few weeks later, Pope Urban III continued his efforts by inviting, threatening, and imploring the princes of the West to march East and not delay the deliverance of the holiest of holies. Intestine conflicts and hostilities between European rulers were eventually brought to an end, and large and small forces from all over the continent put upon their shoulders the badge of the cross, ready to start on the Crusade.²

England, whose participation in the earlier Crusades was insignificant, was thrown into a great excitement. The visit of Heraclius, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to England shortly before the fall of Jerusalem, had awakened a sharp interest in

1 Vitry, History of Jerusalem, p.106.

2 Hoveden, Annals, ii, 75-76; Brundage, The Crusades, p.163; Vitry, History of Jerusalem, pp. 106-107.

the affairs of the Holy Land, and since then the struggle between Christian and Muslim had been viewed by the English with increasing concern.³ In response to the papal call for a Crusade, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Durham and Lincoln took the Cross and travelled about the country preaching and recruiting men.⁴ To raise money for the intended campaign, a ten per cent tax on all revenues and movables including the ecclesiastical benefits was introduced. The new tax was called "Saladin's tithe".⁵ Motivated by a mixture of love of glory, revenge and religious zeal, the energetic young prince, Richard, soon to become Richard I, vowed to journey to Palestine and fight Saladin, whose military exploits in the East had stunned the West. Looking for new sources of revenue to buy allies, troops, ships and munition, Richard sold offices, accepted bribes and ran deep into his father's treasury.⁶

It is not necessary to relate the story of the mightiest and best-planned Crusade which was led by three of the most renowned monarchs of Medieval Europe: Richard I of England, Philip Augustus of France and Frederick Barbarossa of the Holy

3 Siedschlag, English Participation, pp.16, 25-26.

4 The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis, pp. 468-70. Cf. G.R. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England, (London, 1926), pp. 56-57, 199.

5 John of Tyre, Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, i, 489. Cf. J.H. Round, "The Saladin Tithe", BHR, XXXI (1916), 447-50. For earlier English taxes in aid of the Crusades see F.A. Cazel, "The Tax of 1185 in Aid of the Holy Land", Speculum, XXX (1955), 385-92.

6 Kate Norgate, Richard The Lion Heart (London, 1924), pp. 72, 101; Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. "Saladin".

Roman Empire.⁷ But a brief note on its more important and relevant events, especially the complex relations between Richard and Saladin, will help us understand and assess the latter's character as he appears in English medieval literature, particularly in the romance of Richard Coer de Lion (early 14th century), which is of great significance to this enquiry on account of the attention given to the portrayal of Saladin and his fellow Saracens.

King Richard set out for Palestine in the summer of 1190. But part of his fleet had sailed from Dartmouth earlier, and on their way along the Portuguese coast these Crusaders stopped at Lisbon to help the Christian King, Sancho, in checking an invasion by the Muslims of North Africa.⁸ In the meantime, Richard spent the winter of 1190 in Sicily, where he learned something of his future antagonist, Saladin. The venerable Saint Joachim, Abbot of Corazzo, visited the English King and explained to him the meaning of the Apocalypse. One of the seven heads of the Dragon, so the venerable saint told Richard, was no other than Saladin. But Joachim assured the Lion Heart that he would be victorious in the Holy Land and that

⁷ H. Jedin (ed.), A Handbook of Church History, pp. 84-5. Barbarossa however died in Asia Minor, on the road to Jerusalem, but his followers continued the journey to Palestine. See Runciman, Crusades, iii, p.16.

⁸ This is not the first encounter between the English and the Muslims in the Iberian peninsula. Some forty years before this expedition, English volunteers had rushed to offer help to the Portuguese against the Muslim incursions from the African coast. See Runciman, Crusades, iii, pp. 9, 36; Norgate, Richard, p.122.

Saladin would soon be slain.⁹

En route to the Holy Land, Richard conquered the island of Cyprus in retaliation for the ill-treatment of his sister, Joanna, who had arrived there before him. Cyprus was to become the centre of gravity of the Crusader states and was to remain in Christian hands until 1571, when the Turks reconquered it. From Cyprus Richard's flotilla resumed the journey towards Acre, then besieged by the Crusaders. The first encounter between Richard's forces and those of Saladin was at sea, just off the coast of Acre. The English Crusaders saw ahead of them a cargo ship "of the greatest size...full of victuals and armed men" and, adds Richard of Devizes, "bigger than any except Noah's".¹⁰ To the Lion Heart's satisfaction, the Muslim supply ship was soon sunk by his formidable fleet: an omen, no doubt, of victory and a partial fulfilment, perhaps, of Joachim's prophecy.¹¹

9 Runciman, Crusades, iii, 41-42. Three of the seven heads of the Dragon are Muslims. Besides Saladin there are Muhammed and Abdul-Muni'm, the founder of the fanatic Muslim sect, Almohavids (Al-Muwahiddun) in Spain. Cf. T.O. Wedel, The Medieval Attitude Towards Astrology (New Haven, 1920), p.94.

10 The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes, p.38.

11 "The crew of our vessel", says the chief Arab chronicler of the Third Crusade "were overmatched by the superior force of the enemy, and seeing that there was no chance but defeat, the captain...said 'By Allah, we will die with honour, nor shall they get anything from the ship?...and nothing fell into the hands of the enemy'. See Ibn Shaddad, Sirat, p.161. This important work is translated into English by C.W. Wilson under the title of Life of Saladin, P.P.T.S. (London, 1897). Since the translation is based on a French version and does not always provide the exact sense, I have found it necessary to make some changes in the quoted passages. Unless otherwise stated all references are to the Arabic text of Sirat, ed., Al-Shayyal.

Richard's arrival at Acre brought hope and confidence to the weary Crusaders but distressed Saladin and spread terror among his followers. In his biography of Saladin, Ibn Shaddad, a close friend of the Sultan's, writes that the news of Richard's arrival

filled the ifranj¹² with so great a joy that they lit huge and terrible fires that night in their camps - a sure sign of the important support he had brought them. Their leaders had frequently boasted to us that he would come, and held his arrival as a menace over our heads; and now, according to the people who frequented their camp, they expect the very moment he landed to see him fulfil their dearest wish of pushing forward with the siege of the city [Acre]... Therefore, when the Muslims heard of his arrival, they were filled with terror and alarm. 13

Anxious to meet the man about whom he had heard so much, Richard immediately suggested an interview with Saladin, but the latter refused the proposal politely and, instead, sent his brother, Al-Adil, to conduct the negotiations with the English King.¹⁴ In the course of his siege of Acre, Richard fell severely ill, suffering, says Ibn Shaddad, from fever and a strange "craving and longing" for pears and peaches. To this desire of Richard's Saladin himself responded by having fruit together with snow from Mount Hermon sent to him. Fighting, however, did not stop. Saladin's garrison was at length defeated,

12 (*Italics mine*). Arabic for Frank, a generic term given to all Christians of Europe regardless of origin or nationality. The term is occasionally used in this sense even today. Cf. Yaqut Al-Hamawi, Mu'jam Al-Buldan [*The Book of Nations*] (Cairo, 1906), i, 299-300.

13 Sirat, p.161.

14 Ibid., p.201; Lionel Landon, The Itinerary of King Richard I, Pipe Roll Soc.51 (London, 1935), p.58.

and shortly afterwards victory was celebrated by the massacre of hundreds of Muslim captives on a plain outside the city.¹⁵

Richard left Acre and began his march southwards towards Jerusalem. Another victory was awaiting his armies at Arsuf, which Saladin had to abandon for Jerusalem. Suffering from the weather and from lack of provisions, Richard proceeded to Jaffa. It was during the negotiations near this city that Richard offered Al-Adil, Saladin's brother, his sister Joanna in marriage, if Saladin would grant Palestine to the couple and yield up the golden Cross to the English King. The negotiations dragged on for weeks with great shows of chivalry and courtesy on both sides, but finally collapsed and hostilities were resumed.¹⁶

From Jaffa Richard continued his long march until he came almost within sight of Jerusalem. Richard's followers were all enthusiasm and eagerness to advance; but severe weather, lack of provision and increasing reinforcements to Saladin finally forced him to retreat. He then moved southwards and came to Ascalon, which he easily captured together with a number of small towns and villages on the southern coast. In June 1192, he planned an advance to Jerusalem, but this project was no more successful than the first. By now Richard had exhausted not only his money but also his health and strength. He also suffered from wounds and ambushes, in one of which he was nearly taken prisoner by Saladin's men.¹⁷

15 Ibn Shaddad, Sirat, pp. 231 ff. Cf. Runciman, Crusades, iii, 53-54.

16 Ibn Shaddad, Sirat, pp. 195, 203; Landon, Itinerary, pp. 55-6.

17 Norgate, Richard, pp. 204-6; Landon, Itinerary, pp. 56-7.

Distracted by the disquieting news which reached him about his brother John, broken down in health and convinced of the impossibility of snatching Jerusalem from Saladin, who had been doing all w his power to reinforce it even to the neglect of all other cities and towns, Richard proceeded to Acre planning to sail away even if no peace with Saladin were concluded. But he was swiftly recalled when Saladin took Jaffa in a surprise attack. Richard's military achievement outside this city was superb - he fought so indefatigably that his horse was exhausted and fell under him. Saladin, who had apparently witnessed the scene, sent his groom with two fine Arabian horses to his brave enemy, as a mark of deep appreciation of Richard's excellence in fighting. After the battle of Jaffa, Saladin came back with a more terrible force than ever. Once again, Richard sued for peace and wrote to his old friend, Al-Adil, to intercede with the Sultan and arrange a truce. A few weeks later, an agreement was reached and shortly after that Richard left for England on 9 October, 1192.¹⁸

During the eighteen months of Richard's stay in Palestine, Saladin was never sure of victory. Indeed, he lost many coastal towns to Richard and was, for the most part, on the defensive. He succeeded, however, in one thing: his desperate defence of Jerusalem, the place from which Muhammed ascended to Heaven, secured the Holy City in Muslim hands and inspired successive rulers to defend it for eight centuries. In the Muslim world, Saladin's recovery of Jerusalem was never to be forgotten. In the West, not long after his death, Saladin's chivalrous and

¹⁸ Runciman, Crusades, iii, 69-75.

magnanimous qualities were to be remembered and given a prominent place in the romantic legends of its various peoples. In France, Italy and Germany, his deeds touched the fancy of many poets and minstrels.¹⁹ Ironically, these Christian writers represented him in a more romantic light than did his coreligionists, who almost entirely neglected him in their popular tales.²⁰

19 Despite the fact that much erudition has been shown in the study of Saladin's place in European legend, there is a noticeable disregard for his presentation in English medieval literature, particularly in Richard Coer de Lion. The most exhaustive study of the subject is that of Gaston Paris, "La Légende De Saladin", Journal Des Savants (May-August, 1893). Johannes Hartmann, "Die Personalichkeit des Sultans Saladin im Urteil der Abendländischen Quellen", Historische Studien (Berlin, 1933), is also important. Gaston Paris's "Le Roman de Richard Coer de Lion", Romania, XXVI (1897), has useful information although its primary interest is the discussion of the sources of the romance. Stanley Lane-Poole's Saladin and the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (London, 1898), contains a chapter in which the author surveys some of the important works of fiction dealing with Saladin. He briefly examines Richard Coer de Lion and dismisses the account of Saladin as "disappointing". F.E. Loadman, "Le Pas Saladin", MLN, XLI (1897), particularly Part I (pp. 21-34), contains helpful comments on the western view of Saladin although his chief aim is to determine "the dialect of the poem and the date of its composition". The introduction to Richard Löwenherz, ed., K. Brunner (1913), particularly pp. 51-70, contains a list of fictitious details, some concerning Saladin which are incorporated in the romance. Beatrice White's recent article, "Saracens and Crusaders : From Fact to Allegory", in Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G.N. Garmonsway, ed., D.A. Pearsall and R.A. Waldron (London, 1969), should also be consulted particularly pp. 186-91.

20 In The Thousand and One Nights, there are only two stories about Saladin. The first of these is called "Saladin and The Three Masters of Police", in which the Sultan sends for the three walis (Ar. governors) of Cairo to tell him of the most marvellous thing that befell them during their terms of office. The role played by Saladin in this tale is very passive and he disappears altogether as soon as the first governor begins to tell his story. The second is entitled "Saladin and His Wazir", in which the Sultan is surprisingly represented as an "ardent admirer of young boys". See The Thousand and One Nights Entertainment, iv, 271 ff; vii, 142 ff.

In England the preoccupation of poets and legend-makers with glorifying Richard²¹ had noticeable consequences for the place and portrayal of Saladin in English medieval literature and beyond. For it was inevitable that, when applauding Richard's exploits in the East, the nationalistic English writers should defame his adversaries, particularly his principal enemy, Saladin. No other work illustrates this tendency more clearly than Richard Coer de Lion.

In this romance the character of the Muslim Sultan suffers immensely from the expected contrast with the hero and also from the interminable "Saracen baiting" which dominates the whole poem. For the true character of Saladin and the real drama of the relations between him and the English King are completely ignored in favour of stock material, worn-out situations and fantastic adventures, the victims of which are invariably Saladin and his followers.

In his general representation of the Saracens, the author of this romance adds nothing new. He depicts them as he finds them traditionally portrayed: as ranting infidels whose sin can only be absolved by death or baptism. His attitude is straightforward and clear and consists simply of ridiculing and vilifying them at every turn. His motto is both familiar and popular:

21 A survey of the works of fiction dealing with Richard is found in G.H. Needler, Richard Coer de Lion in Literature (Leipzig, 1890). An analysis of the legends, their sources and analogues in literature is B.B. Broughton's recent study of The Legends of King Richard I Coer de Lion (The Hague and Paris, 1966).

"Christians are good, Saracens are bad"; "one Christian against twenty of those dogs".²² But what distinguishes this romance from the other medieval anti-Saracen works is its exultant tone and its indulgence in orgies of butchering Saracens, eating their flesh and gnawing their bones. The reason for this sensationalism is not hard to find. The religio-patriotic theme of the romance - an English king fighting for the Cross - prompts a fanatic spirit which sees heaping of abuse on the enemy as a contribution to the high purpose of singing Richard's praises.

In the numerous battles of the romance, most of which, admittedly, have some historical basis, the author derives a peculiar sadistic joy from describing grisly scenes in which the Saracens are slaughtered like sheep. While, as in other romances, one battle seems very like another, the romancer

22 That this attitude was not only a literary tradition but also a commonly held belief appears from a sermon by John Bromyard, Summa Predicatorum, s.v. "Crux", in which he criticized the boastful men who instead of fighting the Muslims, spent their time "sitting and bragging in their own land, boast[ing] how they would like to kill many Saracens and do wonderful deeds...But when it comes to the point they are afraid of a petty insult"; quoted in G.R. Owst, Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1961), p.333. In a satiric fling at the arm-chair Crusaders, the French poet, Rutebeuf had this to say:

When men are hot with drinking wine
And idly by the fire recline
They take the cross with eager boast
To make a great crusading host
But with first glow of morning light
The whole Crusade dissolves in flight.

Translated from J. Bastin and E. Faral, Onze Poèmes de Rutebeuf concernant la Croisade (Paris, 1946), p.74; cited in Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages, p.55.

occasionally tries to enrich his narrative by introducing some stimulating episodes or by drawing upon popular motifs to break the monotony and satisfy the audience's taste for the grotesque.

One such novel scene, perhaps the most memorable in the romance, describes a cannibalistic feast in which "roast Saracen" is served to the English King for dinner. During his sickness in Acre, Richard develops a violent longing for pork which is, of course, not easy to come by in Muslim lands. Instead of pork, however, the King's cook, acting on the advice of an old experienced knight, offers his sick master the flesh of a "sarezyn yonge and ffat". When later Richard finds out what he had actually eaten, he gleefully exclaims:

What, is Sarezynys flesch þus good?
 And neuere erst j nouzt wyste?
 By Goddys deþ and hys vpryste
 Schole we neuere dye for defawte
 Why! we may in any assawte
 Slee Sarezynys, þe flesch mowe take
 Seþen, and roste hem, and doo hem bake
 Gnawen here fflesch to þe bones
 Now j haue it prouyd ones
 Ffor hungyr ar j be woo
 J and my ffolk schole eete moo. 23

23^{le} 3216-26. Of all his actual heroic exploits in Palestine, Richard's legendary eating of Saracen heads seems to be singled out as the greatest. In Lydgate's Kings of England, in which the poet allocates a stanza to each king, that on Richard I reads:

Richard his sonne, Next bi succession
 First of that name, strong, hardy & notable
 Was crowned Kyng; Callid Cur de Leon -
 With Sarsyn heedis serued was at his table.

ll. 36-39, in Historical Poems of the XIV and XV Centuries, ed., R.H. Robbins (New York, 1959). In Godeffroy of Boloyne, pp. 131-2, the Crusaders threatened that if caught, all the Turkish spies would "be rosted and seruyd at the tables of the barons". This frightened the Muslims and made them consider the Christians more cruel than "alle beres and lyons". Cf. also below "Appendix C".

Shortly after this episode, we are presented with another grim scene in which Richard startles Saladin's ambassadors by serving up to them the heads of his chief Saracen prisoners, 'whose names had been written on labels which accompanied each dish. The old ambassadors were horrified even further when the Richard declared that to the English no flesh is more nourishing than the head of a Saracen:

Whyl any Sarezyn quyk bee
 Lyuande now in *pis* cuntree
 Ffor mete wole we noþyng care
 Aboute ffaste we schole ffare
 And euery day we schole eete
 Al so manye as we may gete
 Into Yngelond wol we nou t gon²⁴
 Tyl *þ*ay be eeten euerylkon.

In the chronicles of the Third Crusade, Latin or Muslim, there is, of course, no mention of Richard's eating or offering any Saracen heads to others. He did, however, keep in his tent some heads of Muslim men whom he had killed in the war. He showed these to his visitors and critics as "proof of his loyalty to God and Christendom".²⁵ On the other hand, some earlier starving Crusaders were said to have actually eaten the roasted corpses of their freshly killed Muslim enemies.²⁶ Even among Richard's followers famine was so calamitous that some Crusaders were forced to steal or fight for food; others had to deny their faith and accept Muslim charity to stay alive.

24 *ll.* 3555-62.

25 Norgate, Richard I, p.201. Cf. C. Wilkinson, Richard Coeur de Lion (London, 1933) p. 136.

26 See Malmesbury, Chronicles, p.380. Cf. L.M.A. Sumberg, "The Tafurs and the First Crusade", Medieval Studies, XXI (1959), 245-6; Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millenium (London, 1957), p.46.

Those who could neither steal, buy, or beg their food had to be content with roots or dead animals.²⁷ We may, perhaps, assume that the report of such privations encouraged the author of Richard Coer de Lion to introduce these macabre scenes, which provided his audience with the crudest and most brutal "humour" in the Middle English romances.²⁸

Relevant to our inquiry is the scene in which Richard slaughters "sixty thousand" of Saladin's men in Acre. This episode, like most others, rests vaguely on the historical fact of the wholesale slaughter of Saladin's garrison in Acre, noted earlier. Unlike the chroniclers of this tragic event who find it difficult to defend or justify,²⁹ the romancer relates it with utmost satisfaction and approval. He assures us that in so doing Richard was simply carrying out God's will and reacting to Saladin's insolent invitation to him to "leve on Appolyn".³⁰ Of the divine sanction of Richard's act,

27 Ambroise, L'Estoire de La Guerre Sainte, 3432-57; Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi, pp. 124-33; Vitry, History of Jerusalem, p.109.

28 Cf. G. Paris, "Richard Coer de Lion", Romania (1897), p. 359, where it is stated that the cannibalistic orgy may have been inspired by an eleventh-century Latin chronicle in which Moorish prisoners are said to have been forced to eat the flesh of their own men.

29 Cf. Norgate, Richard, pp. 171-175; Runciman, Crusades, iii, 53-54 and note.

30 L.3744. Saladin never asked Richard to convert to Islam although it was his practice to "set some of the beauties of Islam" to the Christian princes who visited him or negotiated with him. See Ibn Shaddad, Sirat, p.31. In fact, it was Richard who asked Saladin's brother, Al-Adil, to consider embracing Christianity so that the proposed marriage with Joanna might be arranged without having to obtain special papal dispensation. See Landon, Itinerary, p.57.

the poet has no doubt. As the captives

...wer led into a place fful euene,
 þere þey herden an aungele off heuene
 þat seyde: "Seynyours, tuez, tuese,
 Spares hem nouzt, behediþ þese"
 Kyng Richard herde þe aungelys voys
 And þankyð God and þe holy croys
 þey were behedyd hastelyke
 And caste into a ffoul dyke
 þus Kyng Richard won Acrys
 God graunte hys soule moche blys.³¹

A more significant example of the use of the popular motif of angelic visitations is that in which Richard is forewarned of the Sultan's treachery and guile. After the surrender of Nineveh, Saladin returns to Babylon,³² chased by Richard who lays siege to the city. Saladin manages to break the blockade by bribing some of the French leaders, for whom the romancer has no sweet words. Having broken the siege, Saladin then plans to end Richard's life. He therefore sends a message challenging the English King to meet him in single combat to decide

Wheþer is off more power 33
 Jhesu or ells Jubyter?

The Sultan's challenge is accompanied by the offer of one of his best horses, which Richard readily accepts since his famous horses "Favel" and "Lyard" are "wery and fforgon". Here, the true story of the horses Saladin had given Richard outside Jaffa is introduced. But the magic wand of the

31 Ll. 3747-56.

32 Like most romance poets of the age, the writer of Richard Coer de Lion is not careful of his geographical or historical accuracy. Richard never went to Nineveh (northern Iraq) and the city was conveniently far removed from the crusading activities. Richard's siege of Babylon (Babalyoun, near Cairo and not Babylon [Babil] on the Euphrates, with which it was always confused) is equally unfounded. Obviously the Biblical names of these cities inspired the romancer to make them a fitting scene for Richard's holy war. Cf. introduction to Richard Coer de Lion, where Brunner lists fictitious and semi-historical events incorporated in the romance.

romancer transforms this chivalrous gift into yet another device to blacken Saladin's character, by impeaching his motives. Saladin's horse, the romancer explains, is nothing but a "ffeende off þe eyr". One of Saladin's advisers, a "mayster nigromancien", conjured up through his black magic two evil fiends in the likeness of a mare and her colt. The colt which was given to Richard had been instructed to kneel to its mother and nurse when Saladin's mare neighed, and thus King Richard would be trapped at the critical moment of the encounter.

As always, Saracen black magic is unable to overpower the heavenly protection with which Richard and his fellow-Crusaders are blessed. So, just before the encounter is due, an angel descends from Heaven to relate to Richard the wicked machination of Saladin and to instruct him in the management of the diabolical steed. "Awake, þou Goddes knyzt", says the angel,

"My lord dos þe to vndyrstande
That þe schal come an hors to hande
Ffaire he is off body þyȝte
To betraye þe ȝiff þe Sawdon myȝte
On hym to ryde haue þou no drede
He schal þe helpe at þy nede...
Ryde vpon hym in Goddes name
Ffor he may doo þe no schame
Tak a brydel", þe aungyl seyde,
"And mak it ffast vpon hys hede
And be þe brydyl in his mouȝ
þou schalt turne hym norþ and souþ".³⁴

The romancer then takes us to this long-awaited duel. He describes how Richard gets up at dawn and marches towards Saladin's army which is, not unexpectedly, far greater in number

33 Ll. 5501-02.

34 Ll. 5552-58, 5565-70.

Plate 4

Saladin tumbles over his mare's crupper and falls down with his feet "toward the ffyrmamente". Note the ugly physical features given to the sultan and the shield which is emblazoned with the cartoon of a native ruler or a heathen god. From the Luttrell Psalter; c. 1340, BM. MS 42130, fol. 82. Reproduced in H. Trevor-Roper, The Rise of Christian Europe (London, 1966), p. 111.



than that of Richard. Saladin, expecting Richard's horse to betray him, comes with "gret pryde", carrying, as his only weapon, a falchion and a shield. But despite the repeated neighs from Saladin's mare, the colt could not hear his mother because Richard had wisely taken the precaution of stopping its ears with wax. However, no sooner had the two men engaged than Richard

Gaff þe Sawdon a dynt of deed...
 Wip þe spere þat R. heeld
 He bar hym þorwz vndyr þe scheeld
 None off hys armes myzte laste
 Brydyl and paytrel al tobrast
 Hys geryes and hys styropes alsoo
 His mere to þe grounde gan goo. 35

The poet then describes how the miserable Saladin tumbles over his mare's crupper and falls down with his feet "toward the ffyrmamente". Having lost the combat Saladin flees shamelessly to a nearby forest. "Abyde, coward!", shouts King Richard, as he chases his humiliated enemy,

"And j schal þe prouen ffals
 And þy cursede goddes als".
 Kyng R. dryues afftyr ffast
 þe Sawdon was ful sore agast
 A gret wode beffore hym he sees
 þedyr in wol fast he fflees. 36

That the boisterous account of this fictitious duel - for the two men never met - fascinated the imagination of medieval England is attested by the fact that various illustrations of

35 Ll. 5768-76.

36¹⁶ 5836-42. In contrast to Saladin's wiles ^{against} ~~towards~~ Richard, the English king strongly rejects a plan put forward by a renegade Saracen to kill Saladin when the latter is asleep:

"Ffy, A debles!" quod þe king
 God geue þe now an euyl endyng
 J am no traytour, tak þou kepe
 To sloo men, whyl þey slepe.

(6447-50).

this episode were made by the artists of the age. In an order to the Sheriff of Wiltshire, Henry III directed that a painting of this combat be executed in the Royal Chamber at Clarendon Palace. Besides this, other illustrations of the encounter are found on mosaics and tiles.³⁷ More significant, as R.S. Loomis points out, is the fact that in the fourteenth century illustrations of this duel were so frequent that artists depicting encounters between Christians and Muslims unconsciously represented the familiar feature of Richard's legendary triumph over Saladin.³⁸

In Richard Coer de Lion, the only example of self-restraint which the romancer exercises in his treatment of Saladin is that the Sultan is, at least, spared the fate of most romance Saracens: death or baptism. One feels, however, that the poet would certainly like to have given his story this outcome, had not the facts been too well known to be stretched to that extent. To compensate for the loss of such an attractive climax, the romancer invents an encounter between Richard and Saladin's two sons in which the popular romance elements can be described.³⁹ The first son receives such a blow from Richard that "halff þe body ffel adoun". The other's fate is no better, for

37 R.S. Loomis, "Richard Coer de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art", PMLA, XXX (1915), 514.

38 Ibid., p.518. For further information on Saladin and Richard in art see F.E. Loadman, "Le Pas Saladin", MLN (1897), 23.

39 Saladin had, in fact, seventeen sons and one daughter, none of whom is recorded to have been killed by Richard.

Kyng R. stoutly smot hym
 þat hors and man ffyl ded to grounde
 "Lygge þere", he sayde, "þou heþene hounde
 Schalt þou neuere telle Saladyne 40
 þat þou madyst me lyff to tyne.

When we next meet Saladin himself, we see him in Jaffa leading armies, which "no tunnge may hem tell", preparing for an attack. His men, who occupied a space of twenty miles in length and five in depth, consisted of many nationalities:

Egyens, and of Turkye
 Of Moryens, and of Arabye
 Basyles and Embosyens
 Ffull eger knyghtes of defens
 Egypcyens, and of Surrye
 Of Ynde Maior, and of Capadocyne
 Of Medes, and of Asclamoyne
 Of Samarye, and of Babyloyne
 Two hondred knyghtes without fayle 41
 Fyue hondred of amarayle.

The long list of Saladin's followers - some of whom are quite unidentifiable - is, of course, intended to emphasize the familiar numerical advantage of the Saracens over their Christian enemies. But it is also used here as a decorative device giving some colouring to the otherwise dreary descriptions of battle preparations.⁴² To medieval men, these names must have signified nothing more than a vague impression of outlandish and hostile people.⁴³ On the other hand, the enumeration of

40U.7136-40.

41U.6905-17.

42 Among the various devices the poet uses to give an illusion of reality to his description is his inclusion of two Arabic lines (6829-30) transliterated into English. These, however, defy any attempt to decipher them.

43 The practice of giving numerous Oriental names in succession, in works dealing with the East, was to become quite popular in Elizabethan drama. Marlowe, whose Tamburlaine always aimed at confounding "those blind geographers", includes many such passages. See, for example, the conversation between Tamburlaine and the Kings of Morocco and Fezz in The Second Part of Tamburlaine The Great, I,vi, 1-90. Cf. Steven Runciman, "Medieval History and the Romantic Imagination", Essays By Divers Hands, XXXII (1963), 115 ff.

these different nations and countries is perhaps indicative of the awareness in medieval Europe of the vast confederation of the different peoples under the Jihad banner, who were united only by their blind faith in Mahoune. However, as Richard prepares to meet this formidable army, he declares that

Tyl j be wreken off Saladyne 44
Certys, my ioye schal j tyne.

When the fight begins, Saladin's army wins a temporary victory, but, as soon as Richard "into þe sadyl leep", the situation changes considerably. In short, owing to Richard's fantastic heroism in this fairest battle since the world "was ferst begunne", Saladin loses one million warriors whose souls are characteristically consigned to "Sathanas". Of all the wildly exaggerated claims of military romance, this estimate of Muslim casualties is the most absurdly inflated:

þere were slayn in playn and den 45
Ten hundryd þousand heþene men.

Having mythicised Richard's achievement, and belittled Saladin's, the only remaining task for the romance poet is to account for Richard's truce with such a heathen hound. To do so, he once again falls back upon the convenient device of introducing a heavenly angel. Richard is commanded by God to "take Trues" with Saladin and to go back to England immediately, "for enemyes thou hast" there. But, unwilling to ignore any

44 ll. 6769-70.

45 ll. 7159-60. "Know that nobody among the Muslims has done such evil as thou to Christianity", said one of the leading Crusaders to Saladin just after signing a peace treaty with him. "Never in my time have so many Franks perished as now. We have counted the warriors who embarked to come and find thee, and they numbered six hundred thousand. Of each ten no more than one has returned to his country". See Rosebault, Saladin, p. 293. It is to be admitted here that the term thousand was often used vaguely or hyperbolically for a large number. See O.E.D., s.v. "thousand", sense 2.

opportunity of magnifying Richard's adventures in the Holy Land, the poet makes Richard add to his peace proposal a challenge that he should fight twenty-five of Saladin's knights single-handed and stake the whole issue of the Crusade on this duel. Saladin answers that he would not consent to that, not even if "ffyue hundryd" are to fight against the redoubtable King.⁴⁶ On this note and almost abruptly the romance comes to an end with Richard hurrying back to his native kingdom.

The great energy with which Richard's exploits are eulogised seems to have left the poet too exhausted to give much attention to Saladin. Where the sultan is allowed an appearance, he is described in the familiar superficial methods of minstrel style. Further, there is no attempt at any point in the romance to individualise him. Any of the numerous sultans of romance could easily have replaced Saladin. Like these stereotypes, he is made the target of unrelenting ridicule and abuse. Like them, too, he rants and boasts and is ready to flee on his speedy Arabian horse. He places his faith in his God, Mahoun and the other divinities, and when in wrath "he waryyd his God and cursyd his lawe".⁴⁷ In giving Saladin the conventional labels of cowardice, treachery and untrustworthiness, the romancer ignores a mass of historical evidence to the contrary.⁴⁸

Of the relationship between Richard and Saladin a very grim picture is presented. In the Charlemagne romances very few

46L.7186 ff.

47 L.6566.

48 Examples of Saladin's integrity and chivalry are abundant in Muslim chronicles. Cf. Runciman's judgment of his character (Crusades, iii, 76 ff.).

writers mention the exchange of gifts or the friendly relations between the French King and the Muslim caliphs.⁴⁹ In the same way, the poet of Richard Coer de Lion discards much which might have been considered detrimental to his hero's reputation. At worst, the relations between the historical Saladin and Richard were respectful, despite their formal enmity. From the records we have of their dealing with each other - between one battle and the next - we may, indeed, consider them to have been friends.⁵⁰ The mutual respect and courtesy, the numerous marks of friendliness between them and Richard's marriage proposals, find no reflection in the romance.⁵¹ Clearly such historical facts would be embarrassing and incompatible with the romancer's avowed purpose of displaying Richard as the

49 For the friendly relations between Charlemagne and the illustrious Caliph, Haroun Al-Rasheed and their exchange of "immense presents", see Eginhard and St. Gall, Early Lives of Charlemagne, ed., A.J. Grant (London, 1905), p.29. In Goddefroy of Bolyne, pp. 22-3, "Aaron Ressit" is described as a man of "so grete cortosye / of so grete largesse / of so hye vygour / and of so grete affaires in all good maners". Charlemagne, the writer adds, "had the loue and acqeyntaunce of the said Aaron", who was better disposed to the Christians than "ony of the hethen peple". In Charles the Grete, pp. 30-1, Haroun, who is called "the Kyng of Perse", sends Charlemagne an "olyphaunt merueyloously grete...emonge other yeftes". But such references to Charlemagne's friendliness with the Muslims are extremely rare.

50 Jay Williams, Knights of the Crusades (London, 1962), pp.80 f.

51 Further, it is reported that when Saladin learnt of Richard's departure for England he said that if he were to lose Palestine he would rather Richard should take it than any other prince. See Itinerarium, p.430, and for the exchange of gifts between Richard and the Muslims, pp. 296, 315, 419, 428. For Richard's "great pleasure" and enjoyment of Arabic singing see Norgate, Richard, p.199.

scourge of God on the Saracens. For the only point of contact between Richard and the Muslims, according to the romance, exists at the edge of Richard's battleaxe, with which he had vowed "to breke the Sarasyns bones".⁵² On the other hand, behind Saladin's costly gifts to the English King lurk fear, treachery or the vain hope of luring Richard into accepting Islam.⁵³

The same desire to diminish and detract from Saladin's achievement is responsible for the romancer's omission of the famous battle of Hattin, the outcome of which made Richard vow to take the Cross. Instead of attributing the fall of Jerusalem to Saladin's military superiority, the poet tries to show that Jerusalem was lost by the betrayal and "treasoun strong" of its commanders. Saladin, says the romancer, had secretly sent for the rulers of Jerusalem and bought them off with "land and rente", and "gold many a þousand pound", and thus he became master of the "cyte of Palestyn".⁵⁴

The portrayal of Saladin in Richard Coer de Lion, coloured by strong national and religious prejudices and founded on distorted historical details and legendary material, does not fairly represent the general European attitude towards this man. With the exception of a few early poems and romances in which Saladin is depicted as a crafty schemer, almost all the legendary

52 Ll. 2211 ff.

53 When Saladin's ambassadors hear that "Englyssche men loue gyffte", they bring Richard all the treasures of Acre in return for peace. Richard spurns their present, saying that he had more gold than Saladin "and swylke þre" (Ll. 3370 ff.).

54 Ll. 1297 ff; 4917.

stories about him are well-inclined. The tolerance which he showed to the Christians whom he had captured or subjugated inspired in his enemies an involuntary respect and even sympathy. In many French and Italian romances he is made a knight and a particular admirer of the qualities of Western chivalry. To justify their feelings, romance writers occasionally attributed to him a leaning towards the Christian faith, and even an inclination to recognise and profess Christianity, which was far from his exclusively Muslim soul.⁵⁵ Even Dante, who detests Saladin's religion and his prophet, admits his greatness, places him in Limbo with the great heroes of Troy and Rome, and mentions him as an unforgettable example of munificence and generosity.⁵⁶

Among European countries, medieval England stands alone in its persistently hardened attitude towards Saladin. Most medieval writers there were ungenerous towards him and constantly discredited him in their works. In a sense their attitude was

55 Gaston Paris, "Saladin", *Journal des Savants* (1893), 285-9. Lane-Poole, *Saladin*, pp. 383, 392, thinks that the recurrent story of Saladin's knighting in French romance is based upon the historical fact that Saladin was at one point knighted by his old friend, Humphrey of Toron. For Saladin's alleged knighting see *Itinerarium*, p.315; Rosebault, *Saladin*, p.5. Arab chroniclers do not record this. Cf. also Jean Richard, "La Vogue de l'Orient dans la Littérature Occidentale du Moyen Âge", *Mélanges offerts à René Crozet à l'occasion de son 70e anniversaire* (Poitiers, 1966), p.558; G. Paris, "Un poème latin contemporain sur Saladin", *Revue de l'Orient Latin*, i (1893), 434.

56 Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, iv, 129 in *The Comedia and Canzonieri*; Dante's *Convivio*, trans., W.W. Jackson (Oxford, 1909), IV, xi, 14. Cf. J.S.P. Tatlock, "Muhammed and His Followers in Dante", *MLR*, XXVII (1932), 186-195.

not very different from the view taken by the poet of Richard Coer de Lion. In his Fall of Princes, Lydgate makes Saladin, who was constantly "oppressid with werre", a self-seeking and most ungrateful ruler who built his power on the 'ruin' of those who had helped him. Saladin, in Lydgate, implores two Saracen emirs to help him "enforce ther miht to susteene his partie". With their military aid, Saladin wins the wars and in return for their part in his defence, he

From ther estat, as it was aftir knowe
Disgraded hem, brouht hem doun ful lowe.⁵⁷

A "Kyng Saladyn" also appears in Sir Ferumbras. In this romance the writer takes greater liberty with the career of his Saladyn than does the poet of Richard Coer de Lion with his. Here, he is swiftly vanquished by Roland, who unhorses him, breaks his neck "a-twayn", and then asks his comrades to despoil his corpse.⁵⁸ More significant than these hostile references to Saladin is the fact that of the rich store of the Saladin legends in French romance we know of no Middle English translation or adaptation. The absence of such legends however is not very surprising when we remember that the medieval English, more than any other European nation, thought that the overthrow of Saladin was their own special charge.

Prejudice against Saladin survived long after the period with which we are concerned. In the Elizabethan age, for example, hostile references to the sultan kept on appearing. In Joshua Sylvester's vision poem The Triumph of Faith (1594), translated from a French original, we glimpse "prince Saladine"

57 Lydgate, Fall of Princes, Bk. ix, 1560-61.

58 Sir Ferumbras, 3029 ff.

marching with a most odious group of Muslim conquerors led,
of course, by Muhammed, who

Hath whole subdude the welthie golden East
And wonne withal the three-fold worlds best part.

The Triumph of Faith is, however, interesting not so much for
the brief appearance of Saladin as for the crusading fervour it
reflects:

O wretched Christians! whilst your ciuil rage
Gainst your own harts doth arm your proper hands
O see you not the Turks inuade your lands
And saflie spoile the Lords choise heritage...
Forget then Christians, your domestick iars
Founded on flies feet, ioine againe with speed
Your harts and hands, and armd resolue indeed
To foile Faith's foes, and fight Iehoua's wars
Let Asia and Egypt your fierce forces know
To win againe Gaze, Antioch, and Ascalon
Ioppa, Ierusalem, Tyre, and Sydon 59
And Famagosta lost a yeere ago.

Saladin is also alluded to in Anthony Munday's The Downfall
of Robert, Earle of Huntington (printed in 1601). Seeking,
perhaps, to surpass the poet of Richard Coer de Lion in
praising Richard's deeds, Munday adds details of his own to the
account of Richard's sinking of Saladin's vessel off the port
of Acre. Unlike the romancer who makes Richard engage and
sink a single enemy ship, Munday makes the English King take on
the whole of Saladin's fleet:

O' that day's honour can never be told!
Six times six brigantines he boarded
And in the greedy waves flung wounded Turks.⁶⁰

59 S. Du Bartas, The Triumph of Faith, pp. 8-9.

60 Anthony Munday, The Downfall of Robert, Earle of Huntington,
p.172. Cf. Richard Coer de Lion, 2478 ff.

But the favourable European impressions of Saladin did begin to be echoed, if at first faintly, in the Elizabethan age, which marks the beginning of a change in the literary attitude towards him. There emerges a treatment of Saladin in English literature which we should contrast with that of the Middle Ages.

In Robert Greene's Penelope's Web, Saladin is presented as a valiant sultan whose prowess and "generall conquest of the south-east part ye world" wins him the chaste and obedient daughter of the Great Khan, Barmenissa. He is soon, however, seduced by Olinda, a "proude and iniurious Concubynne", and her revengeful ambition turns him into an unfeeling despot, whose neglect of state affairs causes a "generall ruyne of weale publicke". The enamoured Sultan banishes his lawful wife and raises the courtesan to the throne of Egypt, "prophaning the nuptiall Bed made sacred by the holy law of Matrimonie" and breaking "the laws of Egypt which forbiddeth divorce without cause". In the end, the old Saladin becomes exasperated at Olinda's extravagance and unnatural demands, banishes her for life and reinstates on the throne his modest and obedient wife with whom he lives till his death in amity and love.⁶¹

In William Painter's Palace of Pleasure, a popular book and very widely read, Saladin appears in a far more favourable light than in Greene's Penelope's Web. Despite Painter's professed abhorrence of the Muslim, against whom he sought to "renue the

61 Robert Greene, Penelope's Web, pp. 137-234.

auncient detestation, which we have, and our progenitors had against that horrible Termagant, and Persecutor of Christians... [who] is not only a generall Ennemy to our Countrey and Lyffe, but also to our Soules",⁶² he was willing to include two flattering stories about Saladin. In The Three Rings, which commends Saladin's tolerance, generosity and sense of humour, the Elizabethans could read of the "great valiaunce", "divers victories" and the "magnificent triumphes" of the Sultan.⁶³

In the second and longer tale of Maister Thorello and Saladine, Painter, unable to suppress that "auncient detestation" of Saladin's religion, calls him an "enemy to God". Yet he informs his readers that his choice of Saladin's "history" is prompted by his desire to "elucidate and display" the "benevolence", the "noble personage" of this "mighty Souldan" and "vertuous prynce", who was, adds Painter, "a freyende to those that favored good entertainment and housekepyng".⁶⁴ Saladin, disguised as a merchant, travels to Europe to "see and espy" the preparations of the Christian princes for a Crusade. He accidentally meets Thorello, who invites the Sultan home and entertains him for several days. Years later, Thorello joins the Crusade and is captured by the Muslims. When Saladin recognizes his former host, he frees him, lavishes all kinds of fabulous gifts on him and treats him with great

62 William Painter, "A Cruel Facte of Soltan Solyman", in The Palace, iii, 395, 415.

63 The Palace of Pleasure, i, 116. Cf. The Decameron of Boccacio, i, 63.

64 The Palace of Pleasure, ii, 365 ff.

honour. In his palace, Saladin asks Thorello to "thynke from henceforth that you be lord of this palace and not I". The Sultan crowns his favours to Thorello when he transports him to Europe on a flying carpet, thus reuniting him with his beautiful wife at a critical moment when Thorello's marriage was in danger of being nullified.⁶⁵

It is ironic that these romantic stories about Saladin, which were to come to full bloom in Sir Walter Scott's The Talisman, were the eventual product of years of conflict during which the whole West united in an attempt to destroy this man. In that period of fighting and strife, the Crusaders came to realise that even among the supposed worshippers of Mahoune there were men who stood out for high moral ideals which might as Scott puts it "put to shame those who owned a better religion".⁶⁶

The Talisman⁶⁷ appeared in an age when men's minds had been

65 Ibid., pp. 363-82. Cf. The Decameron, pp. 305-28.

66 Sir Walter Scott, The Talisman, in The Waverley Novels, intro. p.532. Commenting on the Crusaders' conduct in the East, Charles Dickens says that "they agreed in few points except in gaming, drinking and quarelling, in a most unholy manner". Dickens, it might be added, is highly critical of Richard's cold-blooded slaughter of the Saracen captives in Acre which he calls a "crime". Saladin, on the other hand, is a "noble", "generous and gallant enemy". See A Child's History of England, pp. 94-5. Perhaps the most flattering, if belated, compliment to Saladin's power came from the British Army: "Saladin" is the name given to a special type of tanks used by its armoured units. Also significant is the fact that the name "Saracen" is given to a special model of armoured vehicles.

67 Talisman is a corruption of the Arabic term tilsem which is applied to magical or mystical characters inscribed or engraved on seals, images and such objects which some Easterners wear for protection from enchantment, accident, envy and other evils. The superstition is still common in some parts of the East.

turned by The Thousand and One Nights which, more than anything else, helped to bring the West to a more sympathetic understanding of the Muslim East. Saladin, "than whom no greater name is recorded in Eastern history", is here presented as a most chivalrous and gallant knight. His conduct contrasts greatly with that of the "clumsy Crusaders" who appear to have little or no idea of the cause that brought them to Palestine.⁶⁸ Despite the fact that Scott was labouring "under the incapacity of ignorance", as he states in his preface, his treatment of Saladin and indeed his allusions to the Muslims in general are fairly accurate and bespeak some genuine acquaintance with the tenets of Islam, Eastern wisdom and the history of the Crusades. In this enjoyable novel Scott pays an ancient debt which English fiction had long owed the Sultan. Written for a public whose attitudes were not solely conditioned by religious differences, the novel more than compensates for the libels meted out to Saladin by earlier writers.⁶⁹ Scott's treatment of Saladin is so favourable that, had it not been for the skilful use of the disguise device, the novel would have become overweighted with successive scenes all attesting to Saladin's superiority in almost every sphere of human achievement.

68 Cf. Edgar Johnson, Sir Walter Scott (London, 1970), ii, 934-37.

69 However, as late as the mid-nineteenth century, chap-books "Written Expressly for all mummers to commemorate the Holy Wars and the Happy Festival of Christmas" depict Saladin as a pagan giant and a butt for such militant saints as St. George. See A. Brody, The English Mummers and their Plays (London, 1969), p.7.

Scott was the first writer in English, after so many centuries of fiction-writing, who saw that ^{the} character of the sultan could be developed as a romantic match for Richard. This is an attitude which neither the poet of Richard Coer de Lion nor the other legend-makers who succeeded him were able or willing to explore in spite of the evolution of a new attitude towards Saladin which is evident in Europe during the Middle Ages themselves.

Chapter III. The Horrible Saracen in Early
English Religious and Folk Drama,
Spectacle, and Sport.

i Religious Drama

Pre-occupation with the "Saracen Question" which manifests itself so clearly in the non-dramatic fiction of medieval England is also present in the dramatic heritage, particularly in the mystery plays. Despite the fact that the religious cycles were supposed to deal with subjects and events ante-dating Islam by centuries, the medieval dramatists, no better informed about the affairs of their enemy than the romance writers, thought nothing of introducing into their biblical stories and legends a host of Saracen figures!

In these anachronistic appearances and allusions, the part played by the Saracens was naturally designed to appeal to the religious and emotional loyalties of the populace. To this end, the Saracen was ceaselessly made a laughing-stock whose actions, beliefs and rituals were mercilessly ridiculed and caricatured. The same religious bigotry which informs the treatment of the Saracen in romance reveals itself even more intensely on these occasions when he appears or is alluded to on stage.¹

1 A most helpful collection of the scattered references to Islam, the Saracens and Muhammed in the mystery plays is found in Antoinette Greene, "An Index to the Non-Biblical Names in the English Mystery Plays", Studies in Language and Literature in Celebration of the Seventieth Birthday of James Morgan Hart (New York, 1910), pp. 313-50.

But the dramatis personae shown as Saracens entertained the medieval crowds with their strange Oriental apparel, which contributed a good deal to the spectacle of these outdoor exhibitions. The flowing Eastern robes and the grotesque Muslim head-dress, the turban (tulbend), which gave its name to a most delightful species of flowers, the tulips, were among the most popular costumes worn by Saracen as well as other antagonists in the cycle plays.²

Details of stage directions are admittedly scarce in medieval drama, but a most significant, if brief, reference to Saracen costumes occurs in the Coventry cycle, in a scene entitled "the Council of the Jews". Here, the medieval playwright, aware of the strangeness and visual effect the presence of a Saracen may add to his scene, gives remarkable and rare instructions to illustrate the most effective way of exhibiting one of the Saracen supernumeraries in his scene:

Here xal Annas shewyn hym-self in his stage, be-seyn,
after a busshop of þe hoold lawe, in a skarlet gowne,
and ouer þat a blew tabbard furryd with whyte and a
mytere on his hed after þe hoold lawe. ij doctorys
standyng by hym in furryd hodys, and on be-forn

2 A.W. Ward, History of the English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne (London, 1899), i, 61. Cf. S.S. Artemel, The Idea of Turkey in the Elizabethan Period and in the Early Seventeenth Century, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Durham University, 1965), p.184. The typical Saracen or hell-bound pagan in medieval times was automatically envisaged as wearing a turban. Magicians were invariably represented as carrying their magic wands and wearing turbans. Cf. Gary Jennings, Black Magic, White Magic (London, 1967), p.38. In an early 16th century painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, entitled "Descent into Hell" there are among the grisly looking creatures living in hell some Saracens with long beards and huge turbans. Quite interestingly, Shakespeare envisages giants as wearing "impious turbans" in Cymbeline, III, iii, 6.

hem with his staff of A-stat and eche of hem
 on here hedys a furryd cappe with a gret knop in þe
 crowne and on stondyng befor as a sarazyn þe wich xal be₃
 his masangere.

The brief reference to Saracen costumes is very interesting in that it apparently assumes the Saracen's outfit was something well known, the mention of details being consequently not necessary. More significant than the light it throws on the popularity of Oriental costumes, with which we shall deal later, is that the quoted passage also illustrates a familiar tendency to see in the Saracen not only a religious enemy but a natural ally of the Jews. By clothing the messenger in Saracen garb and grouping him with the Jewish doctors, for whom, of course, the medieval public had a monumental hatred, the dramatist reveals a strong inclination to "Saracenise" all the antagonists in religious drama.

This tendency can best be seen in the dramatists' treatment of such important villains as Herod, Pilate, the Pharaohs and the various pagan kings and queens of biblical times.⁴ From a passage in Thomas More's History of Richard III, we learn that the villainous despots of medieval drama were commonly referred to as sultans. "And in a stage play", says More, "all the people know right wel that he that playeth the sowdayne is percase a sowter. Yet if one should can so lyttle good to shewe

3 Ludus Coventriae, p. 230. Cf. Eleanor Prosser, Drama and Religion in English Mystery Plays: A Re-Evaluation (Stanford Calif., 1961), p.124.

4 See "Caesar Augustus", ll. 122-5, 151-2, 238-40, in The Towneley Plays; "The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt", ll. 401-02, in The York Plays; "Balaam and Balack", ll. 285-8, in The Chester Plays, Part I.

out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with hym, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one of his tormentors might hap to breake his head, and worthy for marring of the play".⁵

Herod was undoubtedly envisaged as one of the nefarious and black-faced race of the Saracens,⁶ and the actor of this important part usually wore a painted visor or a mask and brandished his "ffauchon" menacingly - no doubt at the spectators as well as the personages of the play - ever boasting and raging and glibly reiterating the exaggerations expected of the arrogant Saracens of romance. Interestingly enough, some medieval dramatists insisted that the high purpose of this villain-buffoon was to defend his faith and to enforce the teachings of his God, Muhammed:

þe lawys of Mahownde my powere xal fortelye
Reverens to þat lord of grace moost excyllent
Ffor þe his power all thinge doth multiplye...
Ffor þe lawys of Mahownde I have in governawns
The whiche I wele kepe that lord hath no pere 7
Ffor he is god most prudent.

In his kingdom, which according to the Towneley plays extends

⁵ Thomas More, Works, ii, 80-81. Cf. also Stow, Chronicles of England (1615), p.459.

⁶ F. Harrison, Medieval Man (1947), p.138. The historical Herod is of course a half-Arab pagan. See R.E. Parker, A History of the Jewish People (London, 1964), p.23. The Saracens and the "Saracenised" pagans of drama who are considered to have "dampnyd" souls usually wore black visors. See C.M. Gayley, Plays of Our Forefathers (London and N.Y., 1908), pp. 104-105; T. Sharp, Dissertation on the Pageants (Coventry, 1825), pp. 66-71; L.W. Cushman, The Devil (1900), pp. 5, 10-11, 23; A.F. Leach, "Some English Plays and Players", in An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall (Oxford, 1901), pp. 213-4.

⁷ Ludus Coventriae, "King Herod", ll. 6-8, 23-25. For Herod's character see R.E. Parker, "The Reputation of Herod in Early English Literature", Speculum, Vlll (1933), 59-67. For the comic effect of Herod's ranting see Irena Janicka, The Comic Elements in the English Mystery Plays (Poznan, Poland, 1962), pp. 86-87. Cf. also D.C. Boughner, The Braggart in Renaissance Comedy (Minneapolis, 1954), p.123.

from "Paradyse to Padwa", from "egypt to mantua" and from
 "sarceny to susa", there is no place for those who do not believe
 in Muhammed or honour him:

To fell those fatures I am bowne
 And destroy those doys in feyld and towne
 That will nott throw on sant Mahowne
 Our god so swete
 Those false fatures I shall fell downe 8
 Vnder my feete.

In order that the character of Herod might be further Saracen-
 ised some medieval dramatists declared this hated Roman ruler to
 be "reysemblyng the faver of ... Mahownde" himself.⁹ Further
 still, other dramatists went so far as to suggest that Herod was,
 in fact, a blood relation of the prophet. In "Herod the Great"
 of the Towneley Plays, for example, the medieval populace were
 assured that no one on earth could stand against this mighty
 potentate except his own cousin:

Of hym can none spell 10
 But his cosyn mahowne

Herod, however, is not the only character in the religious
 cycles to claim kinship with Mahownde - Pilate seeks that
 distinction too:

Ye wote not wel, I weyn / what wat is comen to the towne,
 So comly cled and cleyn / a reowler of great renowne
 In sight if I were seyn / the granser of great mahowne
 My name pylate has beyn / was neuer kyng with crowne 11
 More worthy.

8 "Offering of the Magi", ll. 24-30; cf. ll. 43-50.

9 "Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors", l. 516 in Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays.

10 "Herod the Great", ll. 53-54. Other dramatists invented a blood relationship between Herod and another pagan god, Jupiter, from whom, according to the "Pageant of the Shearman and Taylors", l. 517 in Two Coventry Plays, he was "desent and cosyn".

11 Towneley, "The Conspiracy", ll. 10-14.

A persecutor of Christians, Pilate, like Herod, is also shown as a great defender of the cause of Mahounde:

If here be any boy that will not loutt till oure lawe
 By myghty Mahowne, hygh shall he hyng 12
 South, north, eest, west.

To both Pilate and Herod, the greatest danger to Mahoune's law comes, of course, from Christ: hence their determination to destroy him. At one point in the Towneley cycle, Pilate instructs his knights to seek out Christ and capture him, for he "prechys the pepyll..., that if he lyf a yere, destroye oure law must vs". Pilate's knights need no exhortation, and are no less zealous in defending their faith than their master. When they are dispatched to carry out these orders, one of them, Malchus, declares that he is ready to die "for Mahoune's sake", if he might take Christ a prisoner.¹²

Ignorance of the essentials of Islam is revealed in the dramatists' attempts to present some forms of Saracen prayers and other religious rituals. When such attempts occur the unknown is usually represented in terms of the familiar. As an example we might refer to one of the episodes in The Digby Plays where Herod is found praying on his death-bed. All that the dramatist does in this scene is to follow the Christian religious practice in respect of prayers with only a slight variation: the name of Christ

12 Towneley, "The Talent", ll. 49-51. Cf. Arnold Williams, The Characterization of Pilate in The Towneley Plays (Michigan, 1950), p.14. In "The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie", l. 537 (Dunbar, Poems), both Herod and Muhammed are referred to as Dunbar's "trew kynnismen" by Kennedy, who apparently uses the name "Muhammed" as an abusive term.

13 "The Conspiracy", ll. 37-8; cf. ll. 600 ff.

is replaced by that of Muhammed:

My lord Mahound I pray the with hert enteer
Take my soule in-to thy hande
Ffor I fele be my hert I shall dey evyn heer.¹⁴

The most detailed account of Saracen religious practices is found in the spectacular and elaborate play of Mary Magdalene of the Digby mysteries. In this dramatization of the saint's life as it is recorded in the popular Legenda Aurea,¹⁵ the spectators were treated to a series of extremely farcical scenes of Islamic rituals. In the second part of this lengthy play, which dramatises Mary's legendary journey to Provence¹⁶ and her subsequent conversion of the Saracens of "Mercyll", we are first presented with a typical Saracen king who roars and blusters in the approved manner of Herod and the Saracens of romance, demanding obedience from all as he is "the hed of all hethenness". The King then summons his lords and attendants and proposes to "do sacryfyce... before ower goddes all", but especially to Muhammed "pat lord curteys and keynd".¹⁷

At the King's command the service begins with a Saracen priest¹⁸ shouting for his "boke", perhaps a vague reference to the Koran. The priest's boy then embarks upon a most obscene and nonsensical mock-sermon intended, no doubt, to entertain the audience with the crudest buffoonery at the expense of the Saracens.

14 "The Killing of the Children", ll. 385-87. Cf. Everyman, ll. 880 ff.

15 Legenda Aurea, fol. CLXXVlll, v. ff. Cf. Arnold Williams, The Drama of Medieval England (Michigan State U.P., 1961), pp. 164-7.

16 See Butler's Lives of the Saints, ed., rev. and supp., H. Thurston and D. Attwater (London, 1956), pp. 161-63 (July 22).

17 Mary Magdalene, Part II, ll. 1133 ff.

18 It might be mentioned here that there is no priesthood in Islam. In the mosques, any pious man, well versed in theological matters, may lead the prayers and deliver the Friday Khutbah (Ar. speech, sermon).

After this service, which suggests a possible link with the Feast of Fools, where such sermons were delivered,¹⁹ all those present are asked to kneel down and give their "offeryng to 'sentt mahownde". This done, the priest and his boy then indulge in singing a "mery tvne", the words of which are, perhaps unregrettably, not recorded in the text. At the end of the song, the priest proceeds to exhibit a collection of relics which include all sorts of repulsive and impossible objects. Among the Muslim rareties he shows is

Mahowndes own nekk bon
 And 3e xall se er ewer ye gon
 Whatt-so-mewer yow be-tyde
 & ye xall kesse all þis holy bon
 Mahowndys own yee-lyd
 3e may have of þis grett store
 & ye knew þe cavse wherfor
 Ytt woll make yow blynd for ewer-more
 þis same holy bede
 Lorddes and ladyys, old and ynge
 Mahownd þe body and dragon þe dere
 Golyas so good, to blysse may yow bryng
 With belyall, In blysse ewer-lastyng
 þat ye may þer In Ioy syng. 20

A variation on the familiar popular motif of the religious duel between Christianity and Islam is then introduced. The Saracen King asks Mary Magdalene (who had come to this distant land to preach the Gospel) who Christ is and of what power. To this welcome question, Mary Magdalene gives a rather detailed and highly informative account of the Creation of the Universe in which she tells him "al and sum". When she finishes her erudite and

19 Janicka, The Comic in the Mystery Plays, p.94; A. Brown, "Folklore Elements in the Medieval Drama", Folk-Lore, LXIII (1952), 67.

20 Mary Magdalene, II, 1233-46. Cf. Chaucer, General Prologue, 699 f; Heywood, The Four P's, in Manly, Pre-Shakespearean Drama, i, 538.

eloquent exposition, which reminds one of Roland's theological discussion with Vernagu in Roland and Vernagu, the King claims that on the contrary the world was created by his gods. To prove this, he then orders all present to go to the temple where he hopes his god will show a miracle by speaking to Mary. The "mament" as might be expected, never utters a word and, at this point, Mary asks leave to try her God:

Now, lord of lordes, to *þi* blyssed name sanctificatt
 Most meekly my feyth I recummend
 Pott don *þe* pryde of mammentes violatt 21
 Lord to *þi* lover *þi* goodnesse descend.

At this, Muhammed's idol begins to shake and quake and, furthermore, the following stage directions are given at the end of Mary's prayers: "Here xall comme a clowd frome hevne, and sett *þe* tempyl one a fyer, and *þe* pryst and *þe* clerk xall synke; and *þe* kynge gothe home..."

No proof of the superiority of Christianity can be more eloquent than this, and shortly afterwards we see the King journeying on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where he is baptised. Upon his return from Palestine, he becomes, as it were, more Catholic than the Pope:

Chyrchys In cytyys I woll edyfy
 & who-so a-zens ower feyth woll reple
 I woll ponysch swych personnes with perpelyxycyon
 Mahond and his lawys I defye
 A! hys pryde owt of my love xall have polucyon 22
 & holle on-to Iesu I me be-take.

Apart from Muhammed's appearance as an idol in Mary Magdalene,

21 Mary Magdalene, II, 1555-58.

22 Ibid., II. 1984-9.

a device which was to be copied by later dramatists,²³ the prophet does not appear in the medieval plays which have come down to us. His absence from the dramatis personae of the surviving texts, however, does not mean that there "never existed" such a character in medieval drama, as S.C. Chew suggests.²⁴ While it is true that there is no indisputable evidence to show that Muhammed did actually appear on the medieval stage, it is not difficult to imagine that he might well have been presented as a devil or as a pagan deity worshipped by the numerous infidels and Jews of religious drama. Mahoune, we must remember, was popularly held to be at the head of the pagan gods, who were usually given the outward appearance of demons and caricature characteristics of the angels on stage.²⁵ Therefore, when John Skelton speaks of Wolsey as resembling a "fiend of hell.../ Like Mahound in a play / No man dare him withsay",²⁶ it is more likely that he was thinking of the noises and furious gestures traditionally attributed to the devils or Mahounds of religious drama than merely recollecting confusedly, as Chew suggests,²⁷ the idol in Mary Magdalene. There is also the possibility that Mahound may have been presented as a Saracen despot, a sultan or a pharaoh, of whom Thomas More was perhaps

²³ See above p. 84, n. 34.

²⁴ Crescent and Rose, pp. 393-4. Chew's reason is that "it is not easy to see where.../Muhammed/ might have been introduced".

²⁵ That even the devil worships Muhammed is attested by many references. In "The Harrowing of Hell", ll. 343-4 (York), Satan cries for Muhammed's help: "Owt, ay, herrowe helpe mahounde / Nowe wex I woode out of my witte". Cf. "The Temptation", ll. 62-3, Ludus Coventriae: "All þe deuelys pat ben in helle / shul pray to Mahounde / as I þe telle". Cf. also "The Last Judgment", ll. 559, 646, 675 in Chester II; Cushman, The Devil, p. 31.

²⁶ "Why Come Ye not to Court", Works, p. 356.

²⁷ Crescent and Rose, p. 394. Cf. note on pp. 227-28 in Edmund Spenser, Works, vi, for more references to Mahoune on the medieval stage.

thinking when he spoke of the "sowdayne" in a passage cited earlier in the chapter. For it is in this capacity that Muhammed appears in Skelton's lost play, The Nigromansir. In this play, which according to Warton was printed by de Worde in 1505, Muhammed is grouped with such figures as Herod, Judas and Pilate, all of whom Skelton consigns to Hell, where they are "well fried and roasted in the unfathomable sulphur of locytus".²⁸

Muhammed's absence from the medieval stage, if indeed he was absent, is nevertheless amply compensated by the numerous farcical references to him which made his a familiar name in medieval drama. In The Play of Wyt and Science, a morality encouraging devotion to study, the favourite oath of the vaunting villain Tediousness is "by Mahowndes nose".²⁹ In The Play of the Holy Sacrament, which dramatises the story of an attempt of outrage upon a host, the culprit, Jonathas, gives a long comic prayer to "almyghty Machomet" who had favoured him with gold, silver and "moche other merchandyse of sundry spycis".³⁰ Similarly, Folly in Lindsay's "Interlude of the Sermon of Folly", in his celebrated Satyre of the Thrie Estatis, is also made to swear "by Mahoun".³¹

28 Thomas Warton, The History of the English Poetry (London, 1775-81), ii, 363. In modern scholarship, however, Warton's claim that he had actually seen a copy of the play is treated with some scepticism. See L.J. Lloyd, John Skelton: A Sketch of His Life and Writing (Oxford, 1938), pp. 77-8; Maurice Pollet, John Skelton (Paris, 1962), p. 211, n. 51.

29 P. 11.

30 Ll. 69-108; cf. ll. 252, 371.

31 Lindsay, Ane Satyre, l. 4313, in Works.

In the hands of the Cornish playwrights Muhammed fared no better. What few Cornish texts of medieval drama we have, invariably show "Maghomys" as the god of the Jews, the Romans and all enemies of Christ. When in "The Passion of Our Lord" Caiphas asks the executioner not to show any sympathy to Jesus and to handle Him roughly, the executioner replies:

Henna my a wra wharre
Re maghom arluth pup le
Yn dyspyt the'n casadow. 32

Finally, the ignorance and anachronisms which shroud the dramatists' references to Muhammed in general are not lacking in amusing irony of which the medieval public were, no doubt, unconscious. For we are frequently presented with scenes in which the staunch worshippers of Mahoune are themselves outraged by Christ's propagation of Muhammed's faith. In the Crucifixion episode of The Towneley Plays, one of Christ's tormentors reflects complacently that from then onwards Jesus "shall with all his mawmentry / No longere vs be tell".³³ No less entertaining is the reference in The York Mysteries in which Caiphas accuses Christ of performing miraculous curses through the help of Muhammed himself: "Al this makes he by the myghtis of Mahounde".³⁴ Thus, Muhammed's name was reduced to stand not

32 "That I will do, soon
By Mahound, lord everywhere
In spite of the Villain."
"The Passion of Our Lord", ll. 993-5 in Ancient Cornish Drama.
Cf. also ll. 575, 936, 947.

33 "The Crucifixion", ll. 72 ff.

34 "Peter Denies Jesus", l. 267; In Balaam and Balak", l. 6
(Chester Plays, I), God asks Moses not to honour "Mawmentry".

only for a demon or chief deity of all non-Christian religions but was also used as a term of obloquy which all religious adversaries employed whenever they wanted to slander their enemies or detract from their faith.

The preceding references to Mahounde and his faith indicate clearly that the dramatic representation of Islam and the Muslims is based entirely on the accepted notions and misconceptions of the age. The medieval dramatists, master panderers to popular taste but hopelessly ignorant of anything pertaining to Islam, failed to add anything new to that elaborate edifice of anti-Islamic legend. They left the Saracens and Islam where they found them and contented themselves with the ignorant repetition of the age-old calumnies against a hated foe.

ii The Folk Drama - The Saint George Plays

A glance at the remnants of the medieval folk drama, the widespread mummers' or St. George plays, will show that the Muslims figure prominently in these performances. The difficulty here is that there are no recorded performances before the fifteenth century,¹ and that there is, regrettably, no extant Middle English text to show us exactly what a medieval St. George play was like. Studies in the fields of folklore and popular entertainment have, nevertheless, shown that the medieval performances of these plays could not have been very different in substance or presentation from those performed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when these plays began to attract the attention of serious scholars and folklorists. Thanks to those who have painstakingly made verbatim reprints of the folk plays, we now possess numerous texts coming from almost every corner in Britain, which we can investigate and analyse.²

¹ A. Harbage, Annals of English Drama 975-1700, rev. by S. Schoenbaum (London, 1962), pp.8, 10, 12, 14. The earliest description of a St. George play is 1685. See Alan Brody, The English Mummers and Their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery (London, 1969), p.11. This ante-dates Chambers's reference by at least a century. Cf. E.K. Chambers, The English Folk-Play, 2nd ed. (New York, 1966), p.154.

² R.J.E. Tiddy, The Mummers' Play (Oxford, 1923) contains a valuable collection of various texts covering many parts of Britain. A convenient "normalized text" is found in Chambers, Folk-Play, pp. 6-9. In this book Chambers adds much additional material to his earlier discussion of the subject in The Medieval Stage (Oxford 1903), i, 205-27. The most recent studies are those of E.C. Cawte, A. Helm and N. Peacock, English Ritual Drama (London, 1967), which includes an excellent bibliography, and Alan Brody's English Mummers.

The mummers' play, which has survived in Britain even into the second half of the twentieth century,³ is usually performed by a band of youths at Christmas in the houses and inns of those who offer them welcome. While, in details of character and action, the little drama varies in different localities, the main lines of the play are usually the same. The principal characters are the hero (St. George or one of the variants), the antagonist (usually, but not always, a Muslim character, frequently named as The Turkish Knight) and a comic doctor. In addition, there are minor personages whose names vary considerably in different versions of the play. After a brief prologue, the two (sometimes more) fighting characters advance and introduce themselves or are introduced by the presenter. A duel or several duels follow and one or other of the combatants is killed. The doctor then enters, boasts his skill in vaunting language and finally resuscitates the victim. Supernumerary characters may then appear to dance and create a festive mood and the play ends with a quote.⁴

In his elaborate study of the play, E.K. Chambers shows that the central incident in the performance is connected with the celebration of the death of the year and its resurrection in the spring and that its ultimate origin is to be sought in the folk festivals and ritualistic dances many centuries before Christianity.⁵

³ See C.J. Berry, "Mummers' Play is a Relic of Medievalism", The Andover Advertiser and Northern Hants. Gazette, No. 4936 (2 Jan., 1953), where in response to newspaper appeals a performance was given by a professional mummer in Andover on the evening of Boxing Day, 1952. The text of the play is given verbatim and a few remarks on the history of the play are also provided.

⁴ Chambers, Medieval Stage, i, 210-17.

⁵ Ibid., p. 207.

In the course of time, these symbolic dances developed into proper drama, and through the influence of Christianity the play gradually attached itself to the season of Christmas rather than that of the Spring, when the pagan rituals had originally been held. The introduction of St. George into the play is another aspect of the Christian influence, and the legend concerning his death and resurrection in time came to be the central motif of the play.

In the widely-read thirteenth century Legenda Aurea, compiled by Jacobus de Voragine and later translated by Caxton in 1483, St. George appears as a great soldier-saint whose slaying of a dragon causes 15000 Libyans, "wythout wymmen and chyldren", to consent to be baptised into the Christian faith.⁶ With the Crusades and with the crystallisation of a general hostile attitude to the Muslims, the dragon gradually disappeared and was replaced by one or more Muslim warriors against whom St. George fights. Thus, the fight between St. George and the dragon was transformed to become at once symbolic and commemorative of the long-protracted strife between Islam and Christendom.⁷ But the fight between the hero and his Muslim adversary is, significantly enough, not

6 Legenda Aurea, fol. CXL, v; Cf. Lydgate, "The Legend of St George", ll. 127-33, in Minor Poems, Part I.

7 Cf. J.S. Udall, "Christmas Mummers in Dorsetshire", The Folk-Lore Record, III (1888), 90; T.F. Ordish, "English Folk Drama", Folk-Lore, IV (1893), 155, 159-60, and by the same author "Folk-Drama", Folk-Lore, II (1891), 331; Arthur Beatty "The St. George or Mummers' Play: A Study in the Protology of the Drama", The Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, XV, pt. II (Madison, 1906), 321. It is noteworthy here that St. George is often presented as wearing a red cross, which is, of course, the Crusaders' symbol. The Knight of the Red Cross in Spenser's The Faerie Queene may perhaps be viewed as the poet's concept of the ideal Crusader.

always crowned with the Christian's victory. This noticeable indifference to the success or failure of the hero, almost unthinkable in romance, lends emphasis, says Karl Young "to the fact that the germ of the play is not the romance or realism of the story but the symbolism of death and revival in themselves."⁸

We might begin our inquiry into the portrayal of the Muslim antagonist in the mummers' plays by mentioning a late sixteenth-century prose romance entitled The Famous Historie of the Seven Champions of Christendom, which was printed in 1596 (part I) and 1597 (part II), on account of the possible influence it had on the texts of the plays as we now have them.⁹ In his Historie, which went through edition after edition for a century and a half, Johnson, using the Legenda Aurea as his basic source and drawing upon a mass of legends connected with St. George and other Christian heroes, presents the saint as a destroyer of Islam and the vanquisher of the sultans of Morocco, Egypt and Persia.¹⁰

8 The Drama of the Medieval Church (Oxford, 1933), i, p.12. Chambers's theory regarding the origin of the play has not been accepted by all critics. Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1955), pp. 330-32, gives a "mere suggestion" that the origin of the mummers' play may be found in a medieval miracle play based on the saint's life as recorded in the Legenda Aurea. He also considers the various references to St. George plays in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as "miracle plays rather than as folk plays".

9 Chambers, Folk-Plays, pp. 176-77. Robert Withington, however, does not share Chambers' view regarding the influence of Seven Champions on the mummers' play. See English Pageantry (Cambridge, Mass., 1918), i, 7, n.1.

10 Thus, reacting to the unsightly procession in honour of Muhammed, St. George transforms the "dirty streets" of Persia into channels overflowing with blood and carcasses. See Seven Champions, p.22.

Curiously enough, the Turks do not figure at all in his work.¹¹ Their complete absence is puzzling indeed, since the popularity of St. George in England "was largely dependant on his miraculous appearances to the English armies" in their fights against the Seljuk Turks in Palestine.¹² By excluding them from the list of the Muslim opponents to St. George, Johnson was discarding a deeply-etched Elizabethan tradition which regarded not the Persian, the Moor or the Arab but the Turk as the symbol and exponent of Muslim menace to Christendom. However, the effect of Johnson's Seven Champions was not to give new knowledge of St. George's crusading activities against the Muslims, but rather to give wider currency to older legends.

Other names for the villain - most commonly called the "Turkish Knight" - for instance, "Turkey Snipe" or "Turkish Champion", appear in different localities. In Cheshire, for example, he is called "black Morocco dog".¹³ In North Somerset he appears as "The Black Prince of Darkness" or "of Paradise", "Palatine", or "Paladine" - perhaps, as Chambers suggests, originally

11 Chambers, Folk-Play, p. 177, suggests that the Turkish Knight of the play is a later replacement of the Soldan of Persia. But it must be remembered that the Turk had long before Johnson's day become the representative figure of Islam and appeared as a titular hero in his role as antagonist to Christian knights. See, for example, The Turke and Gowin, which also deals with death and re-birth, and cf. above pp. 69-71. However, the only mention of the Turks in The Seven is that of the "Janissaries", who appear as bodyguards of the Sultan of Persia. Cf. Artemel, The Idea of Turkey, pp. 188-89. The greater part of the dialogue of the mummers' play was, Arthur Brown points out, the product of the centuries from 1200 to 1500. See his "Folklore Elements", Folk-Lore, LXIII (1952), 68.

12 Newman, St. George, p. 142.

13 Cf. C.R. Baskervill, "Some Evidence of Early Romantic Plays in England", MP, XIV (1917), 507, where it is pointed out that the Turkish Knight is presented with a blackened face.

from "Palestine", since St. George is traditionally connected with Palestine and the Crusaders.¹⁴ Other names given to him include "Slasher", "Captain or Bold Slasher", or even the ironic "Alexander".¹⁵

But whatever his name, there is very little difference in the way he is commonly envisaged. When he first appears he threatens to kill his opponent and then send the dead body to Satan, Turkey, the Devil, the Old Man or the Cookshop "to make mince-pies".¹⁶ Of his characteristic boastful jingles the following, which recurs with slight variations, is a fair example:

Here comes I the bold Turkish Knight
I come from the Turkish lands to fight
First I fought in England
And then I fought in Spain
And now I am come back to England
To fight St. George again

-
- 14 In the later pageants of England, St. George was presented with an attendant dressed in the costumes of a Templar. See Withington, English Pageantry, ii, 170.
- 15 Chambers, Folk-Play, pp. 27-28; Chambers, Medieval Stage, pp. 211 ff. Cf. Beatty, "The Saint George Plays", p. 277. Cf. also Newman, St. George, p. 15.
- 16 Tiddy, Mummers, p. 235 (The Paceaers Play, Yorkshire); p. 229 (The Great Welford Play, Warwickshire); p. 181 (The Longborough Play, Gloucestershire). The Old Man mentioned here might be the "Old One", the devil. However, it might be added in the obscurity of a footnote that a real Muslim Old Man, who terrified the Crusaders more than the devil, did exist in the mountainous area of Northern Palestine. His followers al-hasshashin (Ar. hashish, grass eaters) were responsible for the wounding of Richard I and Edward I. Al-hasshashin also supplied the English language with the nasty word "assassin". But it is difficult to expect the audience of the mummers' play to be aware of the irony suggested by the mention of the Old Man.

If I could meet St. George here
 I would put my spear in through his ear
 I would beat him and bale him
 And cut him in slices... 17

While it is true that the formulas of such Herod-like vaunting passages are frequently interchangeable among the participants of the play, warnings against boastful speaking are more often addressed only to the Turkish antagonist. Where such warnings occur he is usually enjoined to stop bragging and start fighting:

Ha proud Turk what will thou tell me
 So with threting words and threting oaths 18
 Draw thy sord and fight.

From the insults heaped upon him which contrast with the praises given to St. George or his Christian variants¹⁹ and from the custom of presenting him as a black-faced antagonist, it becomes clear that the Turkish knight is simply an extension of the Saracen of tradition and romance. It is noteworthy that although he sometimes vanquishes his Christian opponent, the latter does not humiliate himself by kneeling down or pleading passionately for his life as the Turkish Knight usually does

17 Tiddy, Mummers, p. 144 (The Camborne Play, Cornwall).

18 Tiddy, Mummers, p. 149 (The Mylor Play, Cornwall); cf. p. 186 (The Burghelere Play, Hampshire); p. 192 (The Bursledon Play); p. 144 (The Camborne Play).

19 Occasionally, however, the Turkish Knight returns the compliment by abusing his adversary. "You black-looking English dog, will you before me stand?" he shouts at King George in "The Weston-Sub-Edge Play", reproduced in Chambers, Folk-Play, p. 43. Such insults to the Turk as "you black and American dog" may reasonably be supposed to be no older than the American Revolution of 1776. See Tiddy, Mummers, p. 193 (The Bursledon Play).

under similar circumstances:

O pardon, pardon St. George one thing
Of thee i crav spair me my life
And i will be thy constant slave. 20

'When the Christian champion chooses to spare his enemy's life, the Turkish knight is usually reprimanded for his vainglory and audacity and asked to carry a message, the contents of which must have added to the joy of the audience:

Yes proude torke arise and go in to thy on land
and tell what a bould champion there doth in
England stand had it been a thousand or ten
thousand such men as thee i would fight... 21
for England wance again.

But the Christian victor is not always magnanimous towards his antagonist. In some versions of the play he rejects all his enemy's appeals and pleadings and forces him to resume the fight:

I never will pardon thee, Turkish Knight
Therefore rise thou Turkish Knight
Draw thy sword and we will fight. 22

When the Turk is killed in the duel, his dead body is not always revived by the comic doctor. In such cases it must be carried out. Not unfittingly, the task of disposing of the corpse in some plays is assigned to the devil:

Here I goes old man Jack
With the Turk upon my back. 23

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- 20 Tiddy, Mummers, p. 150 (A Play for Christmas from Cornwall); cf. p. 205 (The Ovingdean Play); p.193 (The Buralledon Play). See also "The Leicestershire St. George Play", ll. 36, 40, in Adams, Pre-Shakespearean Dramas. Cf. C.R. Baskervill, "Dramatic Aspects of Medieval Folk Festivals in England", Studies in Philology, XVII (1920), 34.
- 21 Tiddy, Mummers, p.150.
- 22 From a "Dorsetshire Play", reproduced in J.S. Udal, "Christmas Mummers in Dorsetshire", Folk-Lore Record, III, (1888), 105.
- 23 Tiddy, Mummers, p. 146 (The Camborne Play).

iii Festivities and Sports

A. The Orient as a source of Spectacle.

The value of the Oriental and the exotic to the spectacular performances which offer lavish displays and visual entertainments rather than dramatic action was recognised from an early date in England. Among the first to utilise the Orient for decorative purposes were the organizers of the elegant and lively tournaments of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, whose efforts to enhance the glamour of these occasions resulted in the introduction of the colourful and strange Oriental costumes as suitable outfits for such spectacular events.¹

No less interest in the rich Oriental clothing is shown in the processions and civil pageants of medieval England. Here too, figures dressed as Easterners were a constant feature. In some processions and cavalcades the Saracens and the popes, the sultans and the Prester Johns, the blackamoors and the douzepers, were displayed with equal enthusiasm for the sake of the colour and richness which they provided. But even here, as will shortly be demonstrated, the Muslim never lost his true identity as the arch-enemy of Christendom.

An early example of the employment of Oriental figures in the civil processions of England is described for us by John Stow.

1 In 1331, for example, King Edward III and some chosen knights watched a tournament dressed as Tartars. See Withington, English Pageantry, i, 90; cf. p. 89. See also G. Wickham, Early English Stages (London, 1959), i, 20, 49-50. The Tartarian disguise was particularly appropriate to battle on account of the immense military reputation the Tartars enjoyed during Edward's time.

From his invaluable Survey of London we learn that in 1377 the citizens rode in disguise through the streets and

in the first ranke did ride 48 in the likenes and habite of Esquires, two and two together, cloathed in redde coates and gownes of Say or Sindall, with comely visors on their faces: after them came riding 48 Knightes in the same liuery, of colour and stuffe: Then followed one richly arrayed like an Emperour and after him some distance, one stately tyred like a Pope, whom followed 24 Cardinals and after them eight or tenne with black visors not amiable, as if they had beene legates from some forrain Princes.

The introduction of Oriental costumes in tournaments and in processions is, of course, only one aspect of a general "Oriental vogue" which was to last well beyond the period with which we are concerned. This Oriental vogue was undoubtedly in Chaucer's mind when he laid the scene of The Squire's Tale

At Sarry in the land of Tartarye.

It is also attested again and again by the avidity with which books and travelogues about the East were demanded - whether these came from a Mandeville or a Marco Polo.³ It is further illustrated by an anonymous fifteenth-century Scottish poem which

2 Stow, Survey, i, 96. It is interesting to note that foreign merchants resident in England are usually warned in advance to prepare to contribute to the occasional pageants given to celebrate such events as royal entries. In 1432, a group of "esterlinges" "gladde in her maners" and "estatly horsed" passed through the "subbarbes" of London to meet King Henry VI following his coronation in Paris. See Lydgate, "King Henry VI's Triumphal Entry into London", ll. 45 ff., in Minor Poems, Part II. Cf. Withington, English Pageantry, i, 174 and p.188 for further examples; see also Machyn, Diary, pp. 33, 137.

3 The purchase of Oriental goods and fabrics caused some poets to complain and satirize this tendency among their contemporaries. In "The Maner of the World Now-a-Dayes", possibly by Skelton, the poet regrets to see "so many esterlynges" thriving on the sale of their products in England and bearing "away our wynnynges". See F.W. Fairholt, Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume, Percy Society (1844), p.67.

is highly informative about the rustic festivities of Scottish peasantry. From this poem, The Tale of Colkelbie Sowe, we learn that many of the participants in a village festival "countirfutit the gyss" of a number of Oriental nationalities ranging from Africa to Arabia and Tartary:

Sum the Cane of Tartary
 Sum the soldane of Surry...
 Sum Pretir Johnie of grit Ynd
 Sum As the Ethiopis vsit...
 Sum had dansis many ma
 W^t all the dansis of Asia. 4

In the court disguising of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the external appearance of the Orientals, particularly of the Turks and the Moors, also played an important part. Like the fauns, the fairies and the heroes of antiquity, they supplied the much sought after ingredient of grotesqueness to these festivities. While disguise in Turkish costumes was of special appeal to many courtiers,⁵ the Moor, on account of the additional grotesqueness of his colour, was even more popular. To the consideration of some aspects of this interest in the Moor's blackness we must now turn.

B. The Morris Dance.

In the widespread court and folk dance known as the "morrisco" or "morris dance" the participants usually wore black

4 Laing, Early Popular Poetry of Scotland, i, 194; cited by C.R. Baskervill, "Early Romantic Plays in England", Modern Philology, XIV (1917), 510.

5 See A. Feuillerat, Documents Relating to the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI and Queen Mary (1914), pp. 172-3, 181 for notices of various "maskes of turkes"; cf. p. 186 for a full description of the "turkey gounes" used by some maskers. See also C.W. Wallace, Evolution of English Drama (1912), pp. 100, 199.

visors or blackened their faces so that to the onlookers they looked like "Black-amores". The ultimate origin of the morris dance, which became increasingly popular in Renaissance England and which has been identified with the chorea Sarracenicae of medieval France, is not very clear.⁶ Chambers is of the opinion that the practice of blackening the face rather than any actual Oriental or African association encouraged the idea that the dance was of Moorish origin, which also accounts for its name.⁷ There are however, those who suggest that its ultimate origin might be found in Spain, which was, of course, an important channel through which, among other influences, the Muslim legacy to music spread through Europe. These zealous Orientalists cite such English musical terms as hocket, guitar, lute, naker, rebec, tambour in support of their view.⁸

6 Chambers Folk-Play, pp. 150-51.

7 Ibid., p. 151. Rodney Gallop "The Origins of the Morris Dance", Journal of English Folk Dance and Song Society, I (1934), 127, sees the origin of the dance as a pagan ritualistic dance which invariably included a mock battle between the Queens of Summer and Winter in which the latter is always overcome. As the origin of the ceremony faded from the memory of the folk, "the latter would come to identify the defeated army with their principal foe of the moment which for Southern Europe in the Early Middle Ages would invariably be the Infidel. As new influences were brought to bear on the ceremony, the combat together with the necessity for having two teams would tend to disappear in some cases, and the surviving dancers would retain the name of Moors".

8 See The Legacy of Islam, ed., Sir Thomas Arnold (London, 1931), pp. 368-75; Walt Taylor, Arabic Words in English, Society for Pure English, Tract XXXVIII (1933), p. 577. The words are simply transliterations from Arabic iga'at (rhythm), qithara, al-ud, nakkara, rebab, tunbur. Violet Alford, "Morris and Morisca", JEPDSS, II (1935), 44, repeats the view that the dance existed long before either Moors or Christians entered Europe, but suggests that the name "Morris dance" comes from reconquered Spain. After the excitement of the Reconquest, black-faced dancers began to appear in court masks and civic pageants, to play the Moorish defeat over and over again. The popularity of the term in England may largely be due, says Miss Alford, to the English soldiers who were for more than ten generations stationed in South-West France.

In the most popular form of the morris, the legs and garments of the dancers were hung with bells of unequal size, varying in number from twenty to forty. These made different sounds as the participants danced. The principal dancer was more splendidly dressed than his companions, who varied in number from five to ten or even more. These were generally accompanied by supernumeraries of whom the most persistent was the fool. Evidently he too wore a black visor or blackened his face, for he later came to be known variously as "Owd sooty face", "Dirty Bit", or "King Coffee".⁹ The hobby horse was another feature of the Morris dance performance and, interestingly enough, the term for the hobby horse in parts of Northern Spain is zamalzain which is the Arabic zamil al-zain (The good horse).¹⁰

A glance at the numerous notices recorded in English literature, from the mid-fifteenth century on, will show that the dance became part of English life and a regular feature of private as well as public festivities.¹¹ That the morris dance was also common in Scotland may be seen in Dunbar's complaint that many hypocrites curried favour at the Scottish Court through pandering,

9 John Strutt, Sports and Pastimes (1833), pp. 310-12; Chambers, Folk-Play, pp. 151-52; Francis Douce, "Dissertation on the Ancient English Morris Dance", Illustration of Shakespeare and of the Ancient Manners (London, 1807), ii, 472-75. A. Brody, English Mummers, p. 12, exasperated at the "maddeningly vague" references to the dance, defines it as "some kind of performance, by some kind of players or dancers on some kind of occasion".

10 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, p. 373. Cf. Brody, English Mummers, p. 122, note G.

11 Consult the O.E.D. s.v. "morris", for an illuminating series of quotations. Cf. also Barbara Lowe, "Early Records of the Morris in England", JEFDSS (1957), 72 ff., for the popularity of the Morris on stage as a device to entertain the audience.

flattery and servitude. For

Sum singis, sum dancis - sum tellis storyis 12
Sum lait at evin bringins in the moryis.

C Moorish Disguisings

The blackness and grotesqueness of the appearance of the morris dancer, only decorative and supplemental to the overall effect of the dance performance, became in the hands of poets and the imaginative devisers of the ornate court masques a central idea around which an intricate web of conceits, costumes and settings was woven.¹³

Jonson's Masque of Blackness, for example, fully exploits the splendid opportunities the Moorish blackness offers for symbolism and poetry. Among other things, Jonson uses the idea of blackness to pay a most extravagant compliment to the English Court, particularly to Britannia's "sonne", James. The beams shining from this sun are endowed with such qualities that they

12 "Agains the Solistaris in Court", ll. 7-8, in Poems. Before leaving our brief notice of the morris-dancers, whose very name and appearance reminded the medieval British and subsequent generations of the Moors and the black Muslims in general, mention should be made of a well-known Elizabethan comedian, William Kemp (d.1603), who called himself "the head-master of Morrice-dauncers". Kemp achieved fame in England in 1599 by his extraordinary performance of the morris which he danced from London to Norwich. This took him nine days and a good deal of energy. In order to silence those who cast suspicions on his arduous journey and to register his gratitude for the favours he had received during his gambols, Kemp published a most delightful account in which he related the details of this pleasant adventure. Kemp's picaresque Nine Daies Wonder is, besides its entertaining nature, of some importance to the study of the history of the morris dance. See Alexander Dyce's edition, Camden Society (1840).

13 For the connection between the Morris Dance and the Court masques see Lucile Ferguson, "Some Early Masks and Morris Dances", MP, XXIV (1927), 409 ff.

can even beautify and wash the darkest blackamoor white. For they

shine day and night, and are of force
To blanch an Aethiope and reuiue a Cor's.
His light scientiall is and (past mere nature) 14
Can salue the rude defects of euery creature.

But English as well as Scottish courtiers had for a long time before Jonson's day been acquainted with the Moor as a favourite form of disguising. In England, in the early sixteenth-century revels of the luxury-loving Tudor monarchs, many courtiers dressed in Moorish garb and wore black visors in their costly pastimes. In the first year of his reign, King Henry VIII, says Hall, gave a "goodly banket" in the Parliament Chamber at Westminster. On that occasion, the King withdrew from the hall and came back later with six ladies, two of whom wore

Kirtles of Crymosyne and purpull satyn, embrudered with a vynet of Pomegraneltes of gold, all the garmentes cut compasse wyse, havyng but demy sleeves, and naked dounne from the elbowes, and over their garmentes were vochettes of pleasauntes, rouled with Crymosyne velvet, and set with letters of gold lyke Carettes, their heades rouled in pleasauntes and typpers lyke the Egipcians, embroudered with gold. Their faces, neckes, armes, and handes, covered with fyne pleasaunce blacke: Some call it Lumberdynes, which is marvilous thinne, so that the same ladies seemed to be nigrost or blacke Mores. 15

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- 14 Ben Jonson, Works, vii, 177. Cf. J.C. Meagher, Method and Meaning in Jonson's Masques (Notre Dame, Ind., 1969), pp. 107 ff; E. Jones, Othello's Countrymen (1965), pp. 31-2. Moorish disguising was considered by some contemporaries to border on the scandalous. These saw the blackness of the Moor as an unfitting disguise for the courtiers. See Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques, ed., Stephen Orgel (London, 1969), p. 4.
- 15 Edward Hall, Henry VIII, i, 15-17. Extant accounts of the Revels Office show that numerous masques of "Moore", "Barbarians", "Young Moores", were performed in the sixteenth century. A table of known court entertainments is given in Wallace, The Evolution of the English Drama, pp. 199-209. An idea of the Moorish vogue in the court masques may be obtained from the recurrence of these performances in Tudor England. See also Feuillerat, Documents Relating to Edward VI and Mary, pp. 26, 33. In Feb. 1547 King Edward himself was disguised as a Moor in one of the masques (Ibid., pp. 190-91).

The Scottish courtiers reflected a similar interest in the strangeness of Moorish appearance. Like their English counterparts, they satisfied their love for gala and pageant by introducing Moorish figures in their revels. In a masque given to celebrate the baptism of Prince Henry, in 1594, three men were disguised as "Amazones", "Three Moores" were also to appear to "bring some noveltie to the beholders" but, for some reason, the three men who were to be apparelled as Moors did not attend the celebration.¹⁶

Significant of the general attitude of society towards the black-faced is the way in which the Moor is employed in some of the processions and pageants of sixteenth-century England. The notorious descendant of Cain and the devil was occasionally assigned the task of riding before the pageant to make passage for the advancing procession. In so doing, the pageant organisers reflect a strong medieval inclination which saw in the Moors and the Saracens in general a substitute for the "wild man", whose role in the procession was to frighten the crowded onlookers into clearing the way.¹⁷

16 See John Nichols, The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth (1823), iii, pp. 355 ff. Cf. also A.J. Mill, Medieval Plays in Scotland, pp. 50 ff, where further examples are given.

17 Withington, English Pageantry, i, 40, 73; cf. ii, 53. See also F.W. Fairholt, Lord Mayor's Pageants (London, 1844), note on pp. 14-16, 24 ff; Jones, Othello's Countrymen, p. 29. Further evidence for the association of the Moor with wild men may be found in medieval English engravings where "moriscoes" were represented as savages. See Alford, "Morris and Morisca", p. 42. In Scotland, men disguised as Moors were also employed to ward off crowds. See Mill, Medieval Plays in Scotland, p. 85.

D. The Christian-Muslim Conflict in Pageants.

Even in the merriest festivity of merry England, the ancient feud with the Muslim was never completely forgotten. Indeed, in some cases, to denounce the Muslim and vanquish him in mime or sport was part of the festivity itself. When Queen Margaret visited Coventry in 1455, a splendid series of pageants were prepared for her welcome. Among other things, the activities included "IX pagentes right well arayed & yn evry pagent was shewed a speche of the IX conqueroures" of the world. In their respective speeches, both Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon referred to their wars against their enemies and freely boasted of their victories against those detestable "paynyms" whom they put to "pyne and penaunce".¹⁸

Continental pageantry offers still more illustrations of performances inspired by the age-old motif of Christian-Muslim conflict. In 1389, a play was arranged for the young Queen Isabella to celebrate her entry into Paris. Froissart who witnessed the show describes it for us:

In the strete there was a stage and thereupon a castell, and alonge on the stage there was ordeyned the Passe of Kynge Salhadyn, and all their dedes in personages; the Christenmen on the one parte, and the Sarazins on the other parte. And there was in personages all the lordes of name, that of olde tyme hadde ben armed, and had done any feates of armes at the Passe of Salhadyne, and were armed with suche armure as they than used. And thanne a lyttel above them there was in personages the Frenche Kynge, and the twelve peeres of Fraunce, armed with the blazon

¹⁸ Sharp, Dissertation, pp. 146-51.

of their armes... Thanne the personage on the stage of Kyng Rycharde departed fro his company, and wente to the Frenche Kynge, and demaunded lycence to go and assayle the Sarazins, and the Kyng gave hym leave: than Kynge Rycharde retourned to his twelve companyons. Thane they all sette them in order, and incontynent wente and assayled the Kynge Salhadyne and the Sarazins. There in sporte there semed a great bataile, and it endured a good space: this pagiaunt was well regarded. 19

But English indoor festivities of the sixteenth century offer numerous instances of the employment of this motif. The events dramatised in those entertainments are either fictitious or vaguely based on some historical land or sea confrontation, usually of some topical significance. One of the early examples in which this popular motif was explored occurs in the romantic disguisings performed in October 1518 to celebrate the conclusion of the marriage of the Dauphin of France and Lady Mary. In this entertainment, a number of men disguised as Turks march into the hall with drums. Immediately after the presenter declares that the whole world is singing in celebration of the peace with France and the happy union, one of the Turks objects that the presenter is a liar. "I who am of this world rejoyce not" at this marriage, is the Turk's protest. The exchange of angry words does not settle the ensuing argument and consequently the Turk summons fifteen of his followers who then enter with their weapons. The show then

19 Froissart, *Chronicles*, v, 277. Revels in the Scottish Court also included such symbolic fights between Christians and Muslims. See Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland*, pp. 50-55. Cf. Withington, *English Pageants*, i, 218 n.7, 147 n.2, for further examples. See also Baskervill, "Early Romantic Plays", 90-91, 477. Given the nationalistic interest in the Saladin-Richard confrontation, the episode might well have been dramatised in England despite the rather surprising absence of recorded evidence.

ends with a fight between the knights of Christendom and "the enemies of christes fayth", as Hall puts it, with the Turks, predictably, giving ground to their superior foes.²⁰

Drawing upon a mass of legend which the short-lived victory at Lepanto (1571) inspired in the West,²¹ George Gascoigne devised his Masque for The Right Honourable Viscount Montacute which was presented four years after Lepanto, also in celebration of a wedding, this time of two members of the Montacute family. In this masque, ceaseless confrontations between the Turks and the Christian allies are related by a young wedding guest whose father died defending the faith and who himself had been taken prisoner by the infidel. This young guest who turns out to be a Montacute is finally rescued by the victorious Venetians whose performance in the actual battle of Lepanto was widely acclaimed even in Protestant England, which did not officially participate in the war.²²

As the sixteenth century advanced, reports and news-letters about sea-engagements between English seamen and Muslim pirates began to circulate widely. In these highly patriotic reports the English seamen always fight and win against incredible odds.

20 Hall, Henry Vlll, i, 171; Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, (Venetian) 1509-1519, vol. II, 466-67. Cf. Baskervill, "Early Romantic Plays", 476-77.

21 Among the writers and poets inspired by this victory is King James VI of Scotland, who wrote a long poem entitled The Lepanto. See The Poems of James VI, ed. James Craigie, Early Scottish Text Soc. (1955), pp. 202-58. Chew, Crescent and Rose, p. 129, casts a strong suspicion on its authorship and suggests implicitly that Gascoigne may have written the poem.

22 George Gascoigne, A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers, pp. 173-80, 308 ff. Cf. Chew, Crescent and Rose, pp. 125 ff. Representations of the battle of Lepanto made by contemporary painters are abundant in the museums of Western Europe.

One report speaks of a victory scored by "36 men and 2 Boyes" against "6 Men of Warre of the Turkes, hauing at least 1500 Men in them".²³ Such exaggerated tales, which found eager ears in England as in Europe, mirror the general European anxiety at the increasing Muslim piracy at sea which intensified after the expulsion of the Moors from Spain. Many Moors who had nowhere to go took to piracy for a living.

The significance of this kind of military news for us lies in the fact that it provided material for children's dramatic games and also for the most sensational and spectacular entertainment of all: the sea-fighting shows. John Nichols's invaluable collection of records connected with the progresses of Queen Elizabeth and King James, and Robert Withington's English Pageantry, contain numerous contemporary accounts and notices of these lively shows. One such water-fight with splendid pageantic features inspired by these reports was performed on the Thames in 1610 in celebration of the entry of Henry, the newly-created Prince of Wales, into the city. One of those who witnessed the exciting fight left a detailed and remarkably interesting account which Nichols reproduces in his Progresses of King James:

A Turkish pirate prowling on the seas, to maintaine a Turkish castle (for so their armes and streamers described them both to be) by his spoyle and rapine, of merchants, and other passengers, sculking abroad to finde a bootie, he descried to merchants shippes, the one whereof bearing to winde somewhat before her fellows, made the

23 M.A. Shaaber, Forerunners of the Newspaper in England (Philadelphia, 1929), pp. 132-33. For English campaigns against Moorish pirates see Hall, Henry VIII, i, 30 ff., 181-2.

pirate waite her to strike sayle and come in, which the merchant either not regarding, or no way fearing, rode still boldly on. The pirate with drawen weapons and other menaces, waits her againe to vayne her bonnet, but the merchant still refusing, the pirate sends a commanding shott, which the merchant answered againe, encouraged thereto by her fellowe merchant, who by this time was come neere her, and spake in like language with her to the pirate. When he perceived his hope defeated, and this bolde resistance returned; he sent shot upon shot very fiercely, whereto they replied as resolvedly; so that betweene them grewe a verie fierce and dangerous fight. Wherein the merchants waxing to be somewhat distrassed (by reason that the castle likewise often played upon them) two men of warre happening then to be neere, made in to helpe and releue their hard detriment.

And now the fighte grewe on all sides to be fierce indeed, the castle assisting the Pirate very hotly, and the other withstanding bravely and couragiously; divers men appearing on either side to be slayne and hurled over into the sea, as in such adventures it often comes to passe, where such sharpe assaults are used indeed.

In conclusion, the merchants and men of warre, after a long and well-fought skirmish, prooved too strong for the pirate, they spoyle bothe him and blewe up the castle, ending the whole batterie with verie rare and 24 admirable fire-workes, as also a worthie peale of chambers.

These elaborate spectacles could not have been achieved without great cost and considerable organisation. As the preceding account may clearly indicate, the organisers of the water-fight had to construct special harbours, decorate and equip vessels, use crackers and artillery and, of course, choose people "which could swimme" well.²⁵ To the participant fighting on the English side, good swimming was a qualification hardly needed;

24 London's Love to the Royal Prince Henry... (1610) in Nichols, Progresses of James, ii, 323. Cf. Withington, i, 232-33.

25 Quoted in Withington, English Pageantry, i, 98 from a description of a water triumph in 1539 in which, like the Muslims, "the Pope and his cardinalles were overcome".

but to the actor playing the part of a Muslim pirate it was a pre-requisite. Poetic justice demanded that the show should end with the infidels "forced to escape with a great danger".²⁶

E. The Muslim in Some Early Sports and Games

King of Barbarie

Among the early children's games inspired by the Christian-Muslim relations is one known as the "King of Barbarie".²⁷ Like the spectacular water-fights, this game commemorates the pre-occupation of the English with the depredations of the Moorish corsairs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "The King of Barbarie" may be described as dramatic in the sense that it consists of certain pantomimic movements and words said by the players to accompany the action.

In this popular game two children stand together joining hands tightly to represent a castle. A third, impersonating the King of Barbary, stands at a distance from them and behind him are his Moorish soldiers. Some of the Moors advance to

26 The Magnificent Marriage of the Two Great Princes Frederick Count of Palatine, & And The Lady Elizabeth... (1613), reprinted in Nichols, Progresses of James, ii, 538. Cf. Withington, English Pageantry, i, 98f, 238. See Progresses of James, ii, 529, for a description of another fight against the Turks. In this "delightfull battaile" the Turks "received injuries", but did not apparently lose the battle, for "to the great contentment of all the beholders, the victorie inclyn^g to the nether side, all being opposed foes and combined friends; all victors, all triumphers, none to be vanquished, and therefore no conquerors".

27 A.B. Gomme, The traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland (London, 1894-98), i, 18-19. Other variants are "King of Barbarine", "Queen of Barbaree" or "Queen of Barbaloo".

the fortress, surround it and demand surrender:

O will you surrender, o will you surrender
To the King of Barbarie.

To which the two children reply:

We won't surrender, we won't surrender
To the King of Barbarie.

When the King of Barbarie is told of this defiance he orders one of his soldiers to attack. One by one, his followers go to the castle to try to break down the guard by throwing themselves on the clasped hands of the children forming the fortress. They all fail, and the King is the last to try. He succeeds in unclasping the arms of the two children and after him come all his soldiers bursting through the parted arms signifying capture of the castle.²⁸

The Quintain

The origin of the "quintain"²⁹ is not clear but in its early stages it was nothing more than a trunk of a tree or a post used for target purposes in tilting or jousting and also as a mark for throwing the dart. Later, a staff or a spear was fixed in the earth with a shield hung upon^{it} as the mark at

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

²⁹ The term "quintain" is usually regarded as identical with the Latin quintana, the market and business place of a camp, on the supposition that this sport may have been practised there. Consult O.E.D., s.v. "quintain". Strutt, Sports and Pastimes, p. 186, claims that "quintain" is derived from Quintus or Quintas, the inventor of this sport. But "who he was or when he lived", adds Strutt, "is not ascertained". Cf. also Nichols, Progresses of Elizabeth, i, 444.

which to strike. In the course of time, this diversion was further improved by replacing the shield by a human figure carved in wood. Following the influence of the Crusades, the figure was given the likeness of the "mortal foe", the Saracen. The wooden figure usually bore a shield with one hand and a club or a sabre with the other. The quintain thus fashioned and placed upon a pivot was not altogether harmless. For unless he hit it squarely, the stickler was himself hit by the weapon carried by the Saracen effigy as it swung round after the inexperienced marksman. When a number of young men took part in running at the Saracen to decide who aimed best, the winner was declared from the number and value of the strokes.³⁰ But "he that hit not the brode end of the Quinten", says Stow, "was of all men laughed to scorn".³¹

Details of the rules of running at the quintain are set forth in a very interesting fifteenth-century paraphrase and adaptation of a Latin work by Flavius Vegetius Renatus (4th century). In this poem, which is included in the book of Knyghthode and Bataile, compiled to instruct the young in the medieval pastime of warfare, the militant and crusading temper of the writer is revealed in his instructing the prospective warriors to view the Saracen effigy as a "mortal foe". He also dilates upon the various ways the "wooden Muslim" can be

30 Strutt, Sports and Pastimes, pp. 182 ff; Wickham, Early English Stages, i, 38-39.

31 Stow, Survey of London, i, 94.

dismembered and disfigured:

And, as in werre vppon his mortal foo
 With wightnesse & wepon most he caste
 To fighte stronge, that he ne shape him fro, -
 On hym with shild & sword avised so,
 That thou be cloos and prest thi foo to smyte
 Lest of thin owne deth thou be to wite
 Empeche his hed, his face, have at his gorge
 Bere at the breste, or serue him on the side
 With myghti knyghtly poort, eue as Seynt George
 Lepe o thi foo, loke if he dar abide
 Wil he nat fle, wounde him; mak woundis wide
 Hew of his honde, his legge, his thegh, his armys
 It is the Turk: though he be sleyn, noon harm is. 32

As if Crusading propagandists and their allies were not enough to influence the attitude of the ordinary Christian, this sport served to remind him of the gulf between Christendom and Islam and to prepare him psychologically and indeed physically to fight against the infidel.

Apart from the description of the quintain in the book of Knyghthode and Bataile there are admittedly few notices of it in medieval literature. In Huon of Burdeux, a quintain is set up before a group of young knights who assemble to decide who the best marksman amongst them is. Naturally enough, the hero's grandson Corissant proves to be that man, for he "alone was able to strike it and throe it down".³³ One of the "historical" quintain competitions is said to have taken place near Westminster in 1253. John Stow, who records this event, had himself seen another quintain "set vpon Cornhill, by the Leaden Hall" in London.³⁴

32 Knyghthode and Bataile, ll. 363-75.

33 Huon of Burdeux, pp. 743-44. However, no description of the effigy or the post is given.

34 Survey of London, i, 94.

Renaissance literature contains many other allusions to this popular sport. From a brief reference in Dekker's Shoemakers' Holiday we learn that the term "quintain" had become synonymous with "Turk". "If I stay", says one character, "I pray to God I may be turned to a Turk and set up in Finsbury for boys to shoot at".³⁵ Shakespeare's reference to the quintain is not as picturesque. "That which here stands up", complains Orlando when he finds himself unable to speak to Rosalind, "is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block".³⁶ The medieval sport is also mentioned in Sir Walter Scott's Fair Maid of Perth, whose scene is laid in the turbulent times at the close of the fourteenth century. The vaunting Oliver Proudfeet, the bonnet-maker, tells his companions that he has in his yard a post painted and "carved something like a soldan or a Saracen" with which he practices the arts of combat.³⁷

35 The Shoemakers' Holiday, II, iii, 57-58. Cf. R.V. Lindabury A Study of Patriotism in the Elizabethan Drama (Princeton, 1931), p. 77. Cf. also Preston's Cambyeses, in Dodsley, Old Plays, iv, 231-2.

36 As You Like It, I, ii, 229-30.

37 The Waverley Novels, xxi, 143.

Chapter IV. The Other Aspects of the Saracen in
Middle English

(i) The Results of Increased Contact with the
 Muslim and the Birth of the Missionary Movement.

Behind the religio-literary hostility towards the Saracens which accounts for the distortion of their appearance, beliefs and practices there runs a measure of respect for certain aspects of their life. Despite the professed enmity to Islam the Saracens' achievements in such fields as science, arts and commerce were acknowledged, if at times indirectly or unconsciously. The ambivalent outlook, for such the general medieval attitude may perhaps be called, is one of the ironic outcomes of the wars against Islam - a result unwelcome and, no doubt, unexpected by the Crusade-mongers. In English medieval literature, admiration for the Saracens, though admittedly far less pronounced than the traditional denunciations and imprecations against them, is recorded not only in the works of such enlightened men as Chaucer, Gower and Langland but also in the very vernacular romances which delight in baiting the Saracens and defaming them.

Like the Byzantines, the first Christians to come into contact with the Muslims, the Christians of Western Europe, as indicated earlier, gradually learnt to admire Muslim culture, literature and art despite the fevered attempts of Crusade

propagandists who kept on feeding their public with distortions and exaggerations "regarded at best as absurd", says R.W. Southern, "and at worst as filthy, deceitful and insane".¹

Chief among the factors which "softened" the medieval view of the Muslim and made him seem more of a "worthy foe" than a mere abstraction of all that is evil, degenerate and un-Christian, was the increased familiarity with him, particularly in the lands where Christian and Muslim lived side by side. For although the relations between the Christians and the Muslims were, in effect, a sequence of rivalries and engagements, warfare was not the only form of contact between them.² In Spain, Sicily, the Holy Land and elsewhere, Christians and Muslims were slowly discovering the advantage to them both of the axiom, "live and let live". Thanks to this principle, many troubles were avoided, and, more important, co-existence, traffic of ideas and even fraternisation between the two societies became possible.

To be sure, Latin as well as Arab chronicles offer remarkable examples of friendships which the religious and cultural barriers could not stop. In Salerno, for example, as early as 871 an African Muslim saved the city by notifying his Christian friend in advance of the impending attack of the Muslims.³

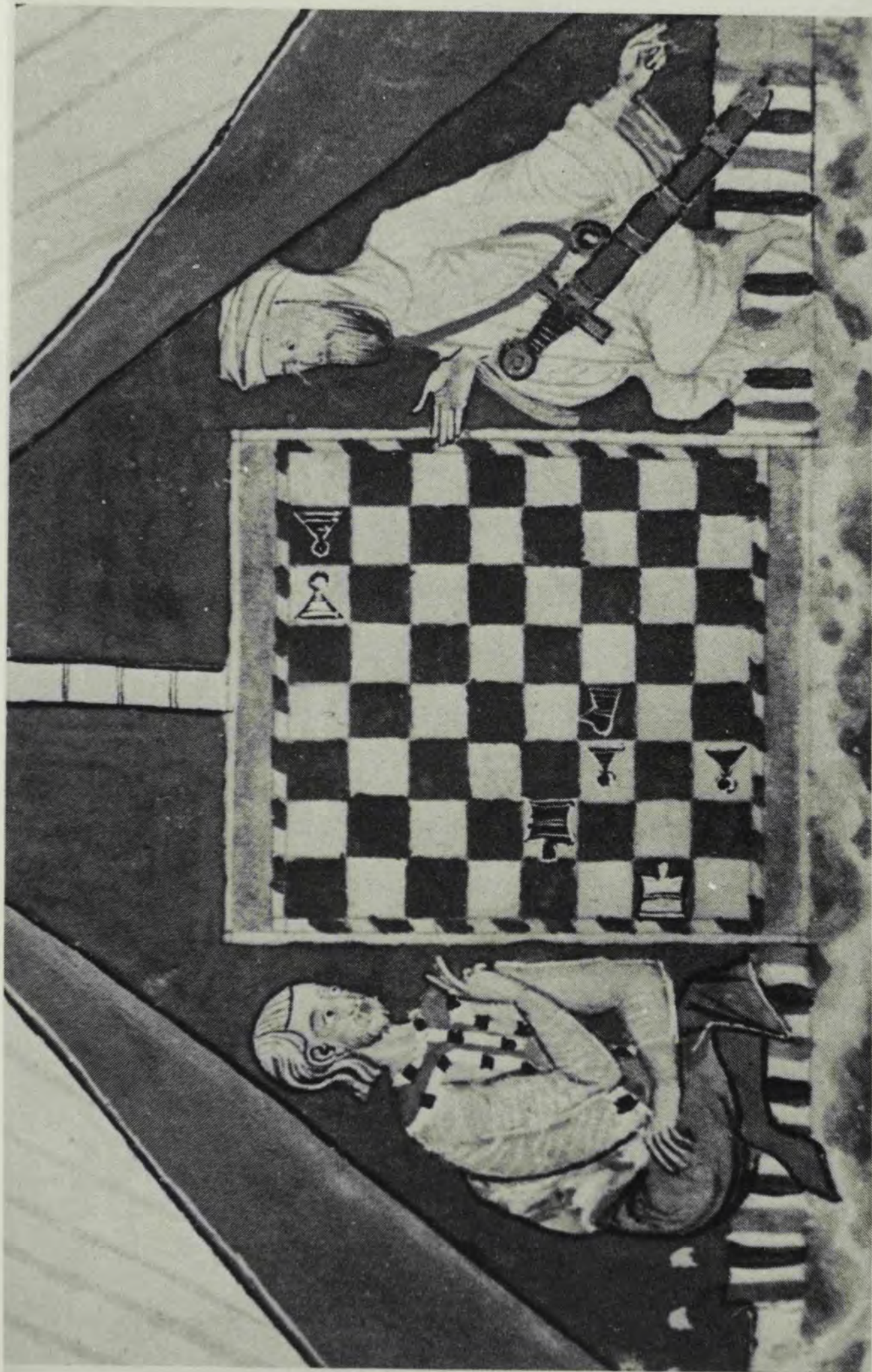
1 The Making of the Middle Ages (1953), p.40.

2 See Steve Runciman, "Islam and Christendom in the Middle Ages - The Need for Restatement", Islamic Studies, III (1964), 194.

3 F.E. Engreen, "Pope John the Eighth and the Arabs", Speculum, XX (1945), 220-21. Glimpses of such worthy deeds are occasionally reflected in romance. In Huon of Burdeux, p.419, the Bishop of Lisbon and his chaplain were saved by a Saracen sailor who, though a stranger, did as much for them as though they "had bene his bretherne".

Plate 5

Warfare was not the only form of contact between the Crescent and the Cross in medieval times. The plate shows a Saracen and a Christian knight playing a game of chess. From a fifteenth-century Spanish manual on chess. Juegos de ajedrez, dados y tablas. 1221-84. El. Escorial, Biblioteca del Monasterio. Reproduced in T.S.R. Boase, Kingdoms and Strongholds of the Crusaders (London, 1971), p. 175.



In the city of Jerusalem itself, the degree of religious tolerance exercised by both Christians and Muslims shocked the newly arrived Crusaders and pilgrims, who frequently professed alarm at the Latins' "betrayal" of Christian ideals.⁴ For instance, Humphrey of Toron, King Richard I's ^sconf^stable and chief negotiator with the Muslims, was "closely associated in the bonds of friendship with Saladin" whom, according to legend, he knighted.⁵

The medieval Muslims of the Holy Land were aware of the contrast between the attitude of the fanatic and suspicious newcomers and that of the "Orientalised" Latin residents whom they came to associate with and accept. "Everyone who is a fresh emigrant from the Frankish lands", says the poet-warrior, Usamah ibn Munqidh (d.1188), "is ruder in character than those who have become acclimatized and have held long association with the Muslims". In illustration of this judgment, Usamah gives the following interesting anecdote which is worth noting for the light it throws upon the tolerance brought about by increased

4 A typical "fresh" Crusader's reaction to the situation in Jerusalem may be found in the following exclamation by one of them: "There are in Jerusalem and in the Kingdom of Jerusalem not as formerly, religious men from every race under heaven, but rather pipers and players and out of every Christian nation the most abandoned, luxury-loving and drunken". See B.N. Siedschlag, English Participation (1939), pp. 41-2.

5 William of Tyre, History of Deeds, ii, 410. In his Chronicle of Richard I, pp. 75-8, William of Devizes speaks of the friendship between Safadin, Saladin's brother, and the English King, who frequently visited each other. Some popes in the later part of the middle ages "maintained peaceful, friendly relations with the Sultan", despite the lingering tradition of the Crusade. See D.M. Vaughan, Europe and the Turk: A Pattern of Alliances 1350-1700 (Liverpool, 1954), p.104.

contact:

Whenever I visited Jerusalem I always entered the Aqsa Mosque, beside which stood a small mosque which the Franks had converted into a church. When I used to enter the Aqsa Mosque, which was occupied by the Templars who were my friends, the Templars would evacuate the little adjoining mosque so that I might pray in it. One day I entered this mosque, repeated the first formula, "Allah is great", and stood up in the act of praying, upon which one of the Franks rushed on me, got hold of me and turned my face eastward saying "this is the way thou shouldst pray". A group of Templars hastened to him, seized him and repelled him from me. I resumed my prayer. The same man, while the others were otherwise busy, rushed once more on me and turned my face eastward, saying, "this is the way thou shouldst pray". The Templars again came in to him and expelled him. They apologized to me, saying "this is a stranger who has only recently arrived from the land of the Franks and he has never before seen anyone praying except eastward". Thereupon I said to myself, "I have had enough prayer". So I went out and have ever been surprised at the conduct of this devil of a man, at the change in the colour of his face, his trembling and his sentiment at the sight of one praying towards the qiblah. 6

Furthermore, some of the Latin residents, towards many of whom Usamah was well-inclined, assimilated themselves to the new Eastern environment to a great degree. Those early Lawrences and Burtons wore Muslim dress, maintained harem, intermarried with the natives, spoke their languages and even abstained, voluntarily, from eating pork.⁷ To these people

6 Usamah, Memoirs, pp. 163-4. "Qiblah" (*italics mine*) is the "direction" of the Ka'abah in the holy city, Mecca, towards which Muslims perform their act of praying. It might be mentioned here that among the factors which contributed to the dramatic downfall of the Templars in Europe in the early fourteenth century was their friendships and alliances with the Muslims. See E. Martin, Trials of the Templars (1928), p. 19.

7 Memoirs, pp. 169-170. Cf. Brundage, The Crusades: A Documentary History, pp. 74-5, "I pray consider and reflect how God has in our times changed West into East. For we", says Raymond of St. Giles' chaplain, "who were occidentals, have now become orientals. The man who was a Roman or a Frank has, in this land, been turned into a Galilean or a Palestinian and...takes as his wife not a woman of his own stock, but rather a Syrian or Armenian, or even, occasionally a Saracen who had obtained the grace of baptism".

the arrival of every new wave of Crusaders or pilgrims was somewhat embarrassing; they not only had to find excuses to explain away the strange and hostile conduct of their countrymen, but had, on occasion, to suffer from the repressive measures which it provoked from the Muslims themselves.⁸

In Europe, the spirit of "live and let live" soon developed into active and fruitful co-operation in various fields. Shortly after the then comparatively uncultured Normans had conquered Sicily in 1085, they found the Muslims not like "devils capering behind their bars", as they had imagined, but a highly civilised people with a great cultural heritage. The new rulers were so impressed that they not only permitted their Muslim subjects to follow their rites freely but also maintained the former system of administration, kept high Muslim officials and surrounded themselves with Muslim philosophers, scientists and artists. In the grand fashion of The Thousand and One Nights, King Roger I of Sicily (d.1105) kept a populous harem, wore an Eastern dress and sat under a huge umbrella like the caliphs of Egypt. He spoke and wrote Arabic, which was also the language of the Chancery. Muslim schools were founded in Palermo and Salerno, and Muslim professors with their flowing robes and long beards, which Muhammed encouraged his followers to grow, were held in great honour in his court.⁹ It was here that the renowned Moorish physician, Constantine, to whom Chaucer alludes, taught and practised.¹⁰

8 Writing about the middle of the fourteenth century, Ludolph von Suchen says the Dome of the Rock had recently been closed to all Christians because of some "ill-mannered Greeks". See Descriptions of the Holy Land, p. 98.

9 B. Lewis, The Arabs (1964), pp. 118 ff; Hitti, The Arabs, pp. 606-609; Cambridge History of Islam, ii, 852.

10 General Prologue, 433. See also below p. 258.

At the court of Roger II (d.1154), the most brilliant Arab geographer, Al-Idrisi (d.1166) wrote his monumental book on geography, Kitab Rujar (The Book of Roger). In his prologue, Al-Idrisi acknowledges Roger's great encouragement to his research and says that the Sicilian King had "sent in all directions for information to be incorporated in the book". Thanks to Roger's political wisdom and moderation, Sicily became, during and after his reign, a focus of Muslim culture not inferior to Al-Andalus. Arabic and Greek being both understood on the island, it was possible for many Greek works to be translated and published.¹¹

Inevitably, however, the reliance upon their Muslim subjects exposed the Sicilian rulers to sharp criticism from the Christians of Western Europe. Such denunciatory titles as "pagans" or "half-baptised sultans" were often applied to them.¹² A similar situation of Christian-Muslim co-operation which also caused criticism occurred in various parts of Spain. Several monarchs of Castille and Aragon surrounded themselves with a Muslim elite. Their mild treatment of the Muslims dismayed many of the Europeans who had helped in the Spanish re-conquest and, as a protest, they left Spain in disgust.¹³

Surprising as it may seem, co-operation between Christian and Muslim had from an early period extended even to war, the field where the Crusaders and the Mujahideen so frequently met as enemies.

11 Al-Andalus is the Arabic name for the whole of Spain. See Thomas Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp. 89-90, 152-3; C.H. Haskins, Studies in the History of Medieval Science (New York, 1960), pp. 155, 252-3.

12 Frederick II (d.1250) was particularly singled out as a target for merciless attacks. Tradition ascribes the famous saying that the world had seen three great impostors- Moses, Christ and Muhammed- to this emperor. See R.W. Southern, Views of Islam (1962), p.75.

13 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, p.4. The recent Cambridge History of Islam (1970) contains excellent pages on the Islamic civilisation and the question of the transmission of learning. See particularly chapter XlII; cf. also pp. 437-39.

In Europe as in the East there were some instances in which the Crescent embraced the Cross in a battle against a common enemy. The much celebrated Cid (d.1100) whose name was presented to the pope for canonisation on account of his military exploits against the infidels, was in fact as much concerned with defending the Muslims as his own coreligionists. His title, El-Cid (Ar. Al-Sayid = lord; master) was an honorific name which the Muslim soldiers bestowed upon him when he was serving the Al-Hudid dynasty at Saragossa.¹⁴ Frederick II (d.1250), grandson of Roger II of Sicily, who had many friends among the Muslims, was excommunicated by the pope in 1229 because, among other things, he concluded a treaty with the Muslims in Palestine in which he undertook to "assist the sultan against all men, Christians as well as Saracens, and on the other hand the sultan would in the same way assist him."¹⁵

In this connection, we might mention one of the most interesting and peculiar events in the history of relations between medieval England and Islam. In 1238 a Muslim envoy arrived unexpectedly in London. Mathew Paris, who recorded this event, informs us of his mission:

[A] powerful and noble Saracen messenger, who had come to the French king, was sent on behalf of the whole people of the East... and he asked assistance from the western nations, the better to be able to repress the fury of the Tartars; he also sent a Saracen messenger from his own company to the King of England, who arrived in England, to tell these events [the Tartars' devastating advance into Muslim territories]... and to say that if they

14 P.K. Hitti, The Arabs (1968), pp. 544-5.

15 Wendover, Flowers of History, ii, 527-28. Pacts and treaties between Christians and Muslims dictated by expediency were not uncommon in medieval times. See Mathew Paris, English History, ii, 502-503.

themselves could not withstand the attacks of such people, nothing remained to prevent their devastating the countries of the West... He therefore asked assistance in this urgent and general emergency, that the Saracens, with the assistance of the Christians might resist the attacks of these people. 16

It would, of course, be very difficult to imagine England, or any other European country for that matter, responding to what must have seemed at the time a most unnatural and insane request. Yet, the fact that the Muslims, or at least some of them, turned to Christian Europe for military help is in itself indicative of the intermittent periods of "détente" between Christendom and Islam, if nothing else. Of these periods of relative peace and concord the medieval writers seem to be aware, as the popular motif of Christians and Saracens fighting under the same banner illustrates.¹⁷ For all his crusading zeal, even Chaucer's "parfit knyght" himself offered his services to a Muslim overlord in Turkey, where he worked under this "heathen" for "somytyme".¹⁸

A more enduring and significant result of the increased familiarity with the Muslim and his world is the gradual evolution of a new attitude towards Islam. Instead of "cleansing the face of the earth" by destroying "God's enemies", we begin to hear,

16 English History, i, 131-32. However, the Bishop of Winchester, who happened to be then present and wearing the sign of the Cross, interrupted the envoy's speech, saying: "Let us leave these dogs to devour one another, that they may all be consumed and perish; and we, when we proceed against the enemies of Christ who remain, will slay them, and cleanse the face of the earth, so that all the world will be subject to one Catholic church, and there will be one shepherd and one fold".

17 Among the notable Christian heroes in romance who fought for Saracens are Guy of Warwick (st.88) and Beves of Hampton (ll. 989 ff). Cf. Stith-Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk Literature, and Bordman, Motif-Index of Romances: M274, V339.1.1. Cf. also Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.133.

18 General Prologue, 64-65; Cf. Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (London, 1967), p. 58.

from the mid-twelfth century on, voices publicly denouncing or at least criticizing the use of violence against the Muslim. These new voices advocated a more humanitarian alternative by which the Europeans were urged to win the Muslim over to the Christian fold. Thus, the seeds of the missionary movement which persists even today were sown.

The presence of clerical preachers and missionaries among the zealous warriors of Christ became a regular feature of the later Crusades. These accompanied the Crusaders to spread the Gospel and to lead the "misguided Muslims" to the Haven of Peace and Eternity. A genuine desire to render service for rather than against the Muslims motivated them. It was in the course of the Fifth Crusade (1219) that the poor friar, St. Francis of Assisi, crossed over the battle line outside Damietta to preach to the Sultan of Egypt, Al-Kamil (The Perfect), under a flag of truce. Puzzled by the sight of the dirty and shabby-looking friar and his strange words, Al-Kamil thought he was listening to an insane man. He therefore politely ended this historic interview, offered Brother Francis many gifts and sent him back with an honourable escort to the Christians. ¹⁹

19 A.S. Atiya, *Crusade, Commerce and Culture* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1962), pp. 87-88; Runciman, *Crusades*, iii, 159-60. See also chapter XXIV of *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, entitled "How St. Francis Converted the Soldan of Babylon to the True Faith". This entertaining story has no basis in reality other than the brief interview between the Friar and Al-Kamil. Damietta, it might be added, was to become the scene of another ambitious attempt at preaching Christianity to the Muslims. The pious but over-optimistic French King, St. Louis, who died in North Africa in 1270 while trying to convert the Emir of Tunis, came to Damietta "not to acquire lands or money... but to gain over to God your endangered souls". "Nor did I undertake this perilous journey for my own advantage", he explained to his Egyptian captors, "but for yours, in fulfilment of my vow. For I possess abundant territory, temperate and healthy, although a sinner and unworthy of it, but I pity your souls, which will surely perish". See Mathew Paris, *English History*, ii, 378. Cf. Runciman, *Crusades*, iii, 291-2.

The greatest age of missionary activities was the mid-thirteenth century. By this time the Gospel preachers had reached as far East as Cambaluc (modern Peking). Letters and envoys were dispatched by the papal authorities in the hope of spreading Christianity among those distant peoples. On the other hand, the Muslim preachers as well as the Nestorians, the Armenians and the pagan Tuins were no less enthusiastic about establishing their claims over the souls of the Khans. On one occasion in 1254, the Mongol Court asked the representatives of these various missionaries, who were working freely there, to hold a public discussion on religion, so that Mangu Khan might himself judge which of these faiths was the true one. What concerns us here is that in the course of the discussion the Christians found an ally in the Muslims against all the rest of the contenders. The Muslims, says William of Rubruck, the Pope's messenger, "agreed with us in saying that there is one God", and according to him there was in them a "help" against the Tuins.²⁰ Such remarks clearly suggest that it was possible to sympathise and see points of contact even with the most objectionable aspect of the Muslim: his faith.

The most extraordinary missionary of the age who, more than anyone else before, strove to seek common grounds between Christianity and Islam and to recommend Christianity to the Muslims

20 The Journey of William Rubruck, pp. 29-30, 39; cf. p. 234; Brundage, Crusades: A Documentary History, pp. 250 ff, for texts of letters exchanged between the pope and Muslim sultans. Cf. Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages, ed., A.P. Newton (London, 1926), pp. 128-31.

on an intellectual basis was the Spanish preacher Ramon Lull (1232-1315). This early Orientalist-ecclesiast frequented many Muslim countries whose governments showed little or no irritation at his activities. Lull, who mastered Arabic and even composed Arabic poetry, was the founder of a school of Oriental studies at Mirmar, Majorca, in 1276. Perhaps at his instigation, the Council of Vienna (1311) resolved to create centres of Oriental studies in Paris, Rome, Oxford and other places. Lull's significance to this enquiry, however, lies not in his educational efforts, which produced no enduring results, but in his solicitations and encouragement of the use of argumentation and dialogue as a means to solve the Muslim Question.²¹ To Lull, evangelising the Muslim world was a lasting obsession until his death in Tunis in 1315.²² His belief was that once the Saracens were converted "it would be a light thing to convert the rest of the world". He also urged the ecclesiastic authorities to send Gospel preachers to the Muslims everywhere even if that entailed

21 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp. 64-65, 271-72; Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture, p. 96; New Catholic Encyclopedia (1966), viii, 1074f, ix, 931f; Newton, Travellers, p. 168. As Atiya, Crusade in Later Middle Ages, pp. 75 ff, and Runciman, Crusades, iii, 431-32, point out, Lull thought it necessary for the work of trained preachers to be supported by military operations against Islam. Cf. Lull's Ordre of Chyualry, p. xii. Cf. also E.A. Peers, Fool of Love: The Life of Ramon Lull (London, 1946), pp. 92-95.

22 Lull met a tragic end. He was killed by a furious crowd of Muslims who stoned him when he was out in the streets denouncing and "blaspheming" Islam. See Peers, Fool of Love, pp. 103-104.

a shortage of priests in Europe in consequence.²³

In England this new peaceful orientation in which spiritual weapons were recommended for use against the Muslims was advocated by the founder of English philosophy, Roger Bacon (1214?-94). Bacon, who owed much of his erudition to Muslim works, attacked the idea of crusading which he saw as an attempt to enslave the Muslims rather than to liberate Jerusalem. Despite his hatred of Islam and its "lawgiver", Muhammed, Bacon called upon his contemporaries to approach the Muslim armed with the "arguments of a superior religion".²⁴

Another eminent Englishman to condemn the militant clergy and Crusade promoters was John Wycliffe (ca. 1320-84). The criticism voiced by this great reformer was strong and unequivocal. No "honour falls to a knight that he kills many men", says Wycliffe. Exhorting the clerics to emulate Christ and His

23 Ibid., p. 29. Lull's sympathetic view of Islam is apparent in the moral story of the Saracen and the Jew which he includes in his Gouvernaunce of Princes. In this story, which is about a chance meeting between a Jew and a Saracen in the "desertis of Araby", the piteous Saracen comes out most favourably and contrasts greatly with the selfish Jew. The Saracen, according to Lull, has great faith in "grete God almychty", loves not only his people but also all "Goddis creaturis" and is glad when they are glad and sad when they are sad. For his "cheritee" and "pitee" the Saracen is finally rewarded by his Sultan, who appoints him as Chief Counsellor to the State. The old fable is widely known in medieval times and is more anti-Jewish than pro-Saracen. See Gilbert the Haye's...Buke of the Gouvernaunce of Princes, ii, 159-61. The tale is also found in Confessio Amantis, Bk. VII, 3333 ff. Cf. R.M. Ames, "The Source and Significance of the Jew and the Pagan", Medieval Studies, XIX (1957), 39-47.

24 The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon, pp. 796, 811.

disciples, he reminds them that those early preachers went "into all the world, not to fight with the cold arms of the body, but with the arms of charity". At the risk of being banned by the Pope and condemned by ecclesiastical courts he voiced such tolerant views as these:

I know that angels withstood fiends, they kill them not, neither fight with them; and wise men of the world hold it well thus to vanquish their enemies without striking; and wise men of the Gospel vanquish by patience, and come to rest and peace by suffering of death. Well I know that worldly men will scorn this sentence, but men who would be martyrs for the law of God will hold with it. 25

That some genuine sympathy for the Saracens was felt even among the ordinary people of medieval English society can be inferred from a passage in The Book of Margery Kempe, an interesting biography of a mother of fourteen children who, troubled by a sort of religious hysteria, took to roaming from shrine to shrine in Europe and in Palestine. Margery, we are told, wept "for hir owyn synnes ful plentyuowsly", while

Sche wept an-oyer owr for þe sowlys in Purgatory; an-oyer owr for hem þat weryn in myschefe, in pouerte, er in any disese; an-oyer owr for Iewys, Sarazynys, & alle fals heretikys þat God for hys gret goodnes xulde puttyn a-wey her blyndnes þat þei myth thorw hys grace be turnyd to þe feyth of Holy Chirche & ben children of saluacyon. 26

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- 25 Tracts and Treatises of John Wycliffe, pp. 68, 70. Cf. also Selected English Works, ed., Arnold, i, 123, 367. Wycliffe was called Muhammed by those who did not favour his views (Chew, Crescent, p. 101, n.1); but he himself referred to his contemporary clergy as "Western Mahomets". See Southern, Views, pp. 79 ff.
- 26 The Book of Margery Kempe, pp. 140-41; cf. pp. 204, 250.

The preoccupation with winning the Muslims over to Christianity through persuasion prompted many writers to criticize and reproach the contemporary clergy for their inertia and lack of enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel. The Cambridge scholar and cleric, St. John Fisher (1459-1535), blames the clergy "from the hyest degre vnto the lowest" for not executing their office with "ardent fayth". If they had done so, says Fisher, then all people would worship God and glorify Him. "A thousande paynymys, Saracyns, & Iewes shall be tourned vnto the, lyke as whan the fyrst foundation was set of thy chirche sometyme .iiij. thousande, now .v. thousande, now more, now lesse, we than conuerted vnto the fayth".²⁷

Some medieval poets were so influenced by the missionary zeal which was steadily gathering momentum that they even suggested the unlawfulness of the whole crusading movement. In a straightforward question to the Confessor in *Confessio Amantis*, the Lover asks if it is lawful to pass over the Mediterranean "to werre and sle the Sarazin". "Sone myne" answers the Confessor,

To preche and soffre for the feith
That haue I herd the gospell seith
Bot forto slee, that hiere I noght.²⁸

27 *The English Works of John Fisher*, pp. 179-80.

28 *Confessio Amantis*, Bk.III, ll. 2486 ff. In another poem, "In Praise of Peace", which he dedicates to King Henry IV, Gower gives extravagant eulogies on the advantages of peace and condemns war as "modir of the wronges alle". He also exhorts the English King and "these othre princes cristene alle" to follow Christ's example in spreading the faith "withoutte werre" to "every creature undir the sonne":

Christ bad himself how that we schulden preche

And to the folk his evangile teche. (216-7)

Later in the poem, however, Gower's missionary enthusiasm seems to fade away:

And if men scholde algate wexe wrothe

The Sarazins which unto Crist be lothe

Let men ben armed ayein hem to fighte

So mai the knyht his dede of armes righte. (249-52).

See *Works*, pp. 487-8.

In another part of Confessio Amantis, Gower expresses "gret mervaille" at the lack of Christian charity among Crusade promoters and at their efforts to incite people to kill the Muslims:

To slen and feihten thei ous bidde
 Hem whom thei scholde, as the bok seith
 Converten unto Cristes feith.
 Bot hierof have I gret mervaille
 Hou thei wol bidde me travaile:
 A Sarazin if I sle schal
 I sle the Soule forth withal
 And that was nevere Cristes lore. 29

A more detailed discussion of whether it is lawful to fight against Islam is found in Gilbert the Haye's Buke of the Law of Armys (1456). Like Gower, but with greater elaborations, the author answers the questions with which many enlightened medieval men must have been occupied: "Be quhat lawe or resoun may men move were aganis the Saragenis?"³⁰ Proving that it "may nocht be be lawe", the author begins his argument by stating that God had distributed wealth, lands, reason, wit and science among all creatures of this earth without discrimination, "alswele for the gude persoun as the evill". The sun and the other planets, adds the writer, shine "evynly" upon the "cristyn mannis corne" as upon the Saracen's. Therefore, Christians should not conquer or take that which God has freely given to the Saracens. As for converting the Saracens, faith, he reminds his medieval public, "sulde nocht be compellit be fors". All that Christians have to do is to explain the Gospel to the Saracens, "mak thame exhortaciounis as did Sanct Paule and othir doctouris" and let

29 Confessio Amantis, Bk. IV, ll. 1674 ff.

30 Gilbert the Hay's Prose Manuscript (A.D. 1456): The Buke of the Law of Armys or Buke of Bataillis, i, 103.

them decide for themselves.³¹ There is, however, one case in which the Christians may rightly wage war against the Saracens: Jerusalem. Here, the writer argues that the Holy City unquestionably belongs to Christ, who bought it "with his awin precious blude". But all attempts to expel the Saracens from that city are unlawful until and unless the pope himself has given his own consent and approval.³²

This tolerant attitude, at least by medieval standards, is also shared by William Langland, whose poetry reflects a sincere missionary zeal. In Piers the Plowman, Langland attacks the "doctours of decree" and the "dyuyn maystres" for not being sufficiently interested in saving the souls of the misguided Muslims:

Ac yf preestes do her deuer wel. we schullen do þe bettere
For saresyns mowe be saued so. yf þei so by-leyuede
In þe lengthynge of here lyf. to leyue on holychurche. ³³

In a more optimistic reference to the Saracens, Langland records his apocalyptic vision that the day will come when all men will beat their swords and axes into sickles and scythes, when "batailles schulle neuere eft be", and when all the Saracens "schullen synge credo in spiritum sanctum".³⁴

31 Ibid., pp. 103-104.

32 Ibid., p. 105.

33 Piers the Plowman, Pass. XVllll, ll. 122-24; cf. ll. 185-86.

34 Ibid., Pass. IV, ll. 479, 484 (C.); cf. Pass. III, (C.) 321 ff. (B.). Langland's excessive optimism becomes apparent when we contrast it with the views of those who felt it would be "moche better these wretchys to despyse / And styll to leue them in theyr blynde darkenes". See Barclay, Ship of Fools, p. 189. Cf. Lindsay, "Dialog Betuix Experience And Ane Courteour", ll. 2557 ff.

Pleas for missionaries are found even in the metrical and prose romances, where writers spoke on many occasions of Saracens being converted to Christianity not upon pain of death, through miracles, or as a prerequisite for inter-marriage, but as a result of conviction procured by the efforts of preachers and missionaries. In The Three Kings' Sons, for example, the Sultan's sister keeps refusing baptism lest her soul be damned in the Next World. Through the efforts of "i or iij notable clerkis" who spend long hours with her to "shewe hir oure feith", she finally abandons her religion and embraces Christianity.³⁵ In Huon of Burdeux, the newly-baptised Sultan, contrary to the regular practice of his converted fellow-Saracens, does not force his subjects to renounce their superstitions but explains Christianity to them, recounting its beauties and merits. From his high "scaffold of tymber", he shows them the way to "eternal saluacyon", which can be attained only if they believe in "our sauour and redemer, Iesu chryst".³⁶ An instructive example occurs in Octavian Imperator, where the Sultan's daughter is asked if she wished to be baptised. She answers in the negative, assuring the assembled men that "Mahoun lawe ys well the better lay". Having heard this rather unexpected response, the pious Clement takes the initiative and indulges in a preaching session. He

Prechede so to her that day
In Sarsyn speche
That she was crystened yn Goddes lay. ³⁷

³⁵ The Three Kings' Sons, p.200.

³⁶ Huon of Burdeux, p.463.

³⁷ Octavian Imperator, 263-65. Sailing with Saracens aboard a ship, Blanchardyn "preched so longe" that all the Saracens "of one assent & accorde promytted vnto Blanchardyn that they sholde deuoutly do baptyse hem self, and shold byleue in the holy crysten feyth whan they shold come to lande or in place where hit myght be doon". See Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.137

No less significant than these examples is the incident concerning Palomides, the Saracen in Malory's Morte D'Arthur. Frustrated by Isolde's consistent rejection of his suits, Sir Palomides carries her away to his castle, but before he can enjoy his fair captive, Sir Tristram is at his castle's gate demanding her immediate release. A fight then ensues in which Sir Palomides is overpowered, and at Isolde's request Tristram spares his life. The reasons offered by the gentle lady are worthy of notice:

'Hit were greete pyte that I sholde se Sir
 Palomydes slayne... bycause that he is nat
 crystened, and I wolde be loth that he sholde
 dye a Sarazen ... A, myne awne lord', seyde
 La Beale Isode, 'full well ye wote I wolde nat
 your dyshonour but I wolde for my sake spare 38
 this unhappy Sarazen'.

Obviously, Isolde's remarks represent an attitude of mind which is diametrically opposite to the earlier and more conventional attitude of slaying the Saracen precisely on account of his faith.

38 Malory, Morte D'Arthur, Bk.viii, 425.

(ii) Saracen Commerce and Culture

Commercial intercourse with the Muslim world, which had begun before the Crusades and continued with few interruptions through this difficult period, played a significant part in softening the general attitude of the ordinary Christians towards the Saracens. In the market-places of Damascus, Alexandria or Aleppo, the chief trading centres between East and West, medieval European merchants met Saracen traders and in a friendly atmosphere conducted business and exchanged courtesies either directly or through the help of intermediaries and dragomen (Ar. terjuman = translator). The mutual benefits gained from commercial relations led to close co-operation in such forms as joint partnerships, commercial treaties and the institution of trade representatives. It was also through this channel that much of the silent penetration of Muslim culture into Europe was effected.

One significant aspect of the result of this contact was the gradual enrichment of the commercial and business vocabulary of medieval Europe with words "borrowed" directly from Arabic, the holy language of Islam. Such terms as cheque (sakk), traffic (tafriq = distribution), tariff (ta'rif = explanation), calibre (caleb = mould) tare (tarha = thrown away) and the everyday word magazine (makhazin = store-house) point clearly to the influence Muslim trade exercised upon the commercial

developments in Christian Europe.¹

Through this channel, too, the stay-at-home Europeans were introduced to the charm of Muslim luxuries, both natural and manufactured. These were so eagerly sought after that they "drained away" the gold coinage of Europe, as R.W. Southern puts it.² The many and varied goods brought by Muslim merchants, who in the words of Chaucer travelled "wyde-where", turned the minds of the medieval men and added a new and favourable shade to the term "Saracen".³

1 Joseph and Frances Gies, Life in a Medieval Town (London, 1969), p. 215; Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp. 103-105; Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture, p. 185. See also Mary Serjeantson, A History of Foreign Words in English (London, 1935), pp. 213 ff; Steve Runciman, "Islam's Influence on Christian Culture", Evening Star (Karachi, Feb. 16, 1968), p.2; Walt Taylor, Arabic Words in English, Society for Pure English, Tract 38 (1933), particularly groups 14 and 15.

2 The Making of the Middle Ages, p.48.

3 The Man of Law's Tale, 135. Cf. E.H. Byrne, "Easterners in Genoa", Journal of the American Oriental Society, XXXVIII (1886), 176-87. The renowned Elizabethan chronicler and antiquarian, John Stow, quoting William Fitzstephen as his authority, comments on the commercial activities in medieval London: "At this Citie Marchant straungers of all nations had their keyes and wharfes: the Arabians sent gold: the Sabians spice and frankensence: the Scithian armour, Babylon oyle, India purple garments, Egypt precious stones". See A Survey of London, i, 79-80; cf. also p.82. The motif of the unexpected arrival of or encounter with Saracen ships and merchants may also be regarded as an acknowledgement of the commercial activities of the Saracens. A good example of this occurs at the beginning of Richard Coer de Lion, ll. 60 ff, where a number of King Henry's knights encountered a fabulous Eastern ship.

It might be noted here that recent excavations have uncovered hoards of Arab coins in many distant countries including Iceland and Britain. It is interesting that as early as the eighth century, the gold coin of Offa, King of Mercia (757-96), bore his name "Offa Rex" inscribed from right to left (in the Arabic manner) on the obverse, and the Muslim religious testimony of faith (Shihadah) in the elegant Cufic penmanship on the reverse. Had the Mercians understood what the inscription on the reverse meant, they would have repudiated them as heretical. See Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture, p.169; Arnold, Legacy of Islam, p.106; Sir Reader Bullard, Britain and the Middle East (London, 1952), p.13.

The Land of Spices and Perfumes.

In an anonymous late fifteenth-century poem entitled "The Boke of Ynglysshe Polysye", which deals mainly with the English wool trade, the poet names "Gret Turkey" as one of the countries to which England exported wool. The poet shows broad-mindedness in defending England's right to engage in commercial activities with the infidels. He nevertheless asks those in charge of exporting English goods to use trade as a political weapon against the "panyms". So long as they "haue nede to oure Englysshe commodyteis, we", urges the poet, "myzt mak theym ful tame". Apparently, it did not occur to the patriotic poet that it was not "Gret Turkey" which needed English wares but England herself that had greater need of the "commodyteis" of the "panyms".⁴

Chief among the commodities Muslim merchants poured down on England and Europe and which were bought at almost any price, were the different kinds of spices, medical syrups and various foodstuffs, of special appeal to the medieval apothecary and grocer. The availability of spices in European markets (one medieval list named two hundred and eighty-eight different kinds) meant, of course, that food could be flavoured and preserved longer. But spices were also used for medicinal purposes and the dead bodies of great men were mummified by these fabulous commodities "instead of being rudely preserved in salt".⁵

⁴ Robbins, Historical Poems of the 14th and 15th Centuries pp. 168-73.

⁵ Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages, p.42. English monarchs of medieval England were often preserved upon their death with "dyverse speceryes and baums". See Caxton, The Chronicles of Englonde (1480), ccxliii, 284, cited in O.E.D. under "balm". The practice is also reflected in medieval romance. In Otuel and Roland, l. 2541, for example, Charlemagne mummifies Roland's body with "myrre and baum".

Whether all these aromatic goods were from the nest or the tomb of the phoenix of Arabia,⁶ extracted from the gums of some strange trees,⁷ fallen from heaven⁸ or simply fished by the Egyptians who stretched their nets across the Nile, the credulous medieval buyer did not know or care. He only knew that these precious powders or juices were brought to him by or through Saracen merchants from the distant lands of the Saracens. How extravagant and costly most spices were can be seen from the fact that along the land routes and in the market-places they were guarded "like diamonds".⁹

In Europe, where the climate is not suitable for growing spices in general, people from an early stage had to depend upon importing these commodities from the East. In England spices were known before the period of the Crusades. This is evidenced

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- 6 See Bartholomew Anglicus, Medieval Lore, p. 87-8, 91; cf. also p.2. This belief comes, ultimately, from classical authorities such as Pliny, Natural History, iii, 137, cf. also p. 123.
- 7 Citing ancient "auctours" as his authority, John Lydgate says that myrrh (Ar. murr?) comes from a tree in "Arabie, the hooite myhti lond". The plant was originally the body of an incestuous woman (Adonis's mother) which the gods "thoruh ther power transfourmed to a tre". The gum which is extracted from this tree is a "gret preseruatiiff / and off nature a ful good defensiff". See The Fall of Princes, Bk.I, ll. 5734 ff.; cf. Ovid, Metamorphoses, X, 298 ff.
- 8 See The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land 1106-1107, p.8, where balsam is stated to fall from heaven "during the months of July and August only". The notion is reiterated by various other pilgrims to Palestine. See for example Fetellus, Description of Places Round Jerusalem, p.12. When the pepper is gathered, says Schiltberger, "fires are made in the forest to drive away the serpents therefore the pepper becomes black". See Bondage and Travels, p.62. Mandeville supplied the West with more realistic information. See his comments on the origin of balsam in Travels, pp. 36-37, where he also teaches prospective travellers how to distinguish between genuine balsam and that which is "sophisticat and countrefeted". Cf. the description of the Cairo balsam garden in Huon of Burdeux, p.435.
- 9 Gies, Medieval Town, p.217. Cf. E.H. Byrne, "Genoese Trade with Syria in the Twelfth Century", American Historical Review, XXV (1919-20), p.218.

by many interesting references. On his deathbed, for example, Bede instructed that his little store of pepper and incense be given to a friend of his.¹⁰ King Alfred's messengers to the East brought back, among other Oriental commodities, "aromatic juices and brilliant exotic gems".¹¹ However, it was not until after the First Crusade that spices and flavours became articles of common use. For these Oriental condiments and aromatic substances were gradually becoming available at the special "spicery shops". Furthermore, to the royal and aristocratic English households, buying and keeping spices was apparently becoming an independent charge assigned to a special employee known in medieval England as the "clerk" or "officer of the spicery".¹² On the other hand, in the inns and taverns, ordinary people could also enjoy the taste of "spiced ales" and "spiced cakes". In Piers the Plowman we are presented with a vivid picture of a London ale-house in which the wife of Beton the Brewster serves her customers with such varieties of Eastern tastes as "hote spices", garlick and "piper".¹³

10 Archer and Kingsford, Crusades, p.439; C.R. Beazley, Modern Geography (1897), i, 203, n.1.

11 Malmesbury, Chronicles, p.118. Cf. Wendover, Flowers of History, i, 226.

12 Early English Meals and Manners, pp. 46, 195. It should however be mentioned that the term "spice" was also extended to include fruit as well. See O.E.D., s.v. "spice", sense 2 b.

13 Pass. VII, 358 ff. and note (C.).

The great liking the medieval English had for spices is well borne out by innumerable references found in the literature of the period. When royal feasts and other important banquets are described, the poets are always careful to give prominence to "roial spicerye" or "spice delitable". Furthermore, the spoils of war which the Christian heroes so frequently gain from their vanquished Saracen foes invariably contained "spicery fyne" of divers tastes and colours.¹⁴

The association of the Saracen with the lands of spices, perfumes and other medicinal gums needs no proof.¹⁵ Eloquent evidence is offered by the many English terms we use even today. Words like balsam¹⁶ and balm (balsam), camphor (cafour), musk (misk), amber (umber), saffron (za'fferan), jasmine (yassamin) to cite only a few, tell their own tale. Like the other European languages, English adopted these terms in an untranslated form from Arabic, which was the language of commerce throughout much of the medieval period.

14 Tale of Sir Thopas, 2043; The Romaunt of the Rose, 1371; cf. The Miller's Tale, 3699; Emare, 1.853. King Richard's notorious meal of "roast Saracen" was seasoned "wip powdyr and wip spysory / And wip saffron off good colour". See Richard Coer de Lion, 3092-3; cf. The Sowdone of Babylone, 1.2702.

15 The story of the Three Wise Men who came from the East bearing offerings to infant Christ together with numerous other references to incense in the Bible may have encouraged this connection. Cf. "The Offering of the Magi" ll 237 ff., in The Towneley Plays. Cf. also Cursor Mundi, 1. 11499.

16 The first English pilgrim to the Holy Land, St. Willibald, was so intrigued by the qualities of the balsam that he smuggled a quantity of it inside his cane-stick. See his own account in Hodoeporicon, pp. 27-8; cf. also above p. 41.

Until the period of the Crusades Europe depended upon honey in the cuisine and pharmacy. Among the many luxuries introduced by the Muslims in the West which immensely delighted the Western palate was sugar (sukker). With it, of course, went all varieties of sweetmeats, candies (kandah) and a variety of delightful or medicinal syrups (sharab = drink). Other commodities introduced and popularised included ginger (zanjabil), scallion (Ascalon [onions]), apricots, which were then known as "plums of Damascus", lemon (laimoun), orange (narenj), and countless other soft drinks and waters tintured by the distillation with roses, violets and other flowers.¹⁷ These new delicacies and tastes acquired by the Christians from their contact with the Muslims must have added a golden touch to the world of "heathenness" throughout Christendom.

In romance a noticeable aspect of the presentation of the Saracens is their possession of all sorts of soothing "bawms" and medicinal ointments. This is, no doubt, an acknowledgment of the medical skill of the medieval Muslims. Some of the Saracen healing potions are said to be extracted from the "foor good

17 In their "The Rose and Islam", Muslim World, XXXI (1941), 360-70, S.M. and M.C. Zwemmer point out that the expansion of Islam eastward to India and westward to Spain popularised the rose and the cultivation of flowers in these regions. The rose of the house of Lancaster, Rosa Damascena, was brought over by the Crusaders from Damascus, as the name clearly indicates. A good case is made for the origin of the word "rose" as Semitic and cognate to Arabic warda. Cf. also Hitti, The Arabs, p. 667; Arnold, Legacy of Islam, p. 60; Chew, Crescent and Rose, p. 63.

watrys that passis from paradyse."¹⁸ The balm with which Firumbras offers to cure Oliver's wounds in Charles the Grete is, according to Firumbras, unique in that it is "the same of whyche...[Christ] was embawmed wyth whan he was taken doun from the crosse and layde in hys graue".¹⁹

In the love-vision poems of Pearl and The Romaunt of the Rose the idealised setting of the symbolic erbers is ornamented with various Eastern and tropical spice plants, which the poets placed side by side with the native plants in a manner "divorced from season and geography".²⁰ The aromatic herbs growing on the "huytle" on which the poet of Pearl came to lie and dream

18 When the fatigued knights in Malory's Morte D'Arthur applied one such variety of elixir (Ar. al-iksir) to their wounds, "holer men than they were within an houres space was never lyvyng syn God the worlde made". See Works, i, 238. Cf. Beues of Hamtoun, ll. 586 (C.); Sir Ferumbras, ll. 511 ff.

19 Charles the Grete, p. 56. Cf. Valentine and Orson, p. 108. In a satirical fling at Wolsey, who was rumoured to be poxy, Skelton says that Balthasar, surgeon to Catherine of Aragon, "with his gum of Araby / Hath promised to heal our cardinal eye". See Skelton, "Why Come Ye Not to Court", in Poems, p. 373. The most famous examples in literature of the association of the Muslim with spicery, fragrance and medicine occur in Shakespeare. See Macbeth, V, i, 60, where Lady Macbeth cries: "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand"; and Othello, V, ii, 353-4, where the Moor speaks of eyes dropping tears "as fast as the Arabian trees their med'cinable gum".

20 See C.A. Luttrell, "Pearl: Symbolism in a Garden Setting", in Sir Gawain and Pearl: Critical Essays, ed., R.J. Blanch (Bloomington, 1966), pp. 75-6.

include:

Gilfore, gyngure and gromyloun
And pyonys powdered ay bytwene
3if hit wat3 semly on to sene
A fayr reflater 3et fro hit flot. 21

Chaucer's
In The Romaunt of the Rose "gyngevre" is also mentioned among the many spices growing in Mirth's garden.²² It is not a long step from the imaginative world of these poems to the fabulous Orient of the Alexander legend, where the strange snakes of the East browse on "pepir", "gyloffre" and "gingere"²³ whose "swete flauour" and "odour of grace"²⁴ captivated the great warrior and his men.

Art and Affluence

But the Saracen world captivated Christian Europe in many other ways. In metal works and decorative arts the Saracen was an expert master. Arab craftsmen in the East as well as in Spain excelled in the art of inlaying fine and sophisticated colourful designs of gold or silver in various other metals. This process, which was executed in several ways, came to be known in Europe as "damascening", which is, of course, indicative of its origin - Damascus.²⁵ Muslim inlaid metal works reached

21 Pearl, ll. 44-7. Cf. Gordon's note on p.48, where further references to spices in the literature of the period are given.

22 L. 1369.

23 Wars of Alexander, 5425-6. Cf. Luttrell, "Symbolism", p.75.

24 Kyng Alisaunder, 6785-7.

25 Hitti, The Arabs, pp. 591-2; Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp. 117-18.

a high degree of excellence about the middle of the twelfth century and persisted for two hundred years. The particular interest which luxury-loving caliphs and emirs took in having their palaces decorated and filled with non-representational designs and ornaments was an important factor in the development of these arts. There was also the fact that many areas under Muslim rule had rich mines of gold and other metals. Indeed, most of the gold stock in the markets of medieval Europe came from the Muslim world, to which, however, it eventually returned through the avid demand for Oriental goods.²⁶

The abundance of gold and precious stones in Muslim lands is well borne out by the numerous accounts written by various European travellers and Crusaders, some of whom suggested strange sources for these treasures.²⁷ For a general idea of the quantity of precious stones possessed by some Muslim caliphs we have only to remember that when Hulagu destroyed Baghdad in

26 Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture, p. 185; Glubb, Empire of the Arabs, p. 324. In his "Some Aspects of English Trade with the Levant in the Sixteenth Century", English Historical Review, LXX (1955), 408-10, T.S. Willan demonstrates how the balance of trade with the Levant was unfavourable to England, whose limited range of exports greatly contrasted with the variety of imports from the East.

27 The author of Mandeville's Travels, for example, reflects the popular notion that the bottom of the Nile was a great source of precious stones. See Malcolm Letts's edition, Hakluyt Society (1953), p. 41, and cf. p. 141. So does Friar Jordanus, The Wonders of the East, p. 43. However, one romance writer imputed the wealth of the Saracens to their conquest of countries "bothe ferre and nere". See Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p. 144.

1258, he ordered a castle to be built on an island in the middle of a lake for depositing what was left of the riches his soldiers had plundered at the caliph's palace. This, however, does not mean that the rulers of medieval Islam were interested only in hoarding treasures. Considerable attention was given to the building of sumptuous artificial lakes, extravagant gardens with beautiful fountains and spacious palaces with exquisite domes and towers. In the field of architecture, the Alcazar (Ar. al-kasr = house, villa) of Seville and the Alhambra (Ar. al-hamra' = the red) of Granada with their profuse but graceful decoration, the Great Mosque of Cordova with its twelve hundred and ninety-three columns and its innumerable chandeliers, the magnificent interior decorations of the Cappella Palatina of Sicily, and the hundreds of mosques and other secular monuments in Arabia, Asia Minor and along the Mediterranean, are among the most superb remains testifying to the grandeur and refinement of Muslim art and architecture.²⁸

These aspects of the world of medieval Islam, fascinating now as they were then, do not seem to have satisfied the romancers' thirst for rare curiosities and exotic prodigies with which to decorate their stories.²⁹ They idealised Muslim

28 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp. 155 ff. For the proverbial treasures of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt see Ibn Al-Athir, Kamil Al-Tawarikh [The Complete Chronicle], xi, 242. Cf. The Book of Ser Marco Polo, i, 63-4, and notes 6 and 7 on pp. 66-67.

29 M.A. Owings, The Arts in the Middle English Romances (New York, 1952), p. 138.

settings by introducing scenes of fabulous castles, gardens and cities. In so doing they were exploiting and highly exaggerating the popular notion of the charm and mystery of the East. Such imaginary scenes occur even in the romances which radiate the familiar Crusading zeal. A passage from Beues of Hamtoun may be cited to illustrate the fantastic exaggerations with which the splendour of the Muslim world was depicted. Describing the wonders of Damascus, the poet assures us that the city was:

... a fful ffeyre space
 All the wyndowes and all the wallis
 With cristall was peynted, chamber and hallis
 Pelouris and durris were all of brasse
 With laten sett and with glasse
 Hit was so riche in many wyse
 That it was like to paradise...
 At the Bryge stode a toure
 Peynted with gold and asure
 Riche it was to be-hold
 There on stode an egull of gold
 His eyn were of precious stones
 Of gret vertue ffor the nones
 Whan Beues was nere at the Cite
 Of that place than mervelid he
 For sethyn that Beues borne was
 Sye he never so ffeire a place. 30

30 Ll. 1130-36, 1147-56. Damascus figured prominently in the medieval accounts of the creation of the universe and Paradise on earth. It was widely believed that our "fadir Adam" was "shapin & formid in the folde of Damaske". See The Early English Version of the Gesta Romanorum ... ed. S.J. Hertridge EETS-ES 33 (1879), p. 204; cf. p. 481 for other references. See also Chew, Crescent and Rose, pp. 81-82. "The rede...flexible and toughe" earth of Damascus "in whiche place Adam was made", is exported by the Saracens who "sell it very dere for golde and spyces", says Sir Richard Guilford who was there in 1506. "The pyttes that they dygge for the same erth", he continues, "be full ayen and is as playne grounde as any other within the same valey". See The Pylgrymage, p. 54. In The Play of The Sacrament, ll. 18-20, Syria is stated to be a "cyte" which had "gret plente off precyous stonys". Cf. also ll. 170 ff.

Other instances of such references to Muslim lands may be multiplied, but a special mention of the romance of Floris and Blancheffleur is not inappropriate on account of the great interest revealed there in the picturesque details of Muslim art, wealth and luxury.

In this beautiful romance, which has no battle scenes, no villainous Saracens and no crusading "heroism", the world of Islam is represented as an exquisite earthly paradise with all the features medieval men associated with Other World landscapes.³¹ Written around the middle of the thirteenth century and based on a French original, the English romance is unique in that it almost completely ignores the "Saracen tradition" in depicting the Muslim sultan. This noble man, who has cause to avenge himself for being deceived by the lovers, is represented as a paragon of mercy and magnanimity who can proudly take his place beside the Saladin of the European medieval literature.³²

In Floris and Blancheffleur, the story of which suggests an Eastern origin,³³ the wanderings of a young prince (Floris) in search of his love (Blancheffleur), a slave-girl of his father's,

31 For the treatment of this aspect of the romance see O.M. Johnston, "The Description of the Emir's Orchard in Floire et Blancheffleur", Zeitschrift Fur Romanische Philologie, XXXII (1908), 705-10, where various parallels to other descriptions of the Other World landscapes are given. See also Elizabeth Willson, The Middle English Legends of Visits to the Other World and Their Relations to the Metrical Romances (Chicago, 1917), p. 38; H.R. Patch, "Some Elements in Medieval Descriptions of the Other World", PMLA, XXXIII (1918), 619 ff.

32 Cf. Henri Baudet, Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man, trans. Elizabeth Wentholt (London and New Haven, 1965), pp. 20-22.

33 See A.B. Taylor's edition (Oxford, 1927); intro. pp. 12 ff.; and cf. Hibbard, Medieval Romance, pp. 189 ff.

bring him to the famous city of Babylon. Here, Floris finds Blanchefflour confined in "the tower of maidens" where the sultan keeps the pick of his harem. Next to this sumptuous tower, which is vividly described to us, is a fabulous garden which has, among other curiosities, a "strem from Paradis", a "tre of love" and a well "wrowt wiþ mochel ginne". In this garden, even^{the} pavement is formed of precious stones:

And of vertue iwis echone
Of Saphires and of sardoines
Of swiþe riche calsidoinies
Of jacinthes and of topaces
Of onicle of muchel grace
Of many anoper direwerþe ston 34
þat ich nu ne nempne can.

The practice of decorating descriptive passages with biblical precious stones was, as Edmond Faral demonstrates, common in the medieval period.³⁵ The enumeration of the delightful gems in which the emir's city is built is reminiscent particularly of the apocalyptic stones as recounted in St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem.³⁶ The notion that Saracen lands are wealthy and abundant is also suggested by the attention romancers give to the concrete and circumstantial details when they describe Saracen arms, armour and other military equipment.³⁷ Admittedly, such descriptions are conventional and common enough in romance, but

34 Floris and Blanchefflour, ll. 701- 708.

35 Recherches sur les Sources Latines des Contes et Romans Courtois du Moyen Age (Paris, 1967), p. 372.

36 Revelation, 21: 19-28.

37 R.W. Ackerman, "Armor and Weapons in the Middle English Romances", Research Studies, State College of Washington, VII (1939), pp. 104-18, concludes that there is a genuine descriptive treatment of armour and weapons despite the stock phrases in which the romancers indulged. Cf. Chaucer's description of the messenger of the King of Arabia and India in The Squire's Tale, 91-92.

their recurrence in connection with the Saracens is noteworthy. For those ineffectual warriors are *made to* fight with "spures of golde",³⁸ their helmets are "wele garnysshed with perle & precious stonys",³⁹ their armours are "embrouded with perils schene",⁴⁰ while the saddles and the bridles of their horses are "glysteryng all of gold".⁴¹ Their military uniforms are made "off gold and asure",⁴² and their galleys have splendid masts and top-castles which are also made of gold.⁴³

A recurrent suggestion of the incredible abundance of treasures and gold among the Saracens is found in the description of the Saracen places of worship to which reference has already been made. These are, as a rule, presented as being full of gold idols "y-poudred wiþ stones preciouze". In one episode in Sir Ferumbras, Oliver, dazzled by the astonishing magnificence of the Saracen images, exclaims: "Thusu lord, ... fro wan comeþ al þis gold?"⁴⁴ Interestingly, in the same romance, when the

38 Beues of Hamtoun, 1.999.

39 Generydes, 3289-90.

40 Sir Ferumbras, 552-53; cf. 3662-64.

41 Le Bone Florence of Rome, 156 ff.

42 Richard Coer de Lion, 4998.

43 The Sowdone of Babylone, 129 ff; Sir Isumbras, 219-24, cf. 352; Sir Ferumbras, 2543-44; cf. the description of the "Antioch ship" whose rudder and nails are all made of gold, in Richard Coer de Lion, 60 ff. Cf. Owings, The Arts, pp. 153 ff.

44 Sir Ferumbras, 2547. Cf. Kyng Alisaunder, 1510 ff.

battlements of the sultan's castle which had been captured by the Christians were broken, the sultan's daughter recommended the unarmed Christian knights to fight the Saracen besiegers by throwing missiles of gold and jewels from her father's treasury. There is enough, she says, to last them for forty days:

þan sche lad þayn by þe hond, þar þat tresour lay
 & þanne saide duk Roland, "her ys a ryche aray".
 Þay toke op slabbes grete & þykke, of þe gold þer lys
 And caste among þe Sarsyns wykke, ne spared þay noȝt þat prys.⁴⁵

Fabled Textiles.

With the abundance of spicery and wealth the medieval romance poet invariably associated with the Saracen a third commodity which fascinates the Westerners even today: the sumptuous Oriental textiles. In the romances we frequently hear of Saracen tents and pavilions made of colourful silk interwoven with gold threads which are "full riche" and "goodly to beholde". Sails of Saracen ships are often described as being made of "sendelle embrowdred with riche araye".⁴⁶ Furthermore, silk cloths are always a major constituent of the Saracens' gifts to prospective wives, their own lords or foreign kings. Saracen temples, courts and chambers, particularly the bed-chambers of

⁴⁵ Ll. 3328-31. See Gerald Herman, "Unconventional Arms as a Comic Device in Some Chansons de Geste", Modern Language Quarterly, XXX (1969), 327. Cf. Charles the Grete, pp. 142-43. To emphasize the unique qualities and the lustrous beauty of the pearl "wythouten spot", the poet of Pearl, l. 3, specifically mentions the East as its origin; cf. also ll. 82, and 255.

⁴⁶ Generydes, 1975 ff; The Sowdone of Babylone, 130 ff. Cf. E.M. Almendingen, Charlemagne (London, 1968), p. 48.

the Saracen princesses to which many Christian knights were invited, are splendid feasts for the eye: draperies, curtains, sheets and bed-covers are all made of the most colourful and shining silk which is "curiously wrought".⁴⁷

There are, of course, historical reasons for the popularity of this notion. Shortly after Muhammed's death, the Muslims, ignoring the prophet's specific disapproval of silken garments, encouraged the existing silk industry and in a few generations won themselves the reputation of being "the leading fabric makers and silk mercers".⁴⁸ That they were indeed the masters of this industry is clearly shown by the existence of a great number of Arabic words belonging to this field in the languages of Europe. The cloth known to Chaucer and his contemporaries as fustian came originally from al-Fustat in Egypt.⁴⁹ Similarly, the fabrics which were called, then as now, damask and muslin came from Dimashk (Damascus) and (Mosul, Iraq) respectively. Baghdad, Italianised as Baldaco or Baudak, was the source of a magnificent silk brocade which came to be known in Middle English as baudekin or baldachin. Muslim Granada supplied the West with a fine dress fabric known as "granadin".

47 Richard Coer de Lion, 3373; Le Bone Florence of Rome, 203; The Sowdone of Babylone, 73 ff; Generydes, 69; Sir Ferumbras, 1340 ff; Man of Law's Tale, 136-37. Note the interesting anachronism in Kyng Alisaunder, l.755, where the fabled baldachin silk brocade is mentioned. The city after which this silk fabric is named (Baghdad) was built more than ten centuries after Alexander's death!

48 Hitti, The Arabs, p. 592.

49 The Knight has a tunic made of fustian. See General Prologue, 75.

In the European drapery shops and fairs, the medieval woman could also buy a variety of real or imitated Muslim fabrics such as tafetta (Ar. and Per. tafta), atlas (Ar. Atles), camlet (Ar. Khamleh), satin (Ar. zaitouni?), or the more popular "tabby" silk, an imitation of al-attabiya fabric manufactured in Baghdad.⁵⁰ The origin of the "Saracenette" silk much admired by some English monarchs of our period is, of course, self explanatory.⁵¹

The Saracen silk fabrics with their extravagant rich colours and floral or geometrical designs were widely used in medieval Europe for making coronation gowns, for canopies over altars and relics and, of course, for the use of princes and aristocrats who learnt to practise what R.S. Lopez calls "hierarchy through clothing".⁵² As the importation of these finely-wrought stuffs proved highly lucrative, ambitious European financiers began to set up weaving houses in various centres in Italy and France where they undoubtedly employed skilled Muslim workmen and designers.⁵³

The fine texture and the "magic web" of these marvellous textiles fascinated the romance poets. In the case of the French composers of romance they emulated the classical writers

50 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp.133-36; Hitti, The Arabs, pp. 631, 668.

51 Prince Edward (later King Edward I) brought some "Saracenette" silk to England. Cf. Richard Barham, "The Blasphemer's Warning", in The Ingoldsby Legends (London, 1864), p.167, n.13. In the medieval pageants or festivities at court the Saracenette was particularly in demand for use by participants and maskers. See Albert Feuillerat (ed), Documents Relating to the Revels at Court in the Time of King Edward VI and Queen Mary, in Materialien Zur Kunde des Älteren Englischen Dramas, Series I, vol. 44 (Vaduz, 1963), p.30.

52 See "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire", Speculum, XX (1945), 29 ff. Cf. E.W. Lane, Arabian Society in the Middle Ages (London, 1883), pp. 116-117.

53 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, p.134.

by including elaborate descriptive passages in their stories. This appears to have established a tradition of descriptions of textiles which passed into English romance. Where such descriptions occur, English poets often supply what the Muslim hands had missed: they freely added to these products intricate representations of stories or events, sometimes unknown to the Muslims, generously multiplied the precious stones with which certain fabrics were embroidered and even endowed them with curious magic qualities.

The most memorable description of this fine product occurs in Emare (ca.1400). In this romance, Emperor Artyrus of Rome is visited by Sir Tergaunte, Prince of Sicily. Tergaunte offers his host a beautiful silk cloth, thickly set with topaz, rubies and many "opur stones of myche prys".⁵⁴ The corners of this precious cloth contain portraits of famous lovers. We are told that in the first corner there is a representation of the story of "Ydoyne and Amadas", in the second that of "Trystram and Isowde", in the third the portrait of "Florys and Dam Blawncheflour", and the fourth corner contains a representation of the love of the emir of Babylon and the "Amerayales dowȝtyr"

⁵⁴ The fact that this fabled silk cloth comes from Sicily is not without some significance. The Normans who reconquered the island in the last third of the eleventh century encouraged the existing Muslim silk industry and patronised it to the extent of building a silk weaving house in the Sicilian court itself. Sicilian silk, as a result, soon became most famous throughout the continent. However, the romance writer may well have heard of the silk cloths given by the Sicilian ruler Tancred (twisted into Tergan or Tergant with some memory of Tervagant or Termagant, the supposed Saracen deity) to Richard I when the latter stopped in the island on his way to Palestine in 1191. For more on the possible historical basis of the gift see Emare, intro., pp. xxx ff.

whose wonder-making hands had wrought this masterpiece.
 In beauty and design the cloth might easily rival those
 fabulous robes woven by Arachne herself.⁵⁵ It was so
 exquisitely "bryght and shene" that when the dazzled emperor
 first saw it, he thought it was a "fayry" thing:

The emperour lokede per-vpone
 And myghte hyt not se
 For glysteryng of þe ryche ston
 Redy syghte had he non
 And sayde, "How may þys be?"
 The emperour sayde on hugh,
 "Sertes, þys ys a fayry,
 Or ellys a vanyte!"
 The Kyng of Cysyle answered þan,
 "So ryche a jewelle ys þer non 56
 In all Crystyante."

The Muslim weaving industry continued to fascinate English
 poets even beyond our period. In the Elizabethan era, there are
 numerous instances in which poets and dramatists voiced their
 admiration for this aspect of Muslim artistry.⁵⁷ The most
 significant reference occurs in Othello where the Moor speaks of
 the handkerchief which was a gift from "an Egyptian to my
 mother". Shakespeare's elaborate description of this "antique
 token" reminds us of Emare's "fayry" dress and the skilful hands
 of the "Amerayle dowztyr of heþennes" who wrought that cloth:

There's magic in the web of it.
 A sibyl that had numb'ed in the world
 The sun to course two hundred compasses
 In her prophetic fury sew'd the work

55 Cf. Ovid, Metamorphoses, vi, 295-7.

56 Ll. 98-108.

57 See E.H. Sugden, A Topographical Dictionary of the Works of Shakespeare and his Fellow Dramatists (Manchester, 1925), under such entries as "Bagdad", "Granada", "Damascus", etc.

The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk
 And it was dy'd in mummy which the skilful
 Conserv'd of maidens' hearts.

58

Just as Othello's handkerchief is employed for dramatic purposes, the fabulous Oriental silk garments of medieval romance are also assigned functional roles of great importance to the development of the stories. Like the other popular motifs of recognition, their role is chiefly to provide an indisputable evidence of the true identity of a disguised or a long-lost character.⁵⁹ In Emare, besides its decorative and symbolic value

58 III, iv, 69-75. Mummy (*italics mine*) is Ar. and Per. Mumiya. It is perhaps fitting to point out that in Cinthio there is hardly any description of the handkerchief, and, what is more important, its origin is vague. All we learn from Cinthio is that the handkerchief is "finely embroidered in the Moorish fashion, and which was precious to Desdemona nor less so to the Moor". See Novella VII, trans., J.E. Taylor, reproduced in W.W. Furness, ed., Othello (London, 1886), p.386. Cinthio's general statement "in the Moorish style", fails to establish a clear origin for the handkerchief, since we are not told who actually "sew'd it" or where. On the other hand, Shakespeare's assignment of a Muslim origin to this most celebrated cloth in literature is indicative of his appreciation of the Muslim weaving skill. Cf. Pamburlaine, Part I, IV, iii, 108, where Marlowe speaks of the Syrians as masking "in silk and cloth of gold".

59 Cf. Bordman, Motif-Index: H.111 ff. A most delicate problem is the assessment of the factors which determine the nature and degree of influence exerted by one literature upon another. However, we might mention that the motif of discovery through recognition of a silken robe is a popular one in Eastern folktales, particularly in The Thousand and One Nights. A notable example of this is found in the story of the "Linguist Dame and the King's Son", where the linguist-princess is recognised by her silk robe which the King's son finds in his room. Cf. Stith-Thompson, Motif-Index, H.111 ff. Thompson's reference to The Arabian Nights is apparently erroneous and should read as follows: R.F. Burton, Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night (London, 1888), vi, 90-111. In his "Arab Literary Contribution to Western Thought and Culture", World Literatures (Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1956), 22-3, Philip K. Hitti demonstrates that "with the infiltration of Arabic thought into Europe and the dissemination of Arabic philosophical and scientific works, Oriental tales, anecdotes and fables found their way into the West both orally and in writing... Travelers, sailors, pilgrims and Crusaders picked up such material and introduced it into the West... [where it] found a ready lodging".

in reflecting the beauty and perfection of the heroine, the silk garment is used in facilitating the final reunion between Emare and her repentant husband. Similarly, the guilty mother in Lai Le Freine identifies her abandoned daughter by the "rich baudekin" with which the daughter was wrapped upon her birth.⁶⁰ More analogous situations occur in other romances, notably in Sir Isumbras and Generydes, where the mystery of some important character is unravelled by the identification of these "Saracen made" garments.⁶¹

The "Rabites" of Arabia.

With the notion of Saracen prosperity and artistry went the idea that the Muslim world was a land of great horses. It is instructive, in this connection, to recall that one of the earliest Arabic loan words in English is ealfara which came through Spanish from al-faras (mare).⁶² This, of course, is one of the results of the early Muslim conquests which spread the fame and the breed of the Arabian horse from Tartary to Spain.⁶³

In medieval England, the fast, patient and exquisitely well-shaped Arabian horse was particularly admired by the English Court. Richard I, for example, fought the Muslims on an Arabian horse of Cypriot breed which he had appropriated "by stratagem" from the

⁶⁰ Lai Le Freine, 364 ff.

⁶¹ Sir Isumbras, 628 ff; Generydes, 1172, 1220.

⁶² Serjeantson, A History of Foreign Words, p. 213.

⁶³ G.H. Conn, The Arabian Horse in Fact, Fantasy and Fiction (London, 1959), p.52.

stable of the conquered master of Cyprus. Edward I, who led a group of English Crusaders to the Holy Land in 1271-72, rode on another of Andalusian breed which carried him "ever charging forward in Palestine". In 1399 Henry Bolingbroke chose an Arab horse upon which to go to Westminster to attend the ceremonies of his crowning as King Henry IV.⁶⁴

In the numerous descriptive passages and other references to horses in romance, the Arabian courser gained an important position. Indeed, the popularity of their breed contributed, at least, one new word to Middle English: "rabite" (horse). This word, as is fairly obvious, is a corruption of "Araby", which was, then as now, the source of these fine coursers. We might add here that in the sixteenth century, when closer contact, both commercial and otherwise, was established between England and North Africa, known then as Barbary, another new word meaning (horse) was to enrich the English language in the form of "barb", short for "barbary" i.e. "a horse of barbary".⁶⁵

Among the most celebrated "rabites" of romance are, undoubtedly, Coer de Lion's "Favel" and "Lyard",

64 Ibid., p. 170. Cf. also p. 286, which refers to Shakespeare's line immortalising the Arabian horse, "Roan Barbary", beloved "as an only son" by Richard II. The Groom says to Richard:
 O, how it ern'd my heart, when I beheld
 In London streets, that coronation-day
 When bolingbroke rode on roan Barbary
 That horse that thou so often hast bestrid
 That horse that I so carefully have dress'd.

See Richard II, V, v, 76-80; cf. also III, iii, 117 f. For more references to the Arabian horse in Shakespeare consult the Shakespeare Concordance, particularly under "Barbary".

65 Cf. O.E.D., s.v. "barb", sb. 3.

That ran so swyfte without fayle
 For a thousande pounde jtolde 66
 Sholde not that one be solde.

Beve's most faithful horse, a gift from the enamoured daughter of the Sultan of Armenia, is "such a stede / The beste that euer was at nede".⁶⁷

The horse which bore Alexander throughout his endless conquests was called "Arrabis" according to one version of the romance.⁶⁸

In Octavian Emperor, Clement's gift to Charlemagne was a stolen "stede of Araby".⁶⁹

Medieval romancers show by numerous examples that Saracens often offer horses as gifts. Huon receives such a good horse from the "Admyrall of Babylon" that "the valew ther of coulede not be estemed".⁷⁰ Hoping to win Florence's hand, the aged Sultan of Turkey sends her father numerous Arabian horses.⁷¹

In order to magnify the beauty of these horses, romance poets occasionally resort to freakish descriptions endowing them with fantastic colours and trappings.⁷² One such Arabian horse is Clarion's in Charles the Grete, which is said to be "alle whyt on the one of hys sydes as a flour delys, & on that other syde as rede as fyre enflammed, The tayle after the facion of a peacock... & had eyen grene & clere...and had on hym moo than an C of smal

66 Richard Coer de Lion, 2338-40; cf. 4835 ff and B.B. Broughton, The Legends of Richard I, (1966), pp. 100-102.

67 Beues of Hamtoun, 747-48. (C.)

68 Life of Alexander (Bodleian Copy), l.1338 from a passage cited in Yule's edition of Marco Polo, ii, Bk. ii, 349.

69 Octavian Emperor, 1458. Cf. Chrétien de Troyes, Arthurian Romances, p. 139.

70 Huon of Burdeux, p.146.

71 Le Bone Florence of Rome, 199 ff.

72 Cf. E. Faral, Recherches, p. 358. This convention, however, is not confined only to horses of Eastern origin.

bellys of fyn gold, sownyng moche melodyously".⁷³ Another "stede of Araby" in Sir Ferumbras is "al y-fraclad wy³ whit & rede", while his tail is "blak so cole".⁷⁴

The most exquisite Arabian horse in the writings in Middle English however is not made of flesh and bones but of metal, namely brass. In Chaucer's "half told" Squire's Tale,⁷⁵ we are presented with a

...steede of bras that esily and weel
 Kan in the space of o day natureel -
 This is to seyn, in foure and twenty houres -
 Wher-so yow lyst, in droghte or elles shoures
 Beren youre body into every place
 To which youre herte wilneth for to pace

73 Charles the Grete, p.151.

74 Ll. 3656 ff. Cf. Generydes, 2302 ff. See also A Thousand Nights, v, 2-3, and p.246, n.1, on the popular English idea of the Arabian horse.

75 Commenting on the sources of The Squire's Tale, H.A.R. Gibb maintains that the tale may have been a "borrowing", that is, a "casual utilization", of an Arabian Nights story which was probably brought to Europe by Italian merchants from the Black Sea. See his article "The Influence of Islamic Culture on Medieval Europe", Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XXXVIII (1955), 94. The most enthusiastic and perhaps exaggerated account of Chaucer's "indebtedness" to the Arabian Nights is that of J. Warton, History of English Poetry (London, 1775), i, 398-415. Skeat's opinion of this thorny question is that the "general tone" of the tale "points to an Eastern and especially Arabian origin", but says no more about it. See Chaucer, Works, iii, 371. W.A. Clouston, "Magical Elements in Chaucer's Squire's Tales with Analogues", in John Lane's Continuation of Chaucer's Squire's Tales, ed. F.J. Furnivall, Chaucer Society, 2nd series (London, 1889), pp. 263-478, and the elaborate Sources and Analogues to the Canterbury Tales by W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (New York, 1941) provide ample suggestions and possible Oriental sources for the tale. For a detailed study of the Oriental influences in Chaucer's works, see E.S. Saigh, Eastern Influences In Chaucer With Special Reference to the Arabs, Ph.D. Thesis (London University, 1946).

Withouten wem of yow, thurgh foul or fair,
 Or, if yow lyst to fleen as hye in the air
 As dooth an egle whan hym list to soore
 This same steede shal bere yow evere moore
 Withouten harm, til ye be ther yow leste
 Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste
 And turne ayeyn with writhyng of a pyn.
 He that it wroghte koude ful many a gin
 He wayted many a constellacion
 Er he had doon this operacion
 And knew ful many a seel and many a bond.⁷⁶

This fabulous horse which was sent by "the kyng of Arabe
 and of Inde" to "Cambyuskan", King of Tartary, astonished the
 Tartarian courtiers who, like bees, swarmed round it to look and
 satisfy their curiosity. Some of those present suggested that
 the horse was "ymaad by som magyk", others, making "skiles after
 hir fantasies", thought that the horse was the same that "broghte
 Troie to destruccion", while another group exclaimed that the
 marvellous steed was, in fact, "of Fairye", which is, as noted
 earlier, a familiar reaction to the sights of curious Saracen
 products and is, no doubt, one of the greatest medieval compli-
 ments to Saracen workmanship and art.

Science and Culture

More significant than the fabulous description of the brass
 horse in The Squire's Tale are Chaucer's remarks and other casual
 references to the Muslims, which shed some light on the poet's
 views of the cultural heritage of medieval Islam. Chaucer's

76 The Squire's Tale, 115-31. Cf. Valentine and Orson, p.142,
 where the Saracen dwarf, Pacelot made a "hors of wodde"
 similar in many ways to the one described by Chaucer.

assurance that the person who had "doon this operacioun" had waited "many a constellacion" and knew many "seals" bespeaks a general awareness of the Muslims' advance in the fields of astronomy and experimental sciences. His choice of "Arabe" as the source of the many extraordinary inventions and his specific mention of the great Muslim physicist and astronomer Alocen (Al-Hasan ibn Al-Haitham, ca. 965-1039) in connection with the "queynte mirours" and perspectives indicate more clearly Chaucer's interest in and appreciation of the Muslim's contributions to the field of optics.⁷⁷

Chaucer's "noble instrument", the astrolabe, a Greek invention perfected and popularised by the Arabs, never failed to fascinate the imagination of many ambitious seekers of knowledge in medieval Europe.⁷⁸ Despite the inevitable association of the astrolabe with black magic, a fact which accounts for the suspicion with which those versed in its use were regarded,⁷⁹ many wandering scholars from France, Italy, Germany and the British Isles travelled to Muslim seats of learning to study this valuable instrument and to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.⁸⁰ From the British Isles such famous medieval scientists as Adelard of Bath (fl. 1125),

77 The Squire's Tale, 110, 232.

78 Including such important men as Gerbert, later Pope Sylvester II (d.1143), who according to Malmesbury resided with a Saracen from whom he also learnt "the art of calling up spirits from hell". See Chronicles, p. 172.

79 Arnold, Legacy of Islam, pp. 114-115.

80 C.H. Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), pp. 284-85.

Michael Scot (d.ca.1236), Robert of Ketton (fl.1150) and others crossed the misty channel and sojourned in distant Syria, in nearer Spain or in Sicily.⁸¹ There, they busily occupied themselves, investigating, copying or translating from the myriads of scientific works of the Muslim whose "magic lamps" of knowledge lighted the way to the so-called twelfth-century Renaissance and helped to pave the way to the much more active one of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁸²

Of the long list of British scientists who studied in the Muslim centres of learning in Spain, the mathematician and astronomer, Robert of Ketton (fl.1150), is of special interest to this inquiry. Like many Westerners thirsty for knowledge unavailable in their home-countries, Robert went to Toledo, which was then one of the renowned citadels of translation and scientific activities.⁸³ In this city he met Peter the Venerable of Cluny,

81 Haskins, Studies in Medieval Sciences, devotes separate chapters to the life and works of each of these men.

82 S.M. Boland, "Arab Contributions to World Civilisation", Islamic Review, IXL (1951), 8-12. On the cultural relations between Christendom and medieval Islam see the scholarly article of T.C. Young, "The Cultural Contributions of Islam to Christendom", The Muslim World, XXXV (1945), which provides an excellent survey of relevant books and articles published until 1945. The more recent A.S. Atiya, Crusade Commerce and Culture (1962), is indispensable.

83 The Muslims lost control of Toledo at the end of the eleventh century, but it maintained its position as a great centre of transmission of Muslim thought long after that. See Hitti, The Arabs, p.588. Toledo was popularly associated with magic and necromancy. In Valentine and Orson, p.142, the Saracen dwarf well versed in "nygromancy" had studied at "the scole of tollette". The enchanter Adramayne in the same romance (p.168) had also "learned the arte of tollette" - i.e., black magic. So popular was the study of astrology among the medieval English clergy that Wycliffe accused the friars of practicing sorcery and black magic. See English Works, ed., F.D. Mathew, EETS-OS74 (1880), p.225. Cf. T.O. Wedel, Medieval Astrology (1920), particularly chaps. VI-VIII; Haskins, Studies, p.19.

to whom reference has already been made.⁸⁴ Peter recruited Robert to work on a project far afield from his lifelong interest and acknowledged competence: translating the Koran into Latin. This done, Robert did not forget the purpose of his journey to Spain, which was the study of Muslim science. He then studied and afterwards translated one of the most important Muslim contributions to Western civilisation: Al-Khawarizmi's book on algebra. To Robert's translation of this work, the terms known in English as algorism (= mathematics, a corruption of Al-Khawarizmi) and algebra (Ar. al-gebr = the resetting [of anything broken]), owe much of their popularity and circulation.⁸⁵ Robert also translated another Muslim work on alchemy (Ar. al-kimiya') and when he later returned to England in 1155 he translated yet another book on the astrolabe, thus enriching Latin scholarship with more information on this instrument without which the New World would no doubt have remained unknown for a longer time. Robert's hostile attitude to the Islamic religion is easy to see throughout his prejudiced translation of the Koran. Yet it is quite difficult to believe that he, like many of his calibre before and since, did

84 See above p. 19.

85 In The Earliest Arithmetics in English, p. 1, "The crafte of nombrynge" is called "algorym". The reason given here is that "ther was a kyng of Inde, *pe* quich heyth Algor, & he made *pis* crafte. And after his name he called hit algorym". The familiar Arabic numerals which had been adopted by the European writers as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century did not become common in England until the sixteenth century. See L.C. Hector, The Handwriting of English Documents (London, 1958), pp. 42-43.

not have a high opinion of Islamic culture and of its men, to whom he owed much of his learning and scholarship.⁸⁶

That Chaucer's attitude to Muslim culture is consistently and unmistakably one of respect and regard can be evidenced by the numerous references he makes to their achievements in various fields. The most memorable instance is found in that passage of tantalising description devoted to the "Doctour of Phisik" in The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. The formidable list of medical authorities the doctor is supposed to have studied includes many Muslim doctors and philosophers whose names Chaucer is careful to recount:

Wel knew he the olde Esculapius
And Deyscorides and eek Rufus
Olde Ypocras, Haly and Gelyen
Serapion, Razis, and Avycen
Averrois, Damascien and Constantyn 87
Bernard and Gatesden and Gilbertyn.

Of these physicians the best known in medieval times is, undoubtedly, Avicenna (Ibn Sina') (980-1037) whose book, Kitab al-Kanoon fil-Tib (Book of the Canon of Medicine), was taught in

86 James Kritzeck, Peter the Venerable and Islam (New Jersey, 1964), pp. vii, 65-6; Southern, The Making, p.39. Jalal Mudhir, Athar Al-Arab Fil Hadharahal Awruppiyah /Arabic Influences in European Civilization/ (Beirut, 1967), p.189.

87 Ll. 429-34 (italics mine). Cf. W.C. Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences, 2nd ed. (London, 1960), p.27 and n.44 on p.321. See M. Bowden, Commentary, pp. 199-215, for more on these authorities. Cf. also E.E. Morris, "The Physician in Chaucer", in An English Miscellany Presented to Dr. Furnivall in Honour of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday (Oxford, 1901), p.339, and R.H. Robbins, "The Physician's authorities", in Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Margaret Schlauch, ed., M. Brahmmer, S. Hellsztynski and J. Krzyanowski (Warsaw, 1966), 335-41.

European universities until the middle of the seventeenth century.⁸⁸ Chaucer mentions him again in The Pardoner's Tale:

But certes I suppose that Avycen
Wroot nevere in no canon, ne in no fen
Mo wonder signes of empoisonyng
Than hadde thise wreeches two, er hir endyng.⁸⁹

It is doubtful that Chaucer, "omniverous reader" though he certainly was, had a first-hand acquaintance with the works of these Muslim authorities whose writings, however, were available in Latin in his day.⁹⁰ There are such statements as "As Knowen they that han hir bokes herd", which may be taken to indicate that Chaucer knew some of these men "by reputation",⁹¹ and Skeat has shown that some of Chaucer's references to these works were "not quite correct".⁹²

But we are certain that Chaucer studied and was greatly indebted to at least one Arab author, namely, Masha'Allah of Baghdad (d.815), whose book on the astrolabe (Ar. asturlab) had

88 H.E.I. Sadiq, "Persian Cultural Relations with the West", Asiatic Review, XLIII (1947), 362.

89 Ll. 889-92.

90 Cf. James Winny, "Chaucer's Science", in M. Hussey, A.C. Spearing and Winny, An Introduction to Chaucer (Cambridge, 1968), p.157.

91 Squire's Tale, L.235; cf. T.R. Lounsbury, Studies in Chaucer His Life and Writings (New York, 1962), i, p.391.

92 W.W. Skeat (ed.), The Man of Lawes Tale (Oxford, 1923), p.164. For further incorrect references to Islam in Chaucer see note on p.124.

been widely acclaimed in the West for a long time before Chaucer. The connection between Chaucer and this Arab astronomer is such that Masha'Allah's book accounts for thirty-one conclusions out of Chaucer's forty-three, or about two thirds of the whole.⁹³ Of his indebtedness to Masha'Allah and other writers Chaucer makes no secret. In his introduction to A Treatise on the Astrolabe, Chaucer modestly asks his little son to "considre wel that I ne usurpe not to have founden this werk of my labour or of my engyn. I n'am but a lewd compiler of the labour of olde astrologiens, and have it translatid in myn Englisch oonly for thy doctrine."⁹⁴

Like Chaucer, Gower voices his great respect for the Muslim "auctorites" whose works he predicts "shal stonde in pris for evermore".⁹⁵ Discussing the history of alchemy, Gower attributes much of the development and popularity of this science to two Muslim scientists: Jabir ibn Hayyan (fl.775), better known in the West as Geber, and the ubiquitous Avicenna, both of whom, says Gower, were among the first alchemists in the world:

93 Works, ed. Skeat, iii, Lxx-Lxxi.

94 Ll. 59-64 (Robinson).

95 Confessio Amantis, Bk. IV, 2631 ff.

Hermes was on the ferste of all
 To whom this art is most applied
Geber thereof was magnified
 And Ortolan and Morien
 Among the whiche is Avicen
 Which fond and wrot a gret partie
 The practique of Alconomie
 Whos bokes pleinli as thei stonde
 Upon this craft, fewe understonde. 96

In Lydgate's Fall of Princes the poet, writing "in reproof of Idilnes", rehearses the names of the "fondours of diuers sciencis cunnyngis". He mentions Albumazar (Abu Mash'ar, ca. 805-85), the famous Muslim astronomer and one of the most frequently cited authorities in medieval Europe as the first who "fond astronomy".⁹⁷

Any medieval writer who was pedantically enthusiastic about citing authorities for his work found in the famous names of Muslim scientists, physicians, philosophers and astronomers an impressive list from which to choose in order to decorate his

96 Ibid., 2606-14 (italics mine). Cf. Lutfali Suratgar, Traces of Persian Influences Upon English Literature During the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (London University, 1939), p.155.

97 Bk. II, L.2489. The reputation of Albumazar survives into a later period. Thomas Tomkis (fl. 1604-15), fellow of Trinity College, made Albumazar the subject of a comedy performed in 1615 before James I at Cambridge. In this, Albumazar is a rascally wizard who transforms the rustic Trincalo into the person of his absent master with absurd consequences. See Albumazar in Dodsley, Collection, xi, 302-421.

page or to sound "strikingly original".⁹⁸ Almost all those who wrote on alchemy fell into the popular habit of enumerating the great Muslim masters of this science. In the poem to his Ordinall of Alchemy, Thomas Norton (fl.1447) mentions Avicenna, Rasis (Ibn Al-Razi) and Geber as among the best authorities on the subject:

Hermes, Rasis, Geber and Avicen
 Merlin, Hortolan, Democrit and Morien
 Bacon and Raimond, with others many moe⁹⁹
 Wrote under cover, and Aristotle Also.

With these men, whose reputation in medieval times needs no further comment, we must associate another Saracen authority whom the medieval English admired extravagantly: Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (ca. 1126-98), the famous doctor and commentator on Aristotle. Besides the numerous complimentary allusions to him in the literature of the period, Averroes appears as the hero in one of the tales contained in the pseudo-historical collection of Gesta Romanorum, which Caxton printed in the 1470's.

In "The Three Jealous Physicians", the Roman emperor Bononius falls sick and sends messengers to various countries "for to wete if yere were any lechis pat myght hele him". After a long and

98 Beatrice M. White, "Facts and Fancy in Medieval English Literature", Essays by Divers Hands, Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, New Series, XXV (1950), 18. In De Proprietatibus Rerum, an encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages, Bartholomew Anglicus quotes freely and draws upon at least a dozen Muslim or Arab authorities on various fields ranging from philosophy to geography. See Medieval Lore, pp. 139-43, where the editor lists and comments on the sources of this influential and widely read book. In his Dyetary of Helth, Andrew Borde quotes a good deal from Muslim sources. Cf. his judgment on the Turks and Saracens among whom he found "noble physycyons", in Introduction of Knowledge, p.273.

99 See Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, Containing Several Poetical Pieces of our Famous English Philosophers... Collected by Elias Ashmole (London, 1652), p.8, cited in Suratgar, Traces of Persian Influence, p.165.

arduous search, the messengers bring back with them Averroes who has the reputation of being "sotill in crafte and a good practiser". When the emperor is cured, Averroes is presented with many gifts and stays in Rome as an honoured royal guest. The emperor's great favours to Averroes, however, kindles the jealousy of the three physicians of Rome who have "grete indignacion and envie of this leche". When their conspiracy to destroy Averroes's reputation goes awry and their base machination is brought to light, the emperor gives them a "iust dome" by drawing them alive "at the tailles of the hors" and hanging them. Averroes, meanwhile, continues to dwell "stille with the Emperour, & feir endid his lyf".¹⁰⁰ This fictitious ending stands in marked contrast to the last years of the historical Averroes which the old man had to spend in banishment, having fallen out of favour with his Muslim rulers on a suspicion of heresy caused by his writings on philosophy.¹⁰¹

More entertaining than the tale of the "Three Jealous Physicians" with its implications that Saracen doctors were held in great repute, is a curious legend connected with Stonehenge, the most famous prehistoric monument in Britain. These late neolithic constructions, popularly known as sarsen (Saracen) stones, came, according to Robert of Brunne, from Africa, where they had been "compassed & wrought". The huge monuments, transported by "geauntz" first to Ireland and then acquired by the British by force

100 Gesta Romanorum, pp. 67-9.

101 See Hitti, The Arabs, p.582. Cf. above p. 24, n. 21.

of arms, had unsurpassed medicinal virtues. For

þey dide gret god to þem þat knewe
þo þat were seke, or had laught skap es
Wasche þe stones did hit in bayes
þat felde hem greued of grettere þynges
Wasched þem of þe selue waschinges
& warysched wel of al þer pyne
Had þey non oþer medycine. 1102

In the vernacular romances of medieval England the most interesting tributes to the Saracens are perhaps those which romance writers unwittingly recorded in their tales. In the medieval list of the "nynne of the nobileste men" in the world, three infidels are included: Caesar, Hector and Alexander. These were occasionally referred to as Saracens. The immensity of the implied praise of the Saracens in general - though the term is admittedly a misnomer here - becomes apparent when we remember the great respect the medieval men felt for antiquity.¹⁰³ In this respect, we might mention a significant but most amusing reference in which Aristotle, "prince of philesofris", is credited with a Saracen father, called - of all names - "Machomete of Macedonye".¹⁰⁴

Other complimentary references to the Saracens are found in various romances. The most exquisite yet perhaps unconscious tribute to Muslim architecture is recorded in Floriz and Blancheflur. Floriz, who planned to meet Blancheflur secretly at the Harem's Tower, where no soul is allowed except the Emir and his eunuchs,

102 Story of England, Part I, ll. 8812-18.

103 See note on Love's Labour's Lost, V,ii, 604, ed., H.H. Furness (London, 1904).

104 Secreta Secretorum, p.3.

was advised to pretend, in case he was seen, that he was a foreign architect who had come to Babylon to learn from its people and "beholde þat feire Toure" so as to make "suche another" in his own country.¹⁰⁵ In Richard Coer de Lion, the Crusader-King, whose sole purpose behind his journey to the East was to exterminate the Saracens so that "þey no more vs anoye", seems to exclude the "Sarezyn leches" and wise men from his Crusading zeal, and upon his sickness his retainers set out to look for their help.¹⁰⁶

Finally the most enduring tribute to the Saracens came from the Crusade propagandist, Caxton himself. For all his attempts to renew "the warre agayn the turke & hethen peple", the first book he ever published in England, Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers, was largely based on a work written by a Syrio-Egyptian "worshipper of Mahoune", Ibn Fatik, who lived in the eleventh century.¹⁰⁷

105 Ll. 664 ff.

106 Ll. 2890, 3051 ff.

107 Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers, intro., pp. x f.

(iii) The Saracen Maiden

Side by side with the Saracen sultans and "amirals" there appear a number of Saracen maidens who play an important part in the romances in which they appear. As a rule, these maidens, like their fellow Saracen warriors, belong essentially to the romance stock-in-trade and there is hardly any attempt at psychologising or individualising them. But their presentation contrasts markedly with that of their male counterparts. Unlike these ranting men, who were traditionally painted in the darkest of colours, the Saracen maidens are, with rare exceptions, shown in a very favourable light.

The part played by the Saracen females consists mainly of adding an exotic note to the usually incidental or subordinate love motif of the romance. Their role is, in most cases, conventionalised and follows more or less the same sequence of events: they rescue Christian knights from captivity, fall in love with them, indicate their willingness to sacrifice parents and all for the Christians' sake, and, after many and great difficulties, everything is happily concluded with their baptism and marriage to the knights.

In considering their outward appearance the first thing that strikes us is the rigorous convention governing the depiction of these beauties. Compared with the great attention given to their actions and wiles, the romancers' interest in their physical appearance is almost negligible. Above all else,

English romance writers were too interested in action to pause in order to elaborate on personal beauty - a matter which most of them dismissed as "idell".¹ Phrases such as "none her pere", "a mayde fair & swet", "the fayrest moder born", "ffull womanly of speche and countenaunce" or simply "a maruaylle" are standardised expressions² applied, however, to all heroines of romance "whoever sits for the portrait".³

Generally speaking, the Saracen heroine seems to belong to a completely different ethnic group from that of her own progenitors. Whereas the sultan with his black face and fiendish looks came to symbolise the opposite of beauty in medieval literature, his daughter or sister, on the other hand, seemed a paragon of charm and the embodiment of the medieval Western ideals of beauty and sensual attraction. In the few passages devoted to their formal description, romance writers endowed the would-be consorts of the worthy Christian heroes with blonde hair, white and pink skin, bright blue eyes, small and even teeth, slender hands with long fingers and, in short, all the features that may well put to shame even the houris whom the Koran promises to its faithful believers. One such beauty is the celebrated young daughter of the Sultan of Armenia in

1 Partonope of Blois, 6162.

2 Respectively: The Tale of the Smyth, p.215; Sir Ferumbras, 1201; Charles the Grete, p.73; Generydes, 677, Blanchardyn and Eglantine, p.56.

3 S.F. Barrow, The Medieval Society Romances (Columbia U.P., 1924), p.105. Cf. A.E. Harris, The Heroine of the Middle English Romances (Cleveland, Ohio, 1928), p.15; W.C. Curry, Ideal of Beauty (1916), p.10.

Beues of Hamtoun. In the words of the romancer, she is

Ffeyre and bryght
Iosyan that Maiden she hight
Her visage was white as floure
There in ran a reed coloure
With Bent browes and eyen shene
With her long as gold wire on the grene
With small handus and fynkurs longe
No thinge of her was shapen wronge
Where to shold I her discryve? 4
There was non so ffeire on lyve.

No less ravishing is the beauty of the Saracen princess Esclarmonde in Huon of Burdeux. Her skin, we are told, is as white as the "floure in the mede / colouryd lyke the red rose". "Her hanches", continues the romancer, "low and her pappys sumwhat resynge, her throte smoth and clere / Her chyne vaunted / her mouth as vermyl as a rose / her tethe small & well rengyde, and whyte / her face whyte and well colouryd, meddelyd whyte & red / her eyene smylynge, her chere amerous to behold, her nose strethe / her forehed whyte / her here yelow / her eeres gentyll and close, I can not deuyse the .X. parte of her excellent beaute / none coude regarde her but that prayed and louyd her".⁵ Far from being accurate, these details are entirely imaginative and conventional, applicable more to a European than

⁴ ⁴⁸ 395-404 (C.). Cf. M. Francon, "Blonde Sarrasines", MLR, XLVI (1951), 251-53.

⁵ Huon of Burdeux, p.549; cf. p.533, where a general contempt for the black-haired and brown-or black-complexioned woman is reflected.

an Oriental girl.⁶

One of the few occasions where the romance writer is unconventional in his references to a Saracen beauty occurs in Sir Ferumbras, where a Saracen maiden poses in the nude:

Wan þys lordes had seyzen hur naked, In alle manere wyse
weel Y-maked, On hure þay toke lekyng
Was non of hem þat ys flechs ne-raas, Noþer kyng, ne baroun,
ne noon, þat was, Sche was so faire a þyng. ⁷

This does not seem very appropriate, since the Saracen girl was

6 Summing up the medieval Eastern ideals of feminine beauty which do not seem to have suffered much change, E.W. Lane, Arabian Society In the Middle Ages (London, 1883), p.215, offers the following intriguing picture of the ideal Eastern woman:

Four things in a woman should be black, the hair of the head, the eyebrows, the eyelashes and the dark part of the eyes; four white, the complexion of the skin, the white of the eyes, the teeth and the legs; four red, the tongue, the lips, the middle of the cheeks and the gums; four round, the head, the neck, the forearms and the ankles; four long, the back, the fingers, the arms and the legs; four wide, the forehead, the eyes, the bosom and the hips; four fine, the eyebrows, the nose, the lips and the fingers; four thick, the lower part of the back, the thighs, the calves of the legs and the knees; four small, the ears, the breasts, the hands and the feet.

7 Sir Ferumbras, ll. 5887-90. English romance writers exercised a good deal of self-restraint and some sort of decorum in their description of intimate love scenes or of women undressing. Cf. Generydes, ll. 151-54.

exhibiting her charms not to excite the gazing public but to prepare herself for baptism.

From the treatment of the outward appearance of the Saracen maiden as beautiful we now move on to consider another convention, in which she was frequently presented as an independent woman of seemingly forward nature, ever anxious to be enjoyed by a Christian knight. A most prominent and consistent characteristic which distinguishes her from the Christian princess of romance is that while the latter's heart must usually be won by a lover, the typical Saracen maiden makes the first advances to the hero, gives ample and open amorous gestures and offers him her love unsought.⁸ She is seldom shown as having the delicacy or coyness which prevent most heroines of English romance from confessing their love to their knights.⁹ Furthermore, her desire to win a lover is such that no rebuff, insult or rejection is likely to turn her from her purpose or humiliate her out of her passionate inclinations.

The love story of the Sultan's daughter Josian, in Beues of Hamtoun, may best illustrate these qualities. The young

8 A few exceptions to this convention are inevitable. Sultan Orcay's sister in The Three Kings' Sons, p.198, was so beautiful that King Humphrey of England became "right amorous & supprised with hir grete beaute". Upon her refusal to marry him on account of his faith, the young King was "right sorrowfull / and chaunged colour & countenaunce so fer forth, that he had not a word to speke". Cf. Octavian Imperator, 1165 ff.

9 There are, of course, quite a number of non-Saracen wooing maidens in romance such as Belisaunt in Amis and Amiloun, Rimenhild in King Horn, Astolat in Morte D'Arthur, but these examples cannot be taken to represent the typical heroine of romance. For the popular motif of "the Wooing Princess" see Stith Thompson and Bordman, Motif-Index: T.55.

emiress grows so enamoured of her father's chamberlain (Beves) that she becomes unable to hide her passion for him and suffer in secret. To acquaint him with the matter she commands two messengers to bring him to her bed-chamber. Beve's response to this "invitation" is, indeed, too saintly; for though Josian is "the fairest wymann under mone", nothing on earth would make him love such a "heathen hound". His words to Josian's messengers:

3if 3e ner masegers
 Ich wolde 3ow ale, losengers
 I nele rise o fote fro ~~pe~~ grounde
 For speke wi~~y~~ an hegen hounde:
 3he is an honde, also be 3e
 Out of me chaumber swi~~pe~~ 3e fle! 10

But "if the mountain will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the mountain", and, taking no heed of Beve's adamant attitude, Josian reflects that "Synne Beues wyll not come to me, / ...to his chamber wyll I go". In Beves's room, neither her tears, her eloquence nor her singular beauty could force an avowal of mutual love from this hard-hearted Christian. The pious youth kept spurning her pathetic appeals and protestations for no reason other than her worship of "Mahoune". But no sooner had Josian declared her willingness to embrace Christianity than the great obstacle was removed; and the young hero then gave way to those pleasures which he was consistently denying himself on purely religious grounds:

10 Beues of Hamtoun, 689-94 (A).

"Mercy" she said "my leman swete:"
 Than fell she down to his fete.
 "Forgeve me, Beues, that I myssayd,
 I wyll, yf thou be wyll payd
 My fals goddus I wyll forsake
 And crystondome for thy love take:"
 "On that comenand", said Beues than,
 "I wyll the love, Iosyan:" 11
 And he kyssud her to cordment.

Medieval romance offers numerous other example of Christian heroes who undergo a similar struggle within themselves; a struggle between their high sense of religious piety and the demands of their body. As in the case of Beves, the mere reflection that the charm and beauty of their enamoured mistresses belong to a non-Christian constantly check their passion or direct it another way. This monumental emphasis on the value of religion shows itself again and again in the knights' straightforward and uncompromising declarations never

To ligge bi an hethene wommon 12
 That leevde on false lawe

or even accept temporary Saracen concubines whom they could enjoy without having to give any pledge of marriage or love. Thus, when a group of Christian knights were once offered the pick and choice of a Sultan's harem for their pleasure they emphatically refused to contaminate their souls and bodies by touching them: "Our lay wole nat", explains one of them, "pat we with you dele /

11 Ibid., 951-59 (C).

12 Kyng of Tars, 386-87.

Till that ye Cristen be made".¹³

Unlike Islam, which regards inter-marriage with Christian or Jewish women as a civil contract between two parties, the views reflected in the romances show that inter-marriage with a Saracen was seen basically as a religious matter. This arose because the attitude of the Church towards inter-marriages became fixed in the twelfth century, and that thereafter all matrimonial unions with non-Christians were invalidated unless approved by the Church in advance.¹⁴ Given the medieval prejudice against Islam, it is not difficult to see how any marriage with a Saracen maiden would be intensely resented.

Interest in conformity inevitably resulted in legitimising all relations between the Christian knights and their enamoured Saracen maidens by making the latter only too willing to renounce their religion. In so doing a thorny theological problem is avoided and a high compliment to Christianity is also paid.

Embracing Christianity, however, is not always sufficient to insure the union of the Saracen maiden with her Christian hero. In compliance with the old feudal ideals, the consent of the Knight's overlord is also insisted upon as another

13 The Sowdone of Babylone, 2750 ff. Cf. Charles the Grete, p.115 where a Saracen maiden "durst not kysse" a Christian on his mouth but "on hys chekes & chynne by cause she was a paynym". There are however a few examples in which the rigid convention is "breached". The most famous exception to this rule is the marriage of the daughter of the King of Tars and the Sultan of Damascus in The Kyng of Tars. In Huon of Burdeux, p.156, the amorous hero commits adultery with Esclarmonde. Huon, we are told "took the lady and made her goo to bed...[where] they took together theyr pleasures". This notorious misconduct, however, was followed by an immediate and severe punishment: "There rose suche a meruelous tempest / that the waves of the see semyd so greate and hys as mounteyns / and therwith it blew and thonderyd and lyghtenyd that...the shyppe [scene of the crime] brast all to peces". Cf. D. Van DeVoort, Love and Marriage in the English Medieval Romance (Nashville, Tenn., 1938), 89-97.

14 Gist, Love and War, p.56.

condition for the intended alliance.¹⁵ In Sir Ferumbras, Sir Guy of Burgundy does not marry his converted Saracen fiancée, Floripas, until he has obtained Charlemagne's approval.¹⁶ It is only after all these prerequisites are met that the Saracen maiden may be declared persona grata, fit to be married to the demanding and highly selective heroes.

In discussing the private morals and ethical values of the Saracen maiden we must guard against passing a hasty judgment. For despite her amorous advances to the Christian knight there is, in fact, little to suggest that she is lewd or lascivious. Her seemingly immodest flirtations and gestures are, in most cases, a feminine design, or a "bait" to entangle the Christian champion and lead him into falling in love with her and then marrying her. In this they differ markedly from the familiar Potiphar's wives with whom romance heroes are frequently plagued. Unlike these cheap and frustrated women who are neither seriously treated by the romance writers nor presented as successful in their amorous attempts, these Saracen maidens with their overpowering personality and wily approach to men and marriage are

15 Christian knights sometimes have to follow this feudal custom even when the lady is not a Saracen.

16 Sir Ferumbras, 2097 ff, 5875-76. Cf. Charles the Grete, p.115: "God forbede that euer I shold take wyfe but yf she were gyuen to me by Charles themperor". "Trew it is", says Huon to Esclarmonde, whom he kissed, "in that I dyd kys you, was by the commaundement of Kyng Charlemayne, who sent me hether, but or elles I had rather to have bene here in perpetuall pryson / then to have touched eny parte of your flessch or mouthe as long as ye be a sarazyn". See Huon of Burdeux, p.126.

consistently praised and admired.¹⁷

Whenever a Saracen girl sets her mind upon a lover, it is the hope of becoming his wife that dominates her actions and attitudes. In other words, the love of the Saracen maidens is essentially a "marriage-love" and is far outside the pale of any system advocating illicit relations with men.¹⁸ To illustrate the emphasis these clever maidens place on marriage, we may choose Floripas, the famous heroine of many of the Charlemagne romances, as an example of the typical Saracen maidens with a one-track mind dominated by marriage.

A well-known episode with which we usually associate this remarkably resourceful girl is her leading of the Christian captives to her bed chamber. There she heals their wounds, comforts them and feeds them most generously. What is significant in this little episode is that before the captives know why they are treated with such kindness and high regard, this young woman has succeeded in exacting from Oliver a pledge of support for her ambitious project of marrying Guy of Burgundy, whom she saw only once when he was fighting against her father in Rome:

17 Cf. A.E. Harris, The Heroine of the Middle English Romances (Cleveland, 1928), p.29. There are however some Saracen women presented as Potiphar's wives. One such woman is Ivoryn's daughter whom Huon greatly disappoints by refusing to lie with her. Her reaction: "A, false faynted hert, Mahounde confounde the / for Yf I had knowe that thou woldest thus a refused my company I wold have [~~check-~~mated the / in the game of chess] & then thou haddest lost thy hed". See Huon of Burdeux, pp. 180-1.

18 Van D  Voort, Love and Marriage, p.97.

"Fro ~~that~~ day in-to ~~pys~~, myn herte ~~haz~~ he yraft
 Ne kepte y neuere more blys, were he to meward laft
 Wolde he be my worldly make, & weddy me to wyue
 For his loue wold y take, cristendom al so blyue
 As ~~you~~ art a trewe knyzt, do & help now wat ~~you~~ maye".¹⁹
 Oliuer saide: "bi god al-mizt, damsele y schal a-saye."

Floripas's emphasis on marriage rather than any form of love relationship is, however, not indicative of any particular "virtue" which distinguishes her and her co-religionists from their Christian counterparts. The noticeable preoccupation with matrimony is ^afamiliar characteristic of Saracen and non-Saracen maidens. A factor from which the Saracen princess benefits is that many of the English romances which include an inter-ethnic love episode, particularly the Charlemagne romances, were written either by clergymen or by men with a high sense of religious piety and clerical concepts of love and sex.²⁰

The elaborated love story of the Saracen maiden and the Christian knight²¹ or vice versa,²² popular as it was in medieval romance,

19 Sir Ferumbras, 1420-25. Cf. Charles the Grete, p.92.

20 Cf. A.C. Baugh, "Authorship of the Middle English Romances", Bulletin of the Modern Humanities Research Association, XXII (1950), 13-28.

21 Bordman, Motif-Index:T.91. 6. 4. 1. ff; cf. V 331. 5. 2.

22 Not surprisingly, medieval romance records very few examples of Christian damsels falling for Saracen warriors. One such case is that of the love of Belisant, Charlemagne's daughter, for Otuel in Otuel and Roland. Belisant arms Otuel and takes him to her room where she warns him of the impending duel with Roland, and prays God to keep him from shame: "Ac thyke lorde that best may / Fro schame schylde the to-day / 3yf yt be hys wylle" (ll. 402-404). This is the furthest a Christian maiden can go in her "amorous advances" to an infidel.

From a Muslim work, The Thousand Nights, we can illustrate how the tables are turned, in that Christian and Jewish girls are often presented as highly enamoured of Muslim men, a fact which delighted the public of medieval Islam. See "The Christian King's Daughter and the Muslim", v, 283-86, "The Muslim Champion and the Christian Damsel", v, 277-83;

is, however, not the creation of the romance writers. Its sources may be found in the various tales of inter-marriage recorded by chroniclers and poets as early as Seneca. But the most famous legend, of paramount importance in the history of the tale in the West, is that which is based on the historical captivity and release of Bohemond I, the Crusader-Prince of Antioch, by the Turks in 1103.²³

Orderic Vital, who records Bohemond's imprisonment in his Ecclesiastical History of England, ornaments his otherwise factual story with a lengthy account of Bohemond's emotional involvement with Melaz, the beautiful daughter of his Muslim captor, Daliman. Soon after Bohemond and his soldiers had been captured by Daliman's men, says the chronicler, the Turk's beautiful daughter conceived ^{an} increasing regard for Bohemond and his followers. Melaz, who had often heard the chivalry of the Crusaders celebrated and praised, frequently descended into the dungeon, where the captives were imprisoned, to comfort them and also to discuss the Christian faith and true religion, "sometimes", adds Orderic, "mingling deep sighs with the investigations she made". At the end of two years, war broke out

22 (continued from previous page)

"Ali Nur Al-Din and Miriam the Girdle-Girl", viii, 264-349, "Masrur and Zayn Al-Mawasif", viii, 205-63. In "Ali Nur Al-Din", the Christian heroine even profanes the Church which contained the relics of Mary by "pulling all that was upon her of raiment and ornaments" and offering herself to her Muslim lover (p.329).

23 See F.M. Warren, "The Enamoured Muslim Princess in Orderic Vital and the French Epic", PMLA XXIX (1914), 346-47.

between Daliman and his brother, and with Melaz's own help and at her request, the Christian knights arm themselves and secretly leave their prison. They fight on Daliman's side and, as might be expected, they easily win the war for him. Vital's fictitious addition ends happily with Daliman's reviling of his God, Muhammed, his daughter's baptism and her marriage to a Christian knight.²⁴

The love adventure described by Vital proved very popular. The romantic circumstances of religious and military hostilities under which Bohemond exchanged love with Melaz perfectly suited the literary taste of the times and also inspired other medieval legend-makers to exploit what romantic aspects the Christian-Muslim warfare could offer.²⁵

A later legend vaguely analogous to Vital's tale, is included in a metrical account, attributed to Robert of Gloucester (fl. 1260-1300), of the life and martyrdom of Thomas à Becket.²⁶ According to Robert, Gilbert, St. Thomas's father, took the Cross and set out for Palestine to visit the Holy Sepulchre by way of penance. In Jerusalem he was captured by the Saracens and

24 Ecclesiastical History, iii, 310 ff. Bohemond, says Runciman, "was still a handsome and glamorous man; and the ladies of the emir's household took an interest in him. Perhaps with their assistance he was able to [arrange his ransom?]" See Crusades, ii, 33 and note 2. It might be mentioned that Vital's references to events connected with the history of Islam are notoriously inaccurate. Cf. above p. 31. Love stories between a Christian hero and a Muslim maiden also occur in other chronicles. See, for example, Hoveden, Annals, ii, 189-90.

25 Cf. Gesta Romanorum, tales LX, p. 377, and LXVII, pp. 306-7, for anecdotes bearing resemblance to Vital's story.

26 Robert of Gloucester, The Life and Martyrdom Thomas Beket, ed., W.H. Black, Percy Soc. (1845).

given to a Saracen prince named Admiraud²⁷ to be his slave. At the prince's house Gilbert led a miserable "harde lyve" for "ful other half 3er". However, no sooner had the prince's only daughter set eyes on Gilbert than was she smitten with love at first sight. Like Vital's Melaz, Gilbert's lover was particularly ~~However, no sooner had the prince's only daughter set eyes on Gilbert than was she smitten with love at first sight. Like Vital's Melaz, Gilbert's lover was particularly~~ interested in "the lyf of Cristene men and what here bileve were". But she was also inquisitive about England and "the toun het Londone". Before long, the young girl declared that for Gilbert's love she would become Christian if he would pledge himself to take her to wife. Gilbert replied politely that he was at her disposal but that he should consider the matter more deeply. At this the damsel became a prey to anxiety but went on loving him "evere the leng the more". One night, however, Gilbert managed to escape from his captivity and after travelling the whole night, he came to the territory of the Christians from which he continued his journey to London.²⁸

When the young girl learnt of his sudden departure she immediately decided to follow him to his own homeland. The depth of her love was such that she cast aside her parental tie,

27 This is apparently another corrupted form of Arabic Amir-Al-Mu'mineen See above p. 41, n. 13.

28 Thomas Beket, ll. 1-54.

inheritance and all for her Gilbert:

And bilevede al hire grete heritage, and hire cun also
 And ne sparede for no sorewe, that mizte come hire to
 Ne for siknisse, ne for deth, ne for sorewe, ne for wo
 Ne for peryl in the see, na londe nothe mo
 Ne that heo scholde among Cristene men, vilere than an hound beo
 Ne that hi ne knewe hire speche nozt, ne heo nuste whoderward teo
 Ne whar he scholde alyve, this Gilbert fynde ozt
 Ne whar he wolde hire spousi, whan heo him hadde al isozt 29
 And natheles heo wende forth, with wel god pas.

When she finally arrived in London she passed in front of the house where Gilbert was living. Soon after this happy coincidence, Gilbert took her to St. Paul's where she was duly baptised and bestowed upon him as his lawful bride. The erstwhile Saracen wife acquitted herself admirably of her marriage duties and bore Gilbert a beautiful boy named Thomas who was to go down in history at the head of the English martyrs.³⁰

The beautiful legend of Becket's mother illustrates not only a tendency to regard the Saracen damsel as an exotic creature to be admired, loved and married, but also an inclination to assign her a significant part in the labyrinth of English legend. In their search for some supernatural or unusual birth for their Arthurs and Alexanders, the medieval romance writers and legend-makers found in the Saracen damsel a fitting parent who responded perfectly to this literary demand. Like Becket's mother, it might be added, Cassodorien, mother of another wild and impetuous man,

29 Ibid., 61-69. Cf. also A Dictionary of English Church History, ed. S.L. Ollard and G. Grosse (London, 1912), pp.48-50.

30 The beautiful legend may have contributed to the popularity of the sign of the "Saracen's Head". However, even without this story, the Saracen was a sufficient object of curiosity. See below, Appendix "C".

Richard in Richard Coer de Lion, was - though not exactly a Saracen - yet an Oriental from Antioch.³¹

This medieval legend of Becket's parentage is reflected in the presentation of the Saracen maiden in the popular English ballads and folk tales. The example which illustrates this influence most clearly is the popular ballad "Young Beichan", the variants of which have carefully been collected by F.J. Child (1825-96).³²

From this ballad we learn that a young Englishman called Beichan (Breachin, Bekie or Beachan, names which obviously bear some etymological resemblance to Becket) goes to the East where he becomes a slave of a "heathen Turk" or a "savage Moor". Because Beichan would "never bend a knee to Mahound or Termagant" he is treated most cruelly by his Muslim master. But it is Beichan's good fortune that his barbarous lord has a pretty daughter. For

She's gien him to eat the good spice-cake
 She's gien him to drink the blood-red wine
 She's bidden him sometimes think on her
 That sae kindly freed him out of pine. 33

More successful than Gilbert's damsel, the jailer's daughter manages to exact a solemn vow of marriage from Beichan, who agrees

31 Richard Coer de Lion, 164. Cf. P.A. Brown, The Development of the Legend of Thomas Becket (Philadelphia, 1930), p.27, n.50, where Becket is stated to be proud of his "hot Oriental blood" dashing through his veins.

32 The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1956), i, 454 ff. My quotations are from text (E).

33 Ibid., st. 15.

to marry her within a few years if she helps him. Nothing is more welcome to her ears than this pledge. Accordingly, Susan Pie, for that is her name in the ballad, supplies Beichan with a sufficiency of money and provision and sets him free. Not long after, Susan begins to suffer from great longing and anxiety which finally compels her to "turn her back on her own countrie ". Concluding a most arduous journey, Susan finally arrives at "Fair England's shore". That same day witnesses the marriage of the long-separated couple:

He's taen her by the milk-white hand
 And led her to yon fountain stone
 He's changed her name from Susie Pye
 And he's call'd her his bonny love, Lady Jane.³⁴

From the brief review of the story of Susan Pie and her earlier Saracen sisters it becomes clear that they all seem to share certain characteristics which distinguish them from their Christian counterparts in English romance: strong-mindedness, resourcefulness and physical courage. Indeed, while the Christian heroine in English romance "need not be clever but she must be fair",³⁵ the Saracen girl is usually presented as having, besides beauty, intelligence, far-sightedness and ingenuity. Her hands work miracles of art and embroidery. She is well versed in magic and divination³⁶ but particularly

³⁴ Ibid., st. 41.

³⁵ Harris, Heroine of M.E. Romances, p.13.

³⁶ Cf. Valentine and Orson, p.133, where fair Clerymonde is said to have in her chamber a brazen head "of suche nature that it gaue answer of al thynges that was asket it". Cf. pp. 84 n.34, 297.

experienced in administering marvellous healing potions to the wounded and the sick. While the Christian heroine is often graced by some heavenly protection at the moment of danger, the Saracen has only her thinking mind and physical power to depend upon. The ingenious plan of Clariona's escape from her ravisher's castle in Generydes,³⁷ the cleverness with which Floripas handles her courtship as well as the delicate state affairs of her country,³⁸ Susan Pie's braving of all terrors of poverty and the dangers of a long journey and a stormy sea, all give us a consistent picture of the imaginary Saracen woman beside whom the conventional Christian heroine in English romance looks passive and retiring, if not lacking in personality.

However, despite their noticeably sympathetic attitude towards the Saracen maiden, romance writers occasionally attributed some of the less attractive qualities to these fair creatures. For it is often suggested that these girls possessed - perhaps inherited - the Saracen quality of hot-bloodedness and cruelty. The way in which Josian in Beues of Hamtoun disposes of her undesirable suitors and husband is just one example of their meteoric behaviour in times of crisis.³⁹ A better known instance of the somewhat unjustified cruelty is perhaps found in the conduct of Floripas. This spiteful and iron-willed girl kills her innocent nurse quite cold-bloodedly within minutes of her murder of the jailer, whom she gives such a blow with her

37 Generydes, 4355 ff.

38 Sir Ferumbras, 1420, 1988 ff.

39 Beues of Hamtoun, 2861 ff. (A).

staff that "out sterte al is brayne". Furthermore, we are assured that Floripas enjoys such "jests" as the burning alive of her erstwhile Saracen suitor in her own chamber.⁴⁰ But crimes committed by these damsels are usually condoned and sometimes even applauded, since they are committed to preserve their virginity (reserved, of course, for the romance heroes), or, more often, to save the life of some Christian knight.

This opportunistic attitude on the part of the romance poet becomes all too clear when we consider how he treats the Saracen mothers and old women whom, obviously, he cannot choose for the glamorous and romantic role of his heroes' lovers. Where such women appear, his attitude is sure to be "Dunbarian"⁴¹ and marked by the traditional hostility which characterizes the treatment of the Saracen rank and file.

Barrock, a Saracen matron in The Sowdone of Babylone, is given the worst of both moral and physical features. We are told that she grins "like a develle of helle". So rapacious is this woman that she has caused the death of many noble Christians. Her fate, however, is no better than that of those Saracens who are put to immediate death on account of their infidelity.⁴² Rosemonde, wife of the Saracen King of Antioch in Valentine and Orson, is another such Saracen. Hers is the unenviable part of the lascivious and conspiring queen who does not hesitate to commit the vilest crime to satisfy her lust.

⁴⁰ Sir Ferumbras, 1251 ff, 1369 ff. Cf. also Generydes, 4582, 5652, for further examples.

⁴¹ See above, pp. 65-66.

⁴² The Sowdone of Babylone, 2941-50.

"For the brennyng of her loue" for Valentine, says the romance writer, this base creature "would purchace the deth of the Kyng of Antyoche her husbände".⁴³

But the archetype of the Saracen matron and indeed of all the familiar cruel mothers of folklore is the emir's mother in The Man of Law's Tale, a fierce, cunning and unpitying creature. For her monstrous design of wholesale manslaughter and for her inhuman barbarity towards the saintly Constance, she revives in Chaucer's mind the old legend that the Serpent who tempted Eve had appeared to her with a woman's head:

O Sowdanesse, roote of iniquitee
 Virago, thou semyrame the secounde
 O serpent under femynynytee
 Lik to the serpent depe in helle ybounde
 O feynde womman, al that may confounde
 Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice
 Is bred in thee as nest of every vice.

O Sathan envious syn thilke day
 That thou were chaced from oure heritage
 Wel knowestow to wommen the olde way
 Thou madest Eva brynge us in servage
 Thou wolt fordoon this Cristen mariage
 Thyn instrument so, weylawey the while
 Makestow of wommen, whan thou wolt bigile.⁴⁴

But such abominable Saracen women are few in medieval literature and cannot therefore be taken to represent the general medieval notion of the Saracen female. They are greatly outnumbered and eclipsed by their younger sisters and daughters on whose talent and cleverness extravagant praise is expended.

⁴³ Valentine and Orson, pp. 221, 224.

⁴⁴ The Man of Law's Tale, 358-71.

Conclusion

We shall now sum up the ground covered in the present investigation. The hate-the-Saracen propaganda, initiated and perpetuated by the Latin Church, had an immense impact on the presentation of the Muslims in the literature, spectacle and sport of medieval England. The constant conflict with Islam gave rise to and developed one of the most persistent features of early English fiction : Saracen baiting. Writer after writer grossly libelled and travestied the Saracen with almost total irresponsibility and little regard for truth.

The historical engagements between Christian and Saracen in Spain, Palestine, Asia Minor and elsewhere furnished the romance writers with numerous themes and motifs which they readily exploited in their stories. The popularity of episodes inspired by the period of the Crusades, the longest war in the history of mankind, cannot be questioned. Saracen warriors, giants or maidens appear as frequently in works completely unrelated to Islam or the East as in those which, in fact, deal with Muslim affairs or have some Eastern elements in them.

As dramatis personae, the Saracens play a distinct and important part. In the drama and in the stories in which heroes are engaged in more or less aimless pursuits and spontaneous fighting, the Saracens simply carry out their role as "enemies", always antagonistic to everything good or Christian.

But they show little or no resemblance to their historical counterparts, particularly in their conduct on the battlefield. Medieval writers generally did not realise that the prestige and prowess of their heroes would have been greatly enhanced, not lessened, had they portrayed the Saracens worthy of their vanquishers' steel.

In presenting the Saracens as "full of sound and fury", and insisting upon their easy defeat by the Christians, the medieval writer was not only conforming to the rules of poetic justice or following a literary tradition, but also performing a ritual, a form of folk-celebration not unlike the pagan ceremonies of sympathetic magic, in which an earnest desire to fulfil a wish is enacted. In routing the unruly hordes of Saracens in fiction or in spectacle, the medieval writer was trying to fulfil his own and his public's ambition to defeat them in actuality.

The anti-Islamic climate and the general ignorance of Muslim affairs, which have no counterpart in the noticeably less impassioned writings of the medieval Muslims, conspired to give rumour and legend an excellent opportunity to supply what knowledge lacked. Inevitably, and despite the writers' claims, there seems to be very little that is genuinely "Saracenic" about the imaginary Saracens. However, the stereotyped picture probably looked authentic and true to life to a public that knew no better.

Conspicuous among the traits of the English medieval attitude to the Saracen was the hostility felt towards the Islamic faith,

considered the root of all Saracen evil. This was at once the least understood and most frequently remembered aspect of the Saracens. Muhammed, of whom medieval literature reflects no consistent image, was universally declared to be either a devil, a false god, a magician, a lecher, a scheming murderer, a frustrated cardinal and a sower of blasphemy and superstition or any combination of these guises. It is ironic that the derivation of the English word "maumetry", signifying idolatry, should come from the name of Muhammed, who devoted his life to eradicating even the most remote aspects of idolatry from pagan Arabia.

What little that was known about the Islamic articles of creed was either twisted in such a way that its relation to the original facts was almost entirely indiscernible, or interpreted most ungenerously to suit the then popular view that the Saracens were the descendants of the classical and biblical pagans. Just as in medieval drama the Jew was invariably held responsible for everything wicked on account of his faith, the Saracen in medieval fiction was blamed for every evil and vice. Indeed, some poets went so far as to imply that it was by associating with the Saracens that the Jews had precipitated their moral and spiritual decline:

Of god all-mihti *pai* left *pe* law,
 To sarazins faith *pai* gan *paim* draw,
 And made wid *paim* *pair* mariage;
 Qua herd euer men sua rage? 1

1 Cursor Mundi, 6983-86 (G).

Intermingled with this xenophobic approach to the Saracen, spasmodic awareness of the need to adopt a more humanitarian attitude to Islam was reflected. Some praise and admiration for Saracen culture, commerce and scientific achievement was also recorded. But these faint echoes were, on the whole, few and far between. They are negligible compared with the avalanche of abuse to which the "usurpers" of the City of God were subjected.

In the drama of the age, the limited scope of the themes dealt with in the religious plays, combined with the highly partisan and absolute spirit in which the Christian faith was expounded and God's ways to Man explained, rendered it difficult for the humanistic attitude of the missionaries and the critics of crusading to have any influence at all. Consequently, the militant and blatant hostility towards the Saracens and all non-Christians in general remained untouched by that missionary zeal which saw in the Saracen not an embodiment of evil to be destroyed, but an equal human being worthy of being guided to the true path of salvation - Christianity.

Appendix A.

Important Dates Providing a Historical
Background for the Subject of the Thesis.

- 570 Muhammed born in Mecca, soon to
 become the spiritual centre of Islam.
- 622 The flight of the Muslims to Medinah.
 Beginning of the hidgra (Hegira) calendar.
- 630 Muhammed enters Mecca triumphantly.
 Destruction of the idols round the Black
 Stone of Ka'abeh.
- 633-41 Muslims conquer Syria, Egypt and Persia.
- 636 Jerusalem falls to the Arabs.
- 711 The Muslims extend their empire to Spain
 in the West and the Indus Valley in the
 East.
- 731 The Venerable Bede points to the danger
 of the Muslim conquest of Spain in
 his Ecclesiastical History.
- 732 Charles Martel (The Hammer) halts the
 Muslim advance at Poitiers.
- 754 St. Willibald, the first English pilgrim
 in Muslim Palestine.
- c. 785 The Mercians mint coins bearing "Offa Rex"
 on the obverse side and the Muslim shihadah
 (testimony of faith in Allah) on the reverse.
- 786-814 Reign of Charlemagne. Friend of the
 historical Saracens but their avowed enemy in
 the literatures of medieval Europe.

- 970 Most Seljuk Turks embrace Islam.
- 1037 Death of Ibn Sina' (Avicenna), Muslim philosopher and physician. His works were widely acclaimed in medieval Europe.
- 1061-91 The Normans reconquer Sicily from the Arabs.
- 1071 Battle of Manzikert. Seljuks take Asia Minor from weakened Byzantium.
- 1085 The Arabs lose Toledo to the Christians.
- 1095 Pope Urban II preaches the need for "armed pilgrimages" to Palestine.
- 1099 Fall of Jerusalem to the Crusaders. Godfrey of Bouillon elected "Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre".
- c.1103 Saewulf, first English pilgrim in Latin Jerusalem.
- 1118 Establishment of the military religious order of the Knights Templars in Jerusalem.
- 1143 English scholar, Robert Ketton, completes first Latin translation of the Koran while studying Arabic science in Spain.
- 1147-48 The Second Crusade.
- 1187 Saladin captures Jerusalem following his victory at Hattin.
- 1190-92 Third Crusade. Richard Coeur de Lion arrives at Acre in 1191.
- 1204 Fourth Crusade - sack of Constantinople.
- 1219 St. Francis of Assisi preaches the Gospel to the Egyptian ruler, Sultan Al-Kamil.
- 1229 Crusaders sign peace treaty with the Muslims which allows them to govern Jerusalem for fifteen years.

- 1238 Unexpected arrival of a Muslim envoy in London to seek military help against the Tartars.
- 1254 The Great Debate at the Mongol Court. Christians, Muslims, Nestorians and pagans hold a public religious discussion before the Khan.
- 1258 Mongol Hulagu enters and destroys Baghdad. End of the Abbasid Caliphate.
- 1270-72 Crusade of Edward I of England.
- 1271 Marco Polo sets out for the far East and returns with tales of splendour.
- 1276 Ramon Lull, the greatest missionary to the Muslims, founds the first school of Oriental Studies in Europe.
- 1291 Fall of Acre, the last Latin stronghold in the East. Expulsion of the Crusaders.
- 1357 Mandeville's Travels increases popular stock of legends about the East.
- 1366 Ottomans establish their capital in Adrianople.
- 1380-1405 Career of the last conqueror of the world, Timur-Lang (Tamburlaine).
- 1405 The battle of Ankara (Marlowe's Angora). Bayazid (Bajazeth) taken prisoner by Timur.
- 1444 Battle of Varna. Beginning of Turkish Expansion in Europe.
- 1453 Byzantine Constantinople falls to Muhammed II (The Opener). Hopes of regaining Jerusalem fade.
- 1458 William Wey's first visit to Palestine. His second pilgrimage was in 1462.

- 1492 Fall of Granada. Ferdinand and Isabella
burn the infidels' libraries, outlaw Islam
and expel Moors. End of the Spanish
Reconquest.
- 1520-66 Reign of Sultan Solyman (the Magnificent).
Height of Ottoman power and prestige.
- 1571 Battle of Lepanto. Short-lived victory
for Christian allies against the Turks.
- 1917 General Allenby captures Muslim Jerusalem
and declares that "the Crusades have come
to an end".

Appendix B.

A Classification of the Medieval English
Romances according to the Part Played by
the Saracens.

I Romances in which Saracens appear as titular heroes :

Duke Rowland and Sir Otuel of Spain
Floris and Blauncheflur
The Kyng of Tars and The Soudan of Damas
Otuel a Knight
Otuel and Roland
Roland and Vernagu
Sir Ferumbras
The Sowdone of Babylone
The Turke and Gowin

II Romances in which the subject-matter is mainly the conflict between Christian and Saracen. In these romances, fictitious and pseudo-historical adventures against the Saracens take up most of the narrative :

Charles the Grete
Godeffroy of Boloyne
Richard Coer de Lion
The Sege off Melayne
The Song of Roland

III Romances in which the Christian hero travels in the steps of the Crusaders (sometimes in disguise) to fight against the Saracens in the East:

Beues of Hamtoun
Eger and Grime

Guy of Warwick
Huon of Burdeux
Octavian Emperor
Sir Degrevant
Sir Isumbras
Sir Perceval of Galles
Sir Torrent of Portyngale

IV Romances in which the Saracens play the part of lovers of Christian princesses. In most of these romances they appear as rejected suitors waging war to enforce their demand:

Le Bone Florence of Rome
Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale
Emare
Gower's Tale of Florent
King Estmere
Robert the Deuyll
Sir Gowther

V Romances which include miscellaneous motifs involving Saracens.

A. In the following romances the Saracens play a minor but functional part in the story:

Blanchardyn and Eglantine
Generydes
The Foure Sonnes of Aymon
Melusine
Partonope of Blois
The Three Kings' Sons
Valentine and Orson

- V B. In the following romances the Saracens
 appear briefly or incidentally:

Joseph of Arimathie

King Horn

Libeaus Desconus

Malory's Morte D'Arthur

Sir Eglamour of Artois

Syr Tryamowre

The Taill of Rauf Coilgear

Appendix C.The Sign of the Saracen's Head in England

The head of a Saracen or a Turk, a symbol which many knights adopted on their armorial bearings when they returned from the Crusades, appears on many inn signs which can still be seen in various parts of the country including Leicester. The use of the Muslim's head in heraldry is said to have first been introduced by Sir Reginald de Chatillon, the Crusader most hated among the Muslims, who was eventually decapitated by Saladin himself. Having beheaded three Saracen emirs, Reginald boastfully depicted their heads on his shield. When he was captured by Saladin, Reginald's arms proclaimed his act too plainly and he met the fate he had meted to others.

Chief among the factors which gave the sign its enduring popularity in England was, no doubt, Richard's alleged eating of Saracens' heads in Palestine. There was also a curious tradition which associated magical and mystical qualities with the Saracen's head. This was based on a wild legend concerning an English Hospitaller at Acre who wanted to know what was happening at home. On the sea-shore of the city, so goes the legend, the Hospitaller dug up the skull of a Saracen who had been buried there for a long time. Like the familiar speaking¹ idols of the fictional Saracens, the skull provided the homesick Englishman with whatever information he required.

1 Cf. pp. 84 n. 34, 282 n. 36.

But the macabre custom of bringing back severed Saracen heads from the Holy Land by those wishing to prove their actual participation and heroism in the Crusades injected the sign with religious and patriotic significance: commemorating Christian victory over the infidel. Among the many Crusaders who returned with such unpleasant souvenirs from the East is Sir Thomas Shirley (d.1363). Sir Thomas was a member of the ancient Shirley family which was to produce such illustrious men as Sir Hugh Shirley, who died at the battle of Shrewsbury clothed in the royal armour of Henry in 1403 (cf. Henry IV, V, iv, 25). The notorious "Three Brothers" of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, who organized the Persian army and taught the Persians the use of artillery in an attempt to break the Ottoman power from the East, were also members of the same family.

Upon his return to his estate in Ettington, near Stratford-Upon-Avon, Sir Thomas Shirley showed the assembled crowds of friends and relatives the head of one of his Saracen victims. This he proudly displayed, cursed and then flung on the ground. From the spot where the Saracen's head had fallen there immediately gushed a cool spring, still flowing today. There is no doubt in the minds of the villages to whom I spoke as to the authenticity of this "miracle".

The family crest of the Shirleys, it might be added, is a Saracen's head, engravings and representations of which are

abundant in the family seat. Of the many sculpted panels showing incidents in the history of the family there is one over the eastern bay window of the house in which the page of Sir Thomas is represented as handing his lord the head of a Saracen whom Sir Thomas had vanquished and decapitated.

See G.L. Kittredge, A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Gloucester, Mass., 1960), pp. 181-82; C.W. Scot-Giles, The Romance of Heraldry (London, 1957), p. 64; L.G. Pine, The Story of Surnames (London, 1965), p. 53; C.W. Bardsley, English Names, Their Sources and Significations (London, 1889), p. 166. See also above, plate 1 (after p. 24).

Appendix D.

English Literary Interest in Islam in the
Later Periods - A Bibliographical Note.

The Elizabethan period has received most attention from scholars interested in Anglo-Muslim relations. The first to touch upon the subject was J.Q. Adams, Jr., who lists more than fifty plays dealing entirely or partly with the Muslim in his Introduction to his edition of Mason's The Turke, in Materials for the Study of Old English Drama (1912). Adams also comments briefly on the popularity of the Turk as a stage villain and "the incarnation of ambition, cruelty, sensuality, and treachery". Three years later, Louis Wann wrote his excellent article "The Oriental in Elizabethan Drama", in Modern Philology, XII (1915). In this study, Wann analyses a great body of plays on the basis of type, sources employed, scenes of action and nationalities represented.

More detailed and wider in scope is W.G. Rice's Turk, Moor, and Persian in English Literature (1927). This scholarly work covers the dramatic and non-dramatic writings from 1550 up to the Restoration. Samuel C. Chew's The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and Christendom during the Renaissance (1937), remains, however, the definitive study of the subject and the basis for any research in this field.

Chew's work has been supplemented by relatively recent writers such as Orhan Burian, who focuses on travel literature in his article "Interest of the English in Turkey as Reflected in the English Literature of the Renaissance", in Oriens, V (1952). In an unpublished Ph.D. thesis in the University of Durham Library entitled The Idea of Turkey in the Elizabethan Period and in the Early Seventeenth Century with Special Reference to the Drama (1965), Mrs. Suraya Artemel traverses the same ground as her predecessors and also discusses various ballads, history books, pamphlets and newsletters concerning the Turks which appeared in England before the Closing of the Theatres. Elie Salem's article "The Elizabethan Image of Islam", in Studia Islamica, XX (1965), concentrates on the idea of Muhammed and the fables circulating about him at the time.

For the Restoration period and beyond, Louis Wann has followed the same procedure he adopted in his earlier study. In "The Oriental in Restoration Drama", in University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, II (1918), Wann concludes that the Restoration period "shows an advance towards a more intimate knowledge of the Orient". Byron P. Smith's Islam in English Literature (1937), which continues and complements Chew's study, has lengthy chapters dealing with the Muslim image until the mid-nineteenth century. A.M. Abdullah's unpublished Ph.D. thesis in the University of Cambridge Library, which bears the title Arabian Nights in English Literature to 1900 (1963), is well worth consulting and contains a good bibliography.

Attention may be called to the specialist bibliography compiled by J.D. Pearson, Index Islamicus: 1906-1955 (1958), with its two Supplements (1962) and (1967). These three volumes have been very useful in the preparation of this thesis. The annual bibliography of the Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, published by the Comparative Literature Committee of Indiana University, contains valuable descriptive listings of various articles, many of which deal with the Orient in general and Islam in particular.

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