

PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN IN VIOLENT SITUATIONS
IN TEXTS OF THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

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For my parents, Mark and Gail Verbanaz
Thanks for your love and support

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Depictions of violent situations within twelfth-century narratives lend themselves to a study of the way in which medieval writers portray female words and actions. These scenes are often among the more graphic and detailed descriptive passages in the narratives, include more dialogue, and therefore offer a more vivid picture of events than other scenes. Moreover, the episodes that most frequently drive the narrative plot include violent situations. These situations are pivotal in the progression of events and females play significant roles within the narratives' plots. Furthermore, women's traditional roles were not typically related to violence, but their portrayals as violent actors reveal the ways in which typical gender roles worked into atypical situations. These portrayals of women in violent situations illustrate a continuance and transformation of traditional female roles in varying locations and contexts during the twelfth century.

Although female gender roles were mostly related to women's reproductive and nurturing functions, women also figure prominently in accounts of violence. A significant amount of literature analyzes women as victims of medieval violence,¹ but in many situations, women appear in narratives not as victims of violence, but as initiators of and participants in violent actions. Writers show women acting in violent situations either directly or through male

¹ For more information on women as victims of violence, see works such as: *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, Ed. by Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature: A Casebook*, Ed. by Albrecht Classen (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

surrogates. This thesis studies the chroniclers' portrayals of women as agents in a violent society rather than as victims of violence. Although these situations may appear to be abnormal, violence was common in medieval society, and oftentimes medieval writers depicted women's participation in violence as if it were expected or commonplace.

Despite producing many kinds of texts over many centuries, from sagas to historical accounts to saints' lives and miracles stories, medieval writers throughout Europe repeatedly illustrate women in three specific roles in violent situations. First, women may appear as inciters of violence. These women start or perpetuate feuds, urge men to war, urge men to take revenge for real or perceived slights, and urge men to protect women. Second, women appear as participants in violence, either by taking direct action or by supporting or instructing others to do so. And third, women appear as peacemakers, urging a cessation of violence. The following chapters will present an exploration of the portrayals of women in three specific times and locations, all produced in the twelfth century and the decades just before and after that century.²

The twelfth century is particularly appealing for a study of feminine portrayals because of the political and intellectual trends and developments of that era. At this time, there was a "cessation of destructive invasions from outside"

² As scholars agree, centuries and decades of history do not have clear cut boundaries when the evolution of ideas is considered over time. In his monograph, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Charles Homer Haskins asserts that "the word 'century' must be used very loosely so as to cover not only the twelfth century proper but the years which immediately precede and follow, yet with sufficient emphasis on the central period to indicate the outstanding characteristics of its civilization." (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 10.

causing Europe to enter “a period of relative peace and equilibrium;”³ and the relatively peaceful era produced an environment in which gender roles could be evaluated and even reshaped. In Maurice Keen’s monograph, *Chivalry*, he examines the Christianization of male roles in regards to violence with the changes in military ideals for elite men during the twelfth century. At this time, traditional male roles were inspected and transformed to fit with the Christian ideals of knighthood for the medieval west; and the “knights combined their violence and their piety rather handily,” with “God, as the greatest chivalric lord,” who “grants worthy men a chance to earn honor . . . for their strenuous effort.”⁴ The transformation and Christianization of male roles that Keen so aptly describes was accompanied by a similar process for female roles.

Furthermore, this century is identified as a period of change by many scholars. Marc Bloch describes it as the Second Feudal Age; R. W. Southern calls it the era of Medieval Humanism; and Charles Homer Haskins has labeled it the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.⁵ The Twelfth-Century Renaissance was a time in which there were great “political, economic, religious, [and] intellectual” developments.⁶ Although the suitability of the use of the term “renaissance” for this period is often debated, during the twelfth century many intellectual, political, and social changes came together that caused a fundamental reshaping of the political, economic, demographic, and cultural forces that made up medieval

³ Edward Grant, *God & Reason in the Middle Ages* (United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 18.

⁴ Richard Kaeuper, “The Societal Role of Chivalry in Romance: Northwestern Europe,” *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, Ed. by Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105

⁵ Kaeuper, 98.

⁶ Haskins, 9.

Europe. The medieval renaissance encompassed a time of change, beginning in the late eleventh century and developing throughout the twelfth century. This period of change was a time in which individuals began to question and reformulate ideas about their religion, culture, and relationships; the questions they contemplated included, “What violence is licit, what illicit? Who decides and exercises violence? Does God bless any violence? How should gendered relationships be structured? What is piety and who governs its exercise?”⁷ For women, particularly elite women, this century saw their former roles as participants in political affairs lessened because of the rise of administrative kingship.⁸ Later in the century, the rise of courtly love ideals and the cult of the Virgin Mary combined to fundamentally reshape gendered ideals of proper behavior. The narratives this thesis examines were all produced in the context of cultural change that affected ideals of proper behavior for both men and women.

In order to understand the portrayals of women in violent narratives, it is first necessary to examine assumptions about the nature of women that twelfth-century writers were likely to have held. Medieval views of the world were based upon various sources including ancient philosophy, patristics, medical science, theology, and scripture. Much of the prevalent thought about women and gender in the medieval west was ultimately derived from the philosophy of Aristotle (d. 322 BCE). Although the bulk of his works were lost to the west after the Roman period, not to be recovered until the later twelfth century and beyond, Aristotle’s

⁷ Kaeuper, 98.

⁸ Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, “The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe: 500-1100,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3/4, Special Double Issue: Women’s History (Winter-Spring, 1973), 137-138.

ideas had permeated ancient thought to the extent that many of them persisted into the Middle Ages and many medieval ideas about the biology of gender were ultimately “Aristotelian.” Aristotle developed two prevalent views about women that persevered throughout the Middle Ages: gender polarity and women as incomplete men. Both ideas were based upon the differences between male and female genitalia. The idea of gender polarity rested on the fact that, “the male reproductive organs were outside the body, while the females’ were inside.”⁹ He assumed that the male penis was the polar opposite of the female clitoris, and that the female ovaries were simply incompletely formed male testicles, since reproductive organs begin inside the fetal body for both males and females and only drop outside the male body during gestation. Therefore, Aristotle considered woman an “incomplete male,” whose genitalia had never fully developed; her body was naturally “inferior to the completed, or perfect, male body.”¹⁰ Because of the incomplete physical development of women, Aristotle believed that men and women were binary opposites in which men embodied positive, or complete characteristics, while women embodied negative, or incomplete, characteristics. Men were active, women were passive; men were form, women were matter; men were perfection, women were imperfection.¹¹ In the Middle Ages masculinity was held as the human ideal and women suffered because of the “practice of

⁹ Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge), 177.

¹⁰ Cadden, 177.

¹¹ Jacqueline Murray, “Thinking About Gender: The Diversity of Medieval Perspectives,” *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, Edited by Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 2.

presenting the male as the standard against which the female is measured.”¹² Because men’s minds were more fully developed, they were more rational and thus able to overcome the limitations of the physical body, while women, with weaker minds, were more subject to their natural passions. The physical differences between men and women combined with their different social roles to create earth-bound females and spiritually inclined males.¹³

The ideas of gender polarity and of gender inferiority flourished in the Middle Ages and influenced thoughts concerning science and nature. Many ideas regarding personal characteristics were based upon “the Hippocratic theory of the four temperaments, identified as sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic. The temperaments, it was thought, shaped and determined human nature.”¹⁴ The “balance” of these four temperaments “determined a person’s health, personality, and even gender conformity.”¹⁵ By nature, women were considered cold and wet, lacking of the dry heat inherent in men, causing them to be fragile, soft, smooth, and inactive.¹⁶ Women were considered colder than men because their cold uteruses needed to be heated with male semen.¹⁷ Thus, women were thought to

¹² Cadden, 187.

¹³ Cadden, 188-195.

¹⁴ Fiona Maddocks, *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 175-176.

¹⁵ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 13.

¹⁶ Cadden, 170-177.

¹⁷ Maddocks, 176.

need “regular sexual intercourse to prevent their wombs from wandering in search of sperm or becoming poisoned by inactivity.”¹⁸

The above mentioned ideas about biological sex differences were taken in consideration with thoughts of gender differences in the minds of medieval individuals when formulating ideas about men and women in society and in relation to each other. Biblical writings, or Scripture, was a major source for the formulation of gender expectations in Christian society from the religion’s inception and certainly was still a frequently used source during the twelfth century. While specific women of the Bible provided either positive or negative examples to medieval women, certain passages presented special instructions for gender roles and ideas. In the creation account of Genesis 1:26-27, God says he created them “male and female” [*masculum et feminam*] in his “image and likeness” [*ad imaginem et similitudinem*].¹⁹ Although this Old Testament passage indicates a certain level of equality of men and women, other passages were used to prove women’s inferiority to men and to justify women’s submission to men in worldly society. For example in Genesis 2:18 God decides to create a helpmate for Adam: “And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself.”²⁰ When the creatures already created do not provide Adam with a “help like unto himself,” God makes woman from Adam’s rib.²¹

¹⁸ Helen Lemay, “Women and the Literature of Obstetrics and Gynecology,” *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, Ed. by Joel T. Rosenthal (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), 189.

¹⁹ Genesis 1:26-27.

²⁰ Genesis 2:18.

²¹ Genesis 2:22-24; “And the Lord God built the rib which he took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

The idea that woman was created as man's helpmate is furthered in Ecclesiasticus 17:5: "He [God] created of him [Adam] a helpmate like to himself, he gave them counsel, and a tongue, and eyes, and ears, and a heart to devise: and he filled them with the knowledge of understanding."²² The submission of women is further supported by 1 Corinthians 11:7-8, in which Paul advises that women should keep their heads covered because woman "is the glory of man" [*mulier autem gloria viri est*] rather than the "image and glory of God" [*imago et gloria est Dei*] like a man.²³ Paul further illustrates the subservient position of women in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 where he instructs women to remain silent in church.²⁴ Furthermore, in St. Paul's epistles to the Ephesians, he argues for wives' subservience to their husbands. This idea of female subservience is supported in Ephesians 5:21-22, in which Paul says, "let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church."²⁵ Although Paul argues for female subservience, he follows this argument with one for men's responsibility to love their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and delivered himself up for it."²⁶ Female

Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh."

²² Ecclesiasticus 17:5; "*creavit ex ipso adiutorium similem ipsi consilium et linguam et oculos aures et cor dedit illis excogitandi et disciplinam intellectus replevit illos.*"

²³ 1 Corinthians 11:7-8.

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; "Let women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak but to be subject, as also the law saith. But if they would learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church." [*"mulieres in ecclesiis taceant non enim permittitur eis loqui sed subditas esse sicut et lex dicit. si quid autem volunt discere domi viros suos interrogent turpe est enim mulieri loqui in ecclesia."*]

²⁵ Ephesians 5:21-22; "*mulieres viris suis subditae sint sicut Domino. quoniam vir caput est mulieris sicut Christus caput est ecclesiae.*"

²⁶ Ephesians 5:25; "*virii diligite uxores sicut et Christus dilexit ecclesiam et se ipsum tradidit pro ea.*"

subservience is further supported in St. Paul's letters to Timothy. 1 Tim 2:11-15 urges women to submission and silence;

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing-if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.²⁷

These scriptural passages were often cited as sources for women's subservient positions in medieval society. Male Christian writers would have been influenced by these teachings about gender roles, and they based many of their ideas regarding gender upon these Biblical guidelines.

In addition to Scriptural passages, much of medieval thought was based upon patristic writing by Christian theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries who maintained an influence on Christian ideas throughout the Middle Ages. Augustine (354-430), a Neo-Platonist, was among the most influential of the early church fathers.²⁸ His writings regarding the human soul affected the ways in which medieval individuals viewed gender. Augustine's early belief in Manichaeism influenced his "attitude to the human body and human sexuality."²⁹ Augustine's almost identical rules for men and women indicate a belief that men

²⁷ 1 Timothy 2:11-15; "*mulier in silentio discat cum omni subiectione. docere autem mulieri non permitto neque dominari in virum sed esse in silentio. Adam enim primus formatus est deinde Eva. et Adam non est seductus mulier autem seducta in praevaricatione fuit. salvabitur autem per filiorum generationem si permanserint in fide et dilectione et sanctificatione cum sobrietate.*"

²⁸ Augustine is noted as "the most important of the Latin church fathers," and as "the single greatest authority, after the Bible, in western Christian thought," by Marcia L. Colish; *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 25.

²⁹ Colish, 27.

and women could attain equal status in regards to spirituality.³⁰ Yet, it may be argued that Augustine assumed that unlike men, women were not made in the image of God; but he did prove that women were at least able to achieve *imago Dei* status in spirit.³¹ Yet, Augustine also maintained many beliefs that were detrimental to views of women, and he himself, unlike other church fathers both from his own time and from the Middle Ages, did not sustain female friendships. According to Rosemary Radford Ruether, Augustine asserted that “gender hierarchy is a part of the original design of creation, not something that happened only after the Fall.”³² He also posited that Adam only sinned along with Eve out of compassion for her plight, lest she be forced to live alone outside of paradise.³³ Furthermore, in his efforts to make Genesis 1:26-27³⁴ coincide with 1 Corinthians 11:7-8,³⁵ Augustine presented two solutions. First, he argued that in the Genesis passage, “male and female originally meant the union of the mind and soul,

³⁰ Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 36.

³¹ Judith Chelius Stark, “Augustine on Women: In God’s Image, but Less So,” *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine*, Ed. by Judith Chelius Stark (United States of America: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 216.

³² Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Augustine: Sexuality, Gender, and Women,” *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine*, Ed. by Judith Chelius Stark (United States of America: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 53.

³³ Ruether, 54.

³⁴ Genesis 1:26-27; “And he said: Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth. And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.” [*“et ait faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram et praesit piscibus maris et volatilibus caeli et bestiis universaeque terrae omnique reptili quod movetur in terra. et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam ad imaginem Dei creavit illum masculum et feminam creavit eos.”*]

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:7-8; “The man indeed ought not to cover his head: because he is the image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man.” [*“vir quidem non debet velare caput quoniam imago et gloria est Dei mulier autem gloria viri est. non enim vir ex muliere est sed mulier ex viro”*]

sapientia and *scientia*, the mind or wisdom being masculine, and the soul, which mediates sense knowledge, feminine.”³⁶ Therefore, the feminine part is the lower of the two and thus must be joined with its superior part to be in the *imago Dei*. Second, Augustine argues that women must be viewed through “two perspectives;”

as *homo* women too were human, had a share in the intellect, hence were made in the image of God and had a redeemable soul. But this intellect remained . . . a possession that women could not use autonomously as an agent in their own right. . . . In her bodily, sexual, and social nature woman is not *homo*, but *femina*, and as such represents the lower, sense perception part of the self and its temptations to sensual pleasure. Thus, as *femina*, women are not the image of God, but represent the sense world that should be dominated by male headship.³⁷

Therefore, Augustine’s view of women was negatively affected by his perceptions of their bodily inferiority; “the whole of his argument emphasizes that woman’s *imago Dei* dwells in her rational soul, which is identical with that of man. The duality between her *homo interior*, which shares in the superiority of man’s soul, and her *homo exterior*, which remains inferior because of her position as man’s helpmate, is sharply defined.”³⁸

In addition to his reconciliation of these scriptural passages from Genesis and Corinthians to the detriment of perceptions of women, Augustine presented negative views on women in regard to sexual intercourse. Not only did he blame women for seducing men into sexual acts, all of which Augustine believed were sinful, but he also asserted that women should never refuse their husbands’ sexual

³⁶ Ruether, 52.

³⁷ Ruether, 55.

³⁸ Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Thomas Aquinas* (Kampen, the Netherlands; Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1995), 29.

advances.³⁹ Augustine's "few letters to women show him as reserved and authoritarian with the female sex;" further, he prohibited his priests "from ever speaking to a woman alone, even a relative, a practice he himself followed as well."⁴⁰ Thus, although Augustine provided an example of a Church father who believed in at least the possibility of the spiritual equality of men and women, he developed many ideas that were detrimental to the views of women and female sexuality.

In addition to the influence of ancient philosophy, scientific knowledge, Scripture, and the early church fathers, twelfth-century contemporary thinkers also illustrated and influenced the prevailing ideas of their time. Many medieval men demonstrated their views regarding women through their correspondence with individual women. Men such as Anselm of Bec (1033-1109) and Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) both maintained relationships with women through their letter writing.

Anselm is a significant figure who must be included in a study of the twelfth century because, as Sally Vaughn argues, his "example provided a much-emulated model of love, compassion, dedication and integrity for his students, friends and admirers in his own lifetime; and for countless devoted disciples who knew him only by his words and deeds, from the twelfth century to the present."⁴¹ Furthermore, Anselm must be included in a study regarding women because much

³⁹ Ruether, 56.

⁴⁰ Ruether, 51.

⁴¹ Sally Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens of God: A Study of Anselm's Correspondence with Women* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002), 8.

of his work was written specifically for women.⁴² In his desire to aid his contemporaries, including women, in their spiritual lives, Anselm often discussed the Virgin Mary as an admirable model for women. He also regularly mentioned God's "forgiveness of and friendship with Mary Magdalene," in an effort to demonstrate that women as well as men could "foster a personal relationship with God."⁴³ Although Anselm would have been aware of the biological and gender ideas of his time, he did not reveal that he believed these gender differences affected women's spiritual well-being. Anselm's friendships with women appear to have been inspired by his belief that "women had the potential to be ideal temporal and spiritual friends, who could learn from [him] while also contributing to the development of his own spirituality."⁴⁴

Furthermore, Anselm's letters to women indicate that he believed they could overcome the negative characteristics attributed to femininity. His letters to women reveal models of behavior for women in specific roles; and these roles often place women on equal status to their male counterparts. For instance, a royal woman may be "an ideal wife who functions as an equal partner in the kingdom with her husband the king," and a married woman may take part in "an ideal partnership with the wife taking the role of guide and leader."⁴⁵ Anselm's beliefs in spiritual equality obviously pervaded his thoughts about men and

⁴² Elizabeth Robertson, "An Anchorhold of Her Own: Female Anchoritic Literature in Thirteenth-Century England," *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, Ed. Julia Bolton Holloway, Constance S. Wright, and Joan Bechtold (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1990), 173.

⁴³ Kristi Keuhn, "For You Are All One in Christ Jesus": St. Anselm's Spiritual Friendships with Women" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Missouri, Columbia, May 2002), 105.

⁴⁴ Keuhn, 107.

⁴⁵ Vaughn, 259.

women in society. His letters emphasize that “husband and wife are of such equal status that they must speak of their conjoined lives as ‘our life.’”⁴⁶ Anselm’s letters to women demonstrate that he did not hold the prevalent belief in the many negative characteristics inherent in females to apply to women he knew. In Anselm’s view of his society, as it was ordered by God, women maintained the crucial role as “handmaiden[s] of God,” with the “primary role” of teaching their husbands and children, thus placing them on equal footing with the bishop who was also to perform the vital role of teacher to his community.⁴⁷

Bernard of Clairvaux, who “could justly be called the spiritual leader of Western Europe during his lifetime,”⁴⁸ also displays the ability to portray women differently in thought and literature than they were believed to be generally. Although he maintained many of the ideas of his day regarding sex differences, women often acquired a more favorable characterization within his works. Robyn Kehoe Ramsey asserts that Bernard “drew from gendered stereotypes and religious images of women” and

though Bernard credits women with being able to exercise their own political power and authority, his tone, content, and dependence on standard images from his century show that he nevertheless sees women as prone to weakness and foolishness, in need of his wise counsel, ruled by their emotions, and spiritually valued not for their intellects or skills, but for their sexual purity as virgins or widows.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Vaughn, 262.

⁴⁷ Vaughn, 287-288.

⁴⁸ Robyn Kehoe Ramsey, “Women and the Feminine in the Letters of St. Bernard” (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Department of History, University of Missouri, Columbia, May 2002), 3.

⁴⁹ Ramsey, 1-2.

In his treatises and sermons Bernard used the Bible to show women favorably. He mentioned that according to St. Paul there was a “theological basis of the equal dignity of men and women.”⁵⁰ He explains that “the Old Testament writers’ emphatic insistence on the inferiority of woman, her congenital weakness, her bodily frailty, her ‘slippery’ mind, is all put right in Mary, who is blessed among women’.”⁵¹

Bernard’s view of women is further exemplified in his letters, in which he illustrates both the conventional gender theories of his time and his own belief that these models did not hold true in regards to all women. He demonstrates a high regard for individual women and only when chastising men does he discuss the negative qualities supposed on women by applying them to men.⁵² Thus, he shows the “underlying nature” of women in his writings of women other than Mary. He seems to think that women have an inherent weakness that they can overcome with proper devotion to God. He writes letters to women both lay and religious on a variety of issues. In a letter written to a nun, he urges her to decide whether she is like the foolish or the wise virgins from Matthew 25:1-13.⁵³ If she were one of the wise, then she would be able to overcome the negative female characteristics and be indispensable to her convent.

Bernard’s letters to lay women illustrate his view that women could transgress traditional gendered weaknesses to become masculine and therefore fit

⁵⁰ Dom Jean Leclercq, *Women and St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, Trans. by Marie-Bernard Saïd OSB (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), 24.

⁵¹ Leclercq, *Women*, 9-11.

⁵² Leclercq, *Women*, 17.

⁵³ *St. Bernard of Clairvaux: Seen Through his Selected Letters*, Trans. and intro. by Rev. Bruno Scott James, Foreword by Thomas Merton (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 162.

for public roles. In a letter to Melisende, Queen of Jerusalem (d. 1161), on the death of her husband Fulk V of Anjou (d. 1143), Bernard writes that since the king had died and her son was in his minority,

the eyes of all will be upon you, and on you alone the whole burden of the kingdom will rest. You must set your hand to great things and, although a woman, you must act as a man by doing all you have to do 'in a spirit prudent and strong'. You must arrange all things prudently and discreetly, so that all may judge you from your actions to be a king rather than a queen and so that the Gentiles may have no occasion for saying: Where is the king of Jerusalem? But you will say: Such things are beyond my power; they are great matters which far exceed my strength and my knowledge; they are the duties of a man and I am only a woman, weak in body, changeable of heart, not far-seeing in counsel nor accustomed to business.⁵⁴

Although Bernard acknowledges the general ideas about women in this letter, he also shows that he believes women could transcend the weakness of their sex with God's help should the situation demand masculine actions of them. Bernard appears to see women with masculine characteristics as individuals who overcome the limitations of their female nature with supernatural aid.

Bernard's ideas, along with Augustine's and Anselm's, reveal the contradictory nature of female characteristics and roles in medieval thought, literature, and reality. The "dual nature of women's position in medieval theory" incorporated the contradictory models of Mary versus Eve.⁵⁵ According to Marty Williams and Anne Echols,

During the Middle Ages, male authors often portrayed women as creatures from the pit of hell, sisters of Eve – weak, lusty, and generally corrupt. Other contemporary writers place females on a pedestal at the opposite end of the spectrum, claiming they were

⁵⁴ *Selected Letters of St. Bernard*, 219-220.

⁵⁵ Marty Williams and Anne Echols, *Between Pit and Pedestal: Women in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1994), 3.

potentially more like the Virgin Mary – beautiful, kind, sweet, pure, chaste, and obedient.⁵⁶

These portrayals of women as inhabiting either the “pit of hell” or the “pedestal of heaven”⁵⁷ present opposite and unrealistic characterizations. This dual characterization of women that appears in the Middle Ages arose in conjunction with the rapid growth in devotion to the cult of the Virgin Mary that occurred in the twelfth century.⁵⁸ The increased veneration of Mary “who is all-beautiful, who was greeted by the angel as full of grace, and whom Elizabeth called blessed among women”⁵⁹ created an increased focus upon the possibilities of positive characteristics in women. This adoration of Mary further led to a developing paradox of female characters in courtly literature. Women began to be portrayed as either chaste or sexually impure, making them either inaccessible or untouchable for men. Incorporating the idea of this female dichotomy into her study, Joan M. Ferrante argues that “the conflict in the lyric lover is between the right and wrong kind of love, devotion and lust.”⁶⁰

Although negative views of women dominated scholarly texts and were perpetuated in stereotypes, gender roles were somewhat fluid in thought, literature, and reality, allowing individuals to transcend them. While traits such as jealousy, deceit, weakness, animosity, treachery, timidity, and sensitivity were often culturally associated with the female sex, in practice, a few women were

⁵⁶ Williams and Echols, ix.

⁵⁷ Williams and Echols, 3.

⁵⁸ Dom Jean Leclercq and Dom François Vandenbroucke, and Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, Vol. II of *A History Christian Spirituality* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), 243 and 250.

⁵⁹ Leclercq, *Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, 254.

⁶⁰ Joan M. Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante* (Durham, North Carolina: The Labyrinth Press, 1985), 73.

able to avoid association with such negative qualities. The concept of the feminine male and the masculine female emerged so that women were able to take on qualities considered masculine to perform atypical roles. In this regard, gender became a continuum on which individuals could be located as acting more or less “feminine” or “masculine” as the occasion demanded. There were times in which it was appropriate to be a “manly woman” or a “womanly man,” and thus these individuals could earn the praise of contemporary chroniclers.

This thesis will consider texts from Scandinavia, Anglo-Norman England, and the Crusader Kingdoms. Viewing the portrayals of women’s actions in these texts reveals the wide range of roles for women that may appear to fall outside of the typical gender expectations of their societies. In violent situations, authors portray women both using their feminine characteristics to their advantage and taking on masculine characteristics in order to perform the acts necessary in their given situations; at times, chroniclers praise these violent actions, and at other times, chroniclers deplore women’s violent actions. This thesis proposes that chroniclers show praise and approval to women who act violently in defense of self, family, and Christendom, while the same chroniclers show disapproval of those women who act selfishly, violently without a purpose, or against the structures of family, crown, and church. These conclusions would not be startling in the least when applied to men; it is the argument of this thesis that women, too, were included in changing attitudes towards violent behavior that accompanied the twelfth-century renaissance. In order to more fully study the portrayals of

women in violent situations, an understanding of typical roles of women in these three areas of Europe is also necessary.

In medieval Scandinavian societies, women held diverse roles pertaining to reproduction, nurturing, household productivity, and also violent events. Women's main duties included marriage, reproduction, and family care. Marriages were at times arranged to either avoid or end a feud. This transfer of a woman from one family to another was a peaceful way in which women were participants in family feuds. Although many aspects of medieval Scandinavian women's lives appear to have been controlled by their male counterparts, they did inhabit their own space, as codified by law, where they maintained a level of authority while carrying out their daily tasks. Women's work was "within the household" and men's work was "everything outside."⁶¹ Nevertheless, much of women's daily activity comprised outdoor tasks. Women were in charge of preserving and preparing food, dairy production, gathering, laundry, helping others dress and undress, and spinning and weaving.⁶²

While the tasks of women do not appear controversial or confrontational, instances arose in the sagas in which women's daily tasks led to feuds and violence.⁶³ Although women "did not have access to performance roles in the center of the social-legal space [the Althing]," "the law code certainly suggests that women might have claimed an active role in the prosecution of blood feud

⁶¹ Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*, 117.

⁶² Jochens, *Women in Old Norse Society*.

⁶³ Zoe Borovsky, "Never in Public: Women and Performance in Old Norse Literature," *The Journal of American Folklore* (Vol. 112, No. 443. (Winter) 1999), 6.

and in matters of inheritance.”⁶⁴ Jesse Byock asserts that “Icelandic women did . . . frequently play an influential role in the working of advocacy. They contributed to the private consensus underlying decisions that determined relations between families and the outcome of feuds.”⁶⁵ The roles women acted out in perpetuating the violence of feuds include those of inciter, avenger, accomplice, and independent instigator.⁶⁶

Like their Scandinavian counterparts, medieval Anglo-Norman women too were expected to carry out reproductive and household productivity roles. This thesis deals particularly with the representations of Anglo-Norman royal women. Earlier queens, particularly Margaret of Scotland (d. 1093), were often looked to as examples of specific queenly behaviors.⁶⁷ In her biography (most likely written between 1104 and 1107), Margaret was depicted as “the ideal wife and mother as well as a politically active woman who took responsibility for maintaining the royal dignity, ordering the palace, influencing legislation and enforcing law, furthering commerce, maintaining peace, and above all promoting Christian charity and church reform.”⁶⁸ Although, first and foremost, the queen’s

⁶⁴ Borovsky, “Never in Public,” 12-13.

⁶⁵ Jesse Byock, *Medieval Iceland: Society, Sagas, and Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 134.

⁶⁶Jochens labels the roles for women as ‘whetter,’ warrior, prophetess/sorceress, and avenger (Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.)); Jesch diversely classifies women as troublemakers, vengeful housewives, and inciters (Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1991), 182-191); and Borovsky defines the actions of females as “mourning, whetting, goading, [and] threatening” (Borovsky, “Never in Public,” 16).

⁶⁷ St. Margaret was often used not only because of her saintly nature, but also because of her familial connection to Maud and Matilda; she was the grandmother of both Maud and Matilda.

⁶⁸ Lois Huneycutt., “Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos,” *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, Ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (United States: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 134.

duty was to provide an heir to the throne, and the biographer emphasized the importance of traditional roles as mother and peacemaker, she also helped her husband politically. This political aid often necessitated the participation of royal women in violence. Queens “participated at the royal curia, witnessed royal writs, and took part in the *coram regis*; they governed in the kings’ absences, extended patronage to churchmen and artists, judged suits, and interceded with their husbands to obtain mercy or benefits for others.”⁶⁹

Anglo-Norman chroniclers of the mid-twelfth century had a particularly apt reason to narrate the actions of royal women within their queenly roles. The succession crisis following the death of King Henry I (d. 1135) brought attention to two powerful women standing to profit from the outcome of the ensuing civil war. These two prominent women were Matilda of Boulogne (d. 1151), wife of King Stephen (d. 1154), and the English princess Matilda, known as the Empress, and usually called “Maud”⁷⁰ (d. 1167). Stephen, Henry’s nephew, claimed the throne after his death, although Maud had accepted oaths from the leading magnates promising to accept her as her father’s heir. This controversy led to a lengthy civil war in which Matilda and Maud played vital parts as inciters or leaders of violent acts and as peacemakers. The chroniclers’ portrayals of these two women, both positively and negatively framed, reveal a continued use in the

⁶⁹ Heather J. Tanner, “Queenship: Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc? The Case of Queen Matilda III of England (1135-1152),” *Eleanor of Aquitaine Lord and Lady*, Ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 138.

⁷⁰ The Empress Matilda lived in Germany as the betrothed and then the wife of Emperor Henry V from about 1111 until Henry’s death in 1125, and she adopted the name Maud, a Germanic version of Matilda.

traditional roles for women in violent situations as well as a transformation of the roles to fit the specific situation of a succession crisis.

Like the Scandinavian women and the Anglo-Norman royal women, women during the First Crusade and in the Crusader Kingdom were expected to carry out traditional gender roles; yet, the expected feminine roles were somewhat transformed because of the atypical situation of the crusades. Women still had reproductive and household roles, but they also had roles within the events of the crusade. Women could urge men to participate in the crusades. Many women remained home, taking care of the household and estate while the men were on pilgrimage. Also, while remaining home, women were able to offer spiritual and material support through their prayers and offerings. While women were not supposed to crusade without the permission or accompaniment of their male kin, they were able to participate in the armed pilgrimage. Female participants carried out both stereotypical roles of female camp followers, such as washerwoman and prostitute, and other roles involved in the violence of the events, such as “when they take on the supposedly ‘male’ role of warrior” in which “they are presented as ‘honorary men’, fighting ‘manfully’ in spite of the disadvantage of their sex.”⁷¹ Women’s involvement in the violence of the events was carried out in such a way that they could be considered comparable to traditional female roles seen in literature and reality. For example, women bringing men water during battle would be an example of a nutritive role of women transferred to the battlefield.

⁷¹ Michael R. Evans, “‘Unfit to Bear Arms’: The Gendering of Arms and Armour in Accounts of Women on Crusade,” *Gendering the Crusades*, Ed. by Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 45.

The following chapters will examine the traditional feminine roles of inciters of violence, actors in violence, and as peacemakers. Scandinavian sagas, Anglo-Norman chronicles, and Crusader chronicles of the twelfth century will be analyzed because of the benefits noted above concerning the relative peace of the period and the establishment and reformulation of ideas regarding gender roles that took place in that era of intellectual, political, and social change. Looking at these three sets of sources from distinct geographic regions illuminates the continuance of chroniclers' uses of these traditional roles as well as the alterations in the portrayals of women in these roles.

Chapter Two

SCANDINAVIAN PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN

Out of the three groups of authors that this thesis will focus upon, the Scandinavian saga writers were the farthest removed temporally from the events they described. The written sagas are recordings of orally-transmitted stories that followed particular patterns and techniques leading to formulaic portrayal of events. The sagas reveal a turbulent social structure containing precise protocols for initiating, conducting, and resolving disputes and feuds. Saga writers continually portray women acting in a male-dominated society as inciters of violence, as executors of violent deeds, and as peacemakers in the highly regularized system of feuding, in which they act either with or without the support or consent of the male members of their families.

Forty works are still in existence that detail events in Norse history beginning around the year 870, roughly the time of Iceland's settlement.¹ These works were written in Iceland in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. Although most of the saga writers are known, the creators of the original oral tales remain anonymous. Literacy accompanied the introduction of Christianity to Scandinavian society generally in the post-Viking Age, and hence the "rich ancient Viking oral traditions of myth and legend" were converted "into written literature" after Christianization.² Since the ability to write was a byproduct of the introduction of Christianity and Christianity was officially accepted in Iceland

¹ Robert Kellogg, "Introduction," *The Sagas of Icelanders: a Selection*, Preface Jane Smiley, Intro. Robert Kellogg (New York: Penguin, 1997), xv-lvii.

² Kellogg, xvii.

in 1000 (before the sagas under discussion were written down), it may be argued that the saga writers, at times, imposed Christian ideals upon the largely non-Christian past. Marlene Ciklamini asserts that “in a society which prided itself on its self-government by law, on its recent conversion to Christianity, and on the kinship of its leading families to prominent settlers from Norway, writing became a means to preserve and transmit its body of law, Christian values and legends, genealogies, and historical lore.”³ Characters may be negatively depicted to elucidate the advantages of accepting Christianity. At times, the portrayal of women in violent situations is given a negative illustration to highlight the negative attributes of non-Christian women. For example, a woman capable of magic would be depicted negatively. Also, individuals behaving violently may be expected to have a negative portrayal. Yet, the illustrations of women involved in violent situations do not appear to be entirely or even mostly negative.

The historical relevance of sagas is continually debated. The large time gap between the events described and the actual recording of the stories as well as discrepancies found among various versions of the same tale present complications. While sagas should not be considered the equivalent of diplomatic documents, they do offer insight into the world of the Scandinavians and a great deal of evidence supports historical use of such sources. According to Richard Kellogg, the sagas “synthesize history, myth, ethical values, and descriptions of actual life.”⁴ Therefore, these sagas, in which the events take place in historically and geographically accurate settings, may be taken as a loose rendering of

³ Marlene Ciklamini, *Snorri Sturluson* (United States of America: Twayne Publishers a Division of G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, 1978), 35.

⁴ Kellogg, xviii.

historical events and as at least a semi-realistic representation of Viking-Age Scandinavian social norms and cultural patterns.

Although the oral nature of Scandinavians' culture presents challenges when using their written accounts as historical sources, the saga writers, who believed they were recording historical events, used several devices to suggest historical accuracy. Although the veracity of the events is not in question here, it is important to note the ways in which authors authenticated their sources and how the sources are relevant historically. These sagas preserve and portray general cultural experience and expectations. While recording tales previously transmitted orally, saga writers maintained authenticity by preserving certain techniques found in oral tales. First they "used rhetoric to give the impression that they were relating events as they happened."⁵ Second, they incorporated highly formulaic Scaldic verses into the sagas that were "a safeguard against corruption during oral transmission."⁶ Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241), himself a prolific saga writer, argues for the historic accuracy of these skaldic poems from the Viking Age:

We consider everything as true that is found in those poems about their exploits and battles. It is the habit of poets to praise him most in whose presence they are; but no one would have dared to recite to him deeds which everyone who listened, as well as he himself, knew to be fantasy and falsehood. That would have been mockery and not praise.⁷

⁵ Kellogg, xxvi.

⁶ E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), lxxiv.

⁷ Kellogg, xxviii.

Third, writers used extensive genealogies to establish the historicity of the sagas' main characters.⁸

The life of Snorri Sturluson, the most prolific saga writer of the twelfth century, exemplifies the typical life for a Scandinavian saga writer. He was fostered from a young age. His early education included “not only ecclesiastical subjects, but also a sound knowledge of the law, genealogies, the history of Norway . . . stories and sagas about prominent Icelanders of the past, and the art of skaldic poetry.”⁹ This education prepared him to be a chieftain, to hold the office of lawspeaker, and to be a scald and historian. Snorri, himself, was involved in feuds throughout his entire life and was killed in 1241 during the events of a feud. Snorri, “with the apprehension of a poet educated at a school at which book learning was prized, . . . felt compelled to commit to parchment the myths and heroic stories used in poetry and skaldic stanzas which illustrated poetic matter and distinct forms. He thus attempted to revive an ancient art which could survive no longer by oral transmission.”¹⁰ The situations of the feuds encountered by the authors themselves may have been quite similar to those they were recording despite the large time gap between the writers' time and the time of the events in the tales they wrote.

⁸ The events of the sagas may also be verified through archaeological discoveries, and corroboration by other historical Scandinavian sources such as the *Islandingabók*, the *Landnamabók*, and historical sources in other languages such as Asser's *Life of King Alfred*.

⁹ Ciklamini, 20-21.

¹⁰ Ciklamini, 23.

The sagas chosen as examples in this chapter come from the group of sagas “known as the sagas of the past.”¹¹ The sagas of the past “focus on the period from 850 to 1100 and encompass most of the (mainly Norwegian) kings’ sagas and all of the sagas of the Icelanders, also known as the family sagas, the flower of Icelandic literature.”¹² They were written in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and include examples of female characters in traditional roles. The specific sagas discussed in this thesis include *Egil’s Saga*, *Gisli’s Saga*, *Eirik’s Saga*, *Graenlendinga Saga*, and *Njal’s Saga*. *Egil’s Saga* was most likely written by Snorri around 1230.¹³ The unknown author of *Gisli’s Saga* wrote around the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁴ Both *Eirik’s Saga* and *Graenlendinga Saga* relate events regarding the Scandinavians’ early expeditions to North America. These sagas, known as the *Vinland Sagas*, were written by unknown authors in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.¹⁵ *Njal’s Saga* was written by an anonymous author around 1280.¹⁶ Although this saga was written later than the other sources considered in this thesis, it provides invaluable illustrations of feuding women and is similar in character to *Egil’s Saga* and *Gisli’s Saga*.

¹¹ Jenny Jochens, “Old Norse Sources on Women,” *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, Ed. by Joel T. Rosenthal, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1990), 157.

¹² Jochens, “Old Norse Sources on Women,” 157.

¹³ Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, “Introduction,” *Egil’s Saga*, Advisory Ed. Betty Radice, Trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 7.

¹⁴ Vésteinn Ólason, “Introduction,” *Gisli Sursson’s Saga*, Trans. Martin S. Regal (London: Penguin Books, 1997), vii.

¹⁵ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, “Introduction,” *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*, Trans. With an introduction by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1965), 11.

¹⁶ Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, “Introduction,” *Njal’s Saga* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1960), 9.

Furthermore, it offers a particularly valuable view of saga writers' references to Christianity because it is set during Iceland's conversion to Christianity.

Although the sagas provide a hazy picture of the exact events in Scandinavian history, they offer a more focused picture of the workings of Scandinavian society. The Viking Age Scandinavians' concern with honor and feuds is prevalent in their literature.¹⁷ Women's everyday responsibilities continued throughout the "killings and lawsuits [that] take place against a background of everyday life and work,"¹⁸ and women worked to maintain both their households and their own honor.¹⁹ Saga writers' depictions of women reveal female everyday responsibilities including their roles as inciters, violent actors, and peacemakers. Women appear in these roles in formulaic representations, often using their femininity to their advantage within these specific roles.

Female inciters could encourage both the beginning and the continuance of feuds. Encouraging or berating men was a key way in which women incited feuds and is the most common example of female involvement in Icelandic feuds in the sagas. These narratives often depict women taking on a nagging or insulting demeanor; the female characters urge men to violence by citing the offences of those they wish the men to take action against, thus indirectly insulting the men by recounting the words and deeds of others.

In *Njal's Saga*, the author illustrates Hrodny, the mother of Njal's illegitimate son, Hoskuld, urging Njal's legitimate son, Skarp-Hedin, to avenge

¹⁷ Jesse L. Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 2.

¹⁸ Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, 186-187.

¹⁹ Borovsky, "Never in Public," 32.

her son's death. She says, "I entrust to you, Skarp-Hedin, the task of avenging your brother; and even though he was not legitimate, I am sure that you will do it well, for you are not a man to give up easily."²⁰ Hrodny's speech plays upon Skarp-Hedin's sense of courage, honor, and determination. When it takes the men time to react to Hrodny's encouragement, Bergthora, Njal's wife, adds her goading to Hrodny's and criticizes the men, "You men amaze me. You kill when killing is scarcely called for, but when something like this happens you chew it over and brood about it until nothing comes of it."²¹ In this instance, the saga writer represents the women's clear sense of vengeance. Furthermore, the saga writer illustrates Bergthora urging the men to quick action so that the priest would not be able to urge them to peaceful settlement when he arrived. In this representation, the women are clearly urging violence in contrast to the new Christian ideals of the period. Even though nonviolent action might have resolved the conflict in this instance, the author shows the women falling upon the traditional female role of goading, thus perhaps presenting both the women and the traditional role in which they act in a negative light. Yet, perhaps the author is portraying these women as possessing a stronger sense of family honor than the men, who are slow to act.

The author of *Egil's Saga* provides Queen Gunnhild, the tenth-century wife of the Norwegian king Eirik Bloodaxe, as a prime example of a goading

²⁰ *Njal's Saga*, Tran. With an Intro. by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1960), 214.

²¹ *Njal's Saga*, 214.

woman.²² Her role in the sagas was so prominent that Jochens asserts that “looming behind all these women [inciters of the sagas] is a historical figure, the awesome Queen Gunhildr, daughter, wife and mother of kings, known for her power and cruelty, admired for her beauty and generosity, feared because of her magic, cunning, sexual insatiability, and—to be sure—her goading.”²³ In *Egil’s Saga*, she attempts to goad her husband to act against Egil. When King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild are in exile from Norway and living in York, the shipwrecked Egil is brought before the king. First Gunnhild asks her husband, “Why not kill Egil here and now . . . or have you forgotten what he’s done?”²⁴ Then in the event that King Eirik or any of the other men in attendance had forgotten, Gunnhild cites Egil’s many offenses: he has “killed your friends and your kinsmen, even your own son, and slandered you! Can anyone say where royalty has ever been treated like that?”²⁵ Gunnhild’s malice against Egil will not be pacified, especially not by the suggestion that Egil create praise poetry for the king to make amends for his offenses. The saga writer relates that Gunnhild replies, “We don’t want to hear his words of praise . . . have him taken out and killed, Eirik.”²⁶ King Eirik allows Egil his life, at least for the night. In the subsequent meeting with Egil, Gunnhild attempts to goad Eirik with assaults on his power and honor; she retorts to the argument for allowing Egil to travel freely for a week made before the king’s table,

²² Jenny Jochens, “The Female Inciter in the Kings’ Sagas,” *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 102 (1987), 116.

²³ Jochens, “The Female Inciter,” 116.

²⁴ *Egil’s Saga*, Advisory Ed. Betty Radice, Trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards. (London, New York, and Toronto: Penguin Books, 1976), 154-155.

²⁵ *Egil’s Saga*, 155.

²⁶ *Egil’s Saga*, 155.

If Egil is given a week to ride away from here unhindered, he'll have time to reach King Athelstan. And there's no need for Eirik to fool himself, every king is proving to be a better man than he is, though time was when nobody would have thought he lacked either the will or the way to take revenge on a man like Egil.²⁷

Although Gunnhild's goading does not win over Egil's praise poetry, it does affect the final outcome of the encounter. While Eirik allows Egil to leave, he does not establish peace between his own kinsmen and Egil.²⁸ The writer uses Gunnhild to convey the gravity of Egil's offenses against Eirik and his kinsmen. Thus, the author of *Egil's Saga* shows Gunnhild having a clearer sense of honor and vengeance than her husband and goading him through assaults on his own honor.²⁹

While inciters are perhaps the most recognizable female saga characters, the writers also portray women, both positively and negatively, as prominent actors in violent proceedings. The negative illustrations arise from women acting against their husbands' wishes or acting to the detriment of the larger peace of the Scandinavian people, while the positive illustrations arise from the women defending their and their family's honor and physical safety. The roles of female violent actors vary in degree of violence. Some women act as auxiliary characters to male violent actors, other women order others to act violently on their behalf, and still others take violent actions on their own.

²⁷ *Egil's Saga*, 157.

²⁸ *Egil's Saga*, 162.

²⁹ Further examples of female inciters may be found in the other sagas studied here. For example, in *Njal's Saga*, Hallgerd begins a feud by arranging the theft of food stuffs from her and her husband Gunnar's neighbor, Otkell's storehouse along with the burning of the storehouse.

Freydis, the sister of Leif Eiriksson, who appears in both the *Graenlendinga Saga* and *Eirik's Saga*, is a formidable actor in the sagas. The author of *Graenlendinga Saga* portrays her inciting a feud with the brothers Helgi and Finnbogi who came to Vinland with her. Freydis goes to the brothers' house and establishes peace with them. But, when she arrives home and her husband Thorvard asks why she is "so cold and wet," she replies that when she went to ask the brothers for a larger ship, "They struck me and handled me very roughly. But you, you wretch, would never avenge either my humiliation or your own. . . . unless you avenge this, I am going to divorce you."³⁰ The saga writer shows the effect of Freydis' goading, writing that Thorvard was roused to action because he could "bear her taunts no longer,"³¹ so he and his men go kill the brothers and all of their men. The author writes that Thorvard and his men "broke in [to the brothers' house] while all the men were asleep, seized them and tied them up, and dragged them outside one by one. Freydis had each of them put to death as soon as he came out."³² When all of the men are killed, Thorvard and his men are squeamish about killing the women; the writer illustrates Freydis taking matters into her own hands yelling, "Give me an axe,"³³ and she kills the five women herself. The author illustrates Freydis as a vindictive and unreasonable woman, who manipulates her husband into acting and also kills her opponents among her own people. The saga writer uses her to illustrate inappropriate female behavior;

³⁰ *Graenlendinga Saga*, The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America, Trans. with an introduction by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson, (New York: Penguin Books, 1965), 69.

³¹ *Graenlendinga Saga*, 69.

³² *Graenlendinga Saga*, 69.

³³ *Graenlendinga Saga*, 69.

she does not work to ensure her family's survival; rather, she causes unnecessary strife with her household's neighbors and allies by breaking her agreement, goading her husband into action through false testimony, and killing her allies.

Contrary to this malicious image of Freydis in *Graenlindinga Saga*, the author of *Eirik's Saga* offers a more benevolent image of her. Although Freydis is more favorably depicted in this saga than in the previous one, she still goads men into action. When the *Skraelings* or Native Americans attack the Icelanders in Vinland, extremely pregnant, Freydis shouts, "Why do you flee from such pitiful wretches, brave men like you? You should be able to slaughter them like cattle. If I had weapons, I am sure I could fight better than you."³⁴ But her pregnant body is revealed as a weapon as she runs onto the field, exposes one breast, and slaps it with a sword, causing the *Skraelings* to retreat. Thus, she begins by goading the men, but when she does not elicit an immediate response, she takes matters into her own hands. The author uses Freydis as a protector of her people, taking on additional duties to protect them, placing her body between the men and the *Skraelings*; here Freydis' character is a positive and active force.

Women active in violent situations are further found in *Njal's Saga*. In this saga, Hallgerd and Bergthora, the wives of two good friends, Gunnar and Njal respectively, perpetuate a feud independent of their husbands by giving orders to or asking help from socially inferior men. Their feud begins with an exchange of insults. Bergthora asks Hallgerd to make room for another woman. Hallgerd, who refuses to move "like some outcast hag," tells Bergthora that she has "turtle-

³⁴ *Eirik's Saga*, *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*, Trans. with an introduction by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson (New York and Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1965), 100.

back nails³⁵ on every finger, and Njal is beardless.”³⁶ Bergthora replies ““But your husband Thorvald wasn’t beardless, yet that didn’t stop you from having him killed.”³⁷ After these insults are exchanged, Hallgerd attempts to urge Gunnar to take action, but since she was not successful, she arranges the murder of Bergthora’s house-jarl while their husbands are away.³⁸ This murder sparks a feud between the women in which they orchestrate the killing of each other’s male servants and kin while their husbands are away at the Thing each year. Gunnar and Njal repeatedly exchange monetary reparations. During the next Althing, Bergthora tells her new servant Atli that ““today you are to kill him [Kol] if you want to please me.”³⁹

The author uses the feud perpetuated by these women to exemplify the possibility of women acting independently of their husbands through feuding. Furthermore, the author portrays both women negatively, acting against their husbands’ wishes and breaking the peace that their husbands not only had established, but were also working to maintain. For example, Gunnar once told Hallgerd before he left for the Althing, ““Behave yourself while I am away, and don’t try any mischief on my friends.”⁴⁰ And Njal says to Gunnar, ““This is bad, that my wife should have broken our settlement and had your servant killed.”⁴¹ The women, however, continue. Njal tries to send away his servant, Atli, when

³⁵Sir George Webbe Dasent translates turtle-back nails, as “hangnails;” (*The Story of Burnt Njal*, Trans. Sir George Webbe Dasent, Intro. E.O.G. Turville-Petre (New York: E.P. Dutton and CO INC, 1957), 59).

³⁶*Njal’s Saga*, 97-98.

³⁷*Njal’s Saga*, 98.

³⁸*Njal’s Saga*, 99.

³⁹*Njal’s Saga*, 102.

⁴⁰*Njal’s Saga*, 98.

⁴¹*Njal’s Saga*, 103.

he was the man who was most likely the next to be killed.⁴² Gunnar, like Njal, attempts to curb his wife's feuding. He tells his kinsman, who comes to stay with him, "I would advise you, like all my kinsmen, not to respond to my wife's promptings, for she indulges in many things that go directly against my wishes."⁴³ In these passages, these women have no difficulty in taking independent actions in the feud waged to maintain their own personal honor regardless of family and community interests.

In contrast to these women acting against their husband's desires, the author of *Gisli's Saga* uses Gisli's wife Aud to exemplify women taking action on their husbands' behalf. She is portrayed as an ideal wife, remaining loyal to her husband throughout his outlawry. At the beginning of the feud, Aud is instrumental in locking the door behind Gisli as he leaves to kill Thorgim and unlocking it when he returns.⁴⁴ Later, when Gisli is an outlaw and one of his enemies offers Aud money to tell him Gisli's location, she hits him with the money, drawing blood. She says, "Take that for your gullibility . . . There was never any hope that I would render my husband into your hands . . . Take this now for your cowardice and your shame, and remember . . . that a woman has struck you."⁴⁵ The author describes a woman, without nearby male support, aiming a direct personal insult at a man's honor, showing her courage and loyalty by her actions. Later in the narrative, Aud and their foster daughter fight together with clubs for Gisli. Gisli praises his wife's efforts saying, "I knew long ago that

⁴² *Njal's Saga*, 104.

⁴³ *Njal's Saga*, 109.

⁴⁴ *Gisli Sursson's Saga*, Trans. Martin S. Regal, (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 27-29.

⁴⁵ *Gisli's Saga*, 59.

I had married well, but never realized till now that the match was as good as this.”⁴⁶ The author provides Aud as an example of the “overwhelming influence of women on the lives of their husbands and families and their decisive part in the action of the sagas.”⁴⁷ The author shows Aud possessing a sense of familial pride and honor and a willingness to insult the honor of men who would belittle hers. The saga writer uses Gisli’s words to emphasize the positive nature of Aud’s violent actions on his behalf.

The proliferation of strong women taking part in feuds and violent acts as perpetrators of violence tends to overshadow the image of women as peacemakers. This role of women is perhaps less often employed by saga writers because of the lack of fanfare and drama surrounding the actions and words of peacemakers. The central place of feuds in Icelandic sagas also plays a part in relegating small roles to female peacemakers for two reasons; one, if the woman was successful in preventing a feud, most likely the story would not be told in a saga; and two, official arbitration was performed by men in legal settings. Thus, the authors did not frequently employ the character of female peacemakers and when they were included, these women’s efforts were often unsuccessful. Examples of successful peacemakers most often include women who plead for the lives of their male kin, making evident the negative consequences for their own lives should they be deprived of the man in question. Women who urge members of their own kin group to cease violent actions are most often unsuccessful in their

⁴⁶ *Gisli’s Saga*, 65.

⁴⁷ Jenny Jochens, “Medieval Icelandic Heroine: Fact or Fiction?” *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 17 (1986), 39.

peacemaking activities, but the authors often use these women as seers who warn of bad ends should their admonitions not be heeded.

Imploring for the lives of male kin was one way in which writers show women achieving peace. In *Egil's Saga*, Egil is moved to spare the life of Armod because of the imploring of Armod's wife and daughter, who "leaped to their feet and started begging Egil not to kill him."⁴⁸ In this circumstance, Egil spares his life "for their [the women's] sake" and for the sake of being "decent."⁴⁹ The writer illustrates Armod's wife and daughter acting as mediators between the men by evoking sympathy. The authors often used women as 'protectors' of men in this manner, emphasizing their stake in the safety of their male kin.

Another way in which authors portrayed women carrying out the function of peacemaker was through words urging men either to stop fighting or to seek peaceful arbitration. The main feud in *Gisli's Saga* is instigated inadvertently through the gossip of Aud and Asgerd, the wives of the brothers Gisli and Thorkel, respectively. Thorkel overhears a conversation between Asgerd and Aud. This conversation occurs while they were in "the women's area,"⁵⁰ where they felt safe from being overheard by men, and implied that both women, before marriage, desired men other than their eventual husbands.⁵¹ Although their intent was not to begin a feud, their attempts to dissuade the men from violence fail. Once Aud and Asgerd are aware of Thorkel's presence, they decide to use

⁴⁸ *Egil's Saga*, 189.

⁴⁹ *Egil's Saga*, 189.

⁵⁰ *Gisli's Saga*, 14.

⁵¹ *Gisli Saga*, 14.

feminine actions to avoid the trouble that would come of their gossip.⁵² Asgerd plans to “put [her] arms around Thorkel’s neck when [they] are in bed and say it’s a lie,”⁵³ while Aud plans to tell Gisli exactly what happened and ask if he has a solution. Aud and Asgerd did not want a feud to begin, but once their bickering was overheard by a man, they were not able to be successful peacemakers because the insults that damaged the honor of certain men could not be disregarded or rescinded. The saga author illustrates the unguarded speech that women used while in segregated company as well as the feminine techniques available to them when desiring to influence the behavior of their husbands. Although the unguarded speech of these two women causes violence to ensue that will destroy close friendships, the author shows these women using the means they had available to them as women to attempt to rectify the situation.

In *Njal’s Saga*, Gunnar’s mother, Rannveig is an example of a woman entreating both men and women to remain peaceful. In his last battle, Gunnar says he will shoot at his attackers with their own weapons so that they would be greatly shamed. His mother responds to this exclaiming, “Don’t stir them up again when they have just withdrawn.”⁵⁴ In this instance, the author uses Rannveig as an example of both peacemaker and seer. She urges her son to take heed as she predicts a bad end for him should he continue on his chosen course. Earlier, the writer also describes Rannveig’s attempt to stop Hallgerd’s feud with Bergthora. Rannveig reprimands Hallgerd saying, “Housewives around here

⁵² *Gisli’s Saga*, 15.

⁵³ *Gisli’s Saga*, 15.

⁵⁴ *Njal’s Saga*, 179.

have managed well enough without resorting to manslaughter.”⁵⁵ Although it is far more common to see women portrayed imploring men to cease fighting, in this instance Rannveig’s son’s well-being and hence the stability of her own life are directly affected by Hallgerd’s actions. The author depicts Rannveig as a wise woman, who urges those around her to peaceful solutions. Yet, while her peaceful urgings fit with the Christian ideals of the author’s time, her representation as a seer or predictor of future events would have presented a fault in the author’s positive illustration of her.

The saga writers’ depictions and uses of women illuminate not only the roles of women in medieval Scandinavian society, but also the ideas of the writers themselves. The authors reveal that the daily tasks of women related to their families’ survival and maintenance of family honor. Saga writers often depict women’s tasks as involved in the events of the feuds that were a prevalent part of their societies. They used female characters to further their plots through goading men and taking actions, this in effect gave the male writers “the advantage of being able to confirm sexual stereotypes of female vengefulness and irrationality, while at the same time getting the benefit of their counsel and having someone to blame other than themselves if the strategy should fail.”⁵⁶ Women, thus, were available as scapegoats in the event of a negative outcome to feuding.

The saga writers portrayed women acting in feuds, initiating, perpetuating, and resolving violent situations even though they were barred from formal legal

⁵⁵ *Njal’s Saga*, 99.

⁵⁶ Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller, *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland: Ljósvetninga Saga and Valla-Ljóts Saga* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 21.

proceedings.⁵⁷ They depict women in formulaic ways and in roles that would have been recognizable to their audience in order to maintain credibility and authenticity. The authors chose to use women in specific ways, showing their vital role in society and in maintaining family honor. Female characters' involvement in the violence of the feuds ranges from gathering information, aiding in escape, instigating a feud (purposefully or inadvertently), aiding in plotting and killing, physically fighting, and acting as peacemakers. The saga writers' most frequent use of women in their narratives is as inciters. Although the writers used images of women in specific ways to suit their narratives, these uses of women do not appear to be intentionally negative, but rather they are used to further the narrative, to depict realistic situations and occurrences (even to depict the actual happenings of history), and to provide a reasonable excuse for male actions (in the case of "goaders," men could reveal women as those initiating the events of feuds).

Within the sagas, the illustrations of women in the three traditional female roles in violent situations (inciter, actor, and peacemaker) appear in characters described with formulaic language. The saga writers use these stock characters and roles in their recordings of the original tales. They relay events that could have happened, but they often invent the speeches and dialogues of their characters. In the case of the Scandinavian writers, these images of women were used to further their stories about the feuding in the society. While the authors at times included a positive or negative light on the actions and words of their female characters taking part in violent situations implying an imposition of their

⁵⁷ Borovsky, "Never in Public," 11.

own Christian ideals upon the situations about which they wrote, they do not appear to seriously alter the original telling of the tale or the traits of the characters of the story. Portrayals of women as goaders, actors, and peacemakers take on more positive and negative depictions and more overtly gendered depictions in the Anglo-Norman chronicles that will be discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, the portrayals of women in these roles in violent situations will take on more religiously defined positive and negative depictions in the crusader chronicles that will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Chapter Three

ANGLO-NORMAN PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN

Twelfth-century English chroniclers, like their Scandinavian contemporaries, illustrated women participating in the violence that was inherent in their society. The chroniclers who wrote accounts of the twelfth-century English civil war illustrate the many ways in which women could participate in the conflict and further their own causes. This war, occurring after the death of Henry I, was between Henry's daughter Maud and Henry's nephew Stephen. Since Maud was out of the country at the time of Henry's death and had married Geoffrey of Anjou without the consent of the magnates, Stephen garnered much support in his usurpation of the throne that was promised to Maud by oath before her father's death. Maud took many actions on her own behalf and Stephen's wife, Matilda, also took many actions on her and her husband's behalf. Unlike the Scandinavian accounts, the Anglo-Norman accounts of women in violent situations often contain overt judgments of the women and specific mention of the feminine or masculine characteristics of the individual woman. While the Anglo-Norman chroniclers make use of the traditional roles for women in violent situations of inciter, actor, and peacemaker, the time, location, and situation in which they lived as well as their own partisanship affected their depictions of these women.

Although the conversations written in chronicles are often more invention than recording, these texts provide an invaluable resource for information regarding Anglo-Norman women. The medieval English chroniclers were mostly

male, middle-age or older, from the landholding classes, either regular or secular clergy, and showed violence as ““contrary to the natural order.””¹ Chronicles often recount war related events, and in this regard chroniclers have a “tendency to depict war as panorama of heroic protagonists”² in which men were able to prove their characters.³ Yet, women also figure prominently in the accounts.

While chroniclers portray women participating in the violence, often they describe females’ characters with words such as “masculine spirit” or “man’s resolution” that show that they thought of violent actors in male terms. The chroniclers, like the saga writers, depict women as inciters of and participants in violence, and as peacemakers encouraging a cessation of the violence that could easily disrupt their lives; but, unlike the saga writers, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers discussed here are primarily concerned with the actions of two specific women who fought on opposite sides of the war of succession that followed the death of King Henry I in 1135. Near-contemporary chronicles of the events of 1135-1152 include Orderic Vitalis’ *Ecclesiastical History*, William of Malmesbury’s *Historia Novella*, and the anonymously written *Gesta Stephani*. Orderic Vitalis (b. 1075), a monk, wrote his thirteen volumes of the *Ecclesiastical History*, which relate the history of England from the birth of Christ to his present time, after he was instructed by his abbot to write a history of his abbey.⁴ He,

¹ Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 61-64.

² Given- Wilson, 110.

³ Given-Wilson, 111.

⁴ Véronique Gazeau, “Orderic Vitalis,” *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, Vol. II: K-Z*, Edited by Andre Vauchez in conjunction with Barrie Dobson and Michael Lapidge, English trans. by Adrian Walford (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000), 1050.

therefore, wrote to record church history rather than to promote a particular side in the civil conflict that was taking place around him, although his biases are evident. Although he limits women “to two spheres, family and church, on the moral plane Orderic equates women with men, attributing to both groups the ability to exercise power wisely and to decide between good and evil.”⁵ Orderic’s depictions reveal that gender could be transcended “if not on the social plan then on the moral plan, by using one’s own (or someone else’s) power wisely and by avoiding violence if at all possible.”⁶ William of Malmesbury (b. 1085x1090),⁷ a widely read Benedictine scholar,⁸ wrote his *Historia Novella*, in support of King Henry’s daughter and designated successor, Maud. Maud’s mother, Queen Matilda (d. 1118) placed the responsibility for the production of the *Gesta Rerum* upon the abbey of Malmesbury;⁹ and her early patronage may have influenced William in his favorable stance towards her daughter.¹⁰ Little is known about the author of the *Gesta Stephani* except that he was a supporter of King Stephen, King Henry’s nephew, who had usurped the throne in 1135 while Maud was still in Normandy. Although the *Gesta* author’s work begins in firm support of

⁵ Jean Blacker, “Women, Power, and Violence in Orderic Vitalis’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*,” *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, Ed. by Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 44.

⁶ Blacker, 52.

⁷ R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (First Published: Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1987; Revised Edition: Great Britain: Athenaeum Press Ltd., Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, 2003), 4. Also see Thomson’s first appendix regarding the dates of William’s birth p. 199-201.

⁸ Thomson, 15-17.

⁹ Thomson, 18.

¹⁰ Although, according to Thomson, it may be argued that William actually wrote to support Robert of Gloucester, his writing works to support Robert and Maud’s collective cause (Thomson, 37).

Stephen, towards the later portions he “seems to hold the balance even” between Stephen and Maud’s son, Henry.¹¹

These chroniclers all labored to record events regarding the succession crisis following the death of King Henry I between Stephen and Maud. Within the arena of the ongoing conflict, chroniclers illustrate women taking on prominent roles in the violent actions surrounding them. The long-term struggle over the proper possession of the throne involved two English royal women, both descendants of King Alfred and thus of the Anglo-Saxon royal line. The first was Matilda of Boulogne, wife of King Stephen, and the second was Maud, daughter of King Henry I, as participants in the violence, acting as inciters, as leaders of violent acts, and as peacemakers. The chroniclers’ depictions of the violent actions of Matilda and Maud reveal that while the chaotic times created an arena in which women could act outside of the normal gender roles, the chroniclers chose to portray women in diverse ways at times using their steps outside of traditional gender boundaries as a means for criticizing them while at other times lauding their bravery for doing so.

Anglo-Norman chroniclers often portray women as inciters, working within typical gender stereotypes to goad men into acting on their behalf. Although the Anglo-Norman chroniclers are using this familiar role for women, they transform the role to fit with their specific situation. Rather than showing women goading men through assaults on their honor and courage, in these chronicles, the writers show women using the belief in their weakness and

¹¹ K. R. Potter, “Introduction,” *Gesta Stephani* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1955), xxx.

vulnerability to goad men into action on their behalf. Furthermore, the chroniclers show women goading men into action in support of their cause. At times this goading takes on a sense of honor, imploring the men to remember the oaths they had taken or their family alliances.

The first mention in the *Gesta Stephani* of Maud inciting men to act on her behalf against King Stephen depicts her actions in 1136 with Baldwin de Redvers, an English magnate who had taken an oath to Maud during her father's life. The author of the *Gesta* writes that:

The Countess of Anjou, King Henry's daughter, was urging him [Baldwin] to the commission of these evil deeds by continual entreaties and reminders, because on the death of her father she had appropriated his treasures, which it would have been more just to distribute to the poor for the benefit of his soul, and fortified some castles as her own property.¹²

The author shows Maud spurring Baldwin to act against the supporters of the king, to strengthen her position in Normandy. In this illustration, the author negatively depicts Maud inciting a man to "evil deeds." She further is shown to fail in carrying out the traditional queenly role of benefactress.

In instances regarding King David of Scotland, Maud's uncle, the chroniclers also depict Maud in the role of inciter, urging her uncle to take part in the civil war for her benefit. In 1138, prior to Maud's decision to cross the channel and act on her own behalf, the chroniclers illustrate her imploring her uncle to uphold his oath to her. The author of the *Gesta* writes that

King Henry's daughter sent him [King David] a letter, stating that she had been denied her father's will and deprived of the kingdom promised to her on oath, that the laws had been made of no

¹² *Gesta Stephani*, Ed. and Trans. by K. R. Potter, with new Intro. and Notes by R.H.C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 47.

account, justice trampled under foot, the fealty of the barons of England and the compact to which they had sworn broken and utterly disregarded, and therefore she humbly and mournfully besought him to aid her as a relation, since she was abandoned, and assist her as one bound to her by oath, since she was in distress.¹³

The author portrays Maud in this instance beginning to cross traditional gender expectations; she seeks the throne in her own right, but she also emphasizes her distress. Furthermore, she calls into question King David's word and thus his honor. The author appears to blame Maud and her goading of her uncle for the negative effects the country suffered; he writes that King David "determined to set the kingdom of England in confusion" and "sent out a decree through Scotland and summoned all to arms, and giving them free licence he commanded them to commit against the English, without pity, the most savage and cruel deeds they could invent."¹⁴ Likewise, Orderic places the blame for the negative effects on Maud. He calls Maud and her supporters "pernicious disturbers of the realm" and "rebels" who "had incited him [David] to ravage their country."¹⁵ While these illustrations of Maud appear to hold her responsible for the brutality of the men acting on her behalf, they do not overtly criticize her and they show her acting in a familiar manner as an inciter and using feminine methods, such as emphasizing her need for and reliance upon the protection provided to her by her kinsmen, to incite men.

The chroniclers also depict Matilda acting as an inciter of men, who remains within the traditional feminine gender expectations. The chroniclers

¹³ *Gesta Stephani*, 53-55.

¹⁴ *Gesta Stephani*, 55.

¹⁵ Orderic Vitalis, Book XIII, 519, note 10: Chibnall notes "this is Orderic's only reference to any oaths sworn to Matilda by the leading barons of England and Normandy, which occupy so prominent a place in the English chronicles."

describe Matilda's entreating of Stephen's brother Henry, bishop of Winchester, to rejoin his brother's side. William uses traditional feminine language when describing Matilda's as an inciter. But, the chronicler depicts Matilda attempting to incite "rightful behavior," whereas the chroniclers' accounts of Maud's inciting often show ensuing violence, or violence as the intended results of her goading of men to action. Matilda's attempt to achieve "rightful behavior" is a more traditional way for women to use their persuasive voices (as in the case of female peacemakers). When she sought her husband's release and Bishop Henry's support, William writes that first Matilda sent a clerk to plead her husband's case. According to William, the letter sent with the clerk contained the following message: "The queen earnestly begs all the assembled clergy, and especially the Bishop of Winchester, her lord's brother, to restore to the throne that same lord, whom cruel men . . . have cast into chains."¹⁶ Since she is urging a bishop and clergymen to rejoin her side, she is obviously not inciting them to violence; yet, she is seeking their legitimizing support and the armed support of the men who would follow the alliances of the Bishop and other clergymen. William writes that Bishop Henry "had an intimate conference at Guildford with the queen, his brother's wife, and influenced by her tears and offers of amends he resolved to free his brother."¹⁷ The author of the *Gesta Stephani* further describes the scene of 1141 as follows:

The queen was admitted into the city by the Londoners and forgetting the weakness of her sex and a woman's softness she bore herself with the valour of a man; everywhere by prayer or

¹⁶ William of Malmesbury, *The Historia Novella*, Trans. from Latin with Intro and Notes by K. R. Potter (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1955), 55.

¹⁷ William of Malmesbury, 57-58.

price she won over invincible allies; the king's lieges, wherever they were scattered throughout England, she urged persistently to demand their lord back with her; and now she humbly besought the Bishop of Winchester, legate of all England, to take pity on his imprisoned brother and exert himself for his freedom, that uniting all his efforts with hers he might gain her a husband, the people a king, the kingdom a champion. And the bishop, [was] moved . . . by the woman's tearful supplications, which she pressed on him with great earnestness.¹⁸

The chroniclers show the feminine use of tears as the most powerful method of persuasion. Both the author of the *Gesta* and William portray Matilda in a traditionally feminine way when she acts as an inciter. She acts on behalf of not only herself, but also of her husband and son. Yet, the author of the *Gesta* offers overt praise of Matilda's character for she overcomes the weakness of her sex. The chroniclers appear to depict Maud and Matilda differently because of their perceptions of the women's differences in motives. The depictions of Maud, who chroniclers show working for her own ends, often include the violent consequences of her urgings. The depictions of Matilda, who chroniclers show urging clergymen to rejoin her husband's side, rarely depict the violent actions that may have ensued.

Likewise, the chroniclers' descriptions of female actors contain many differences both between their descriptions of the two women and from other medieval writers' use of the common feminine role. In comparison to the saga authors, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers depict women acting less overtly for the sake of honor and more for claiming legitimate political power. Also, these chroniclers depict women in leadership positions and in military battles, rather than as carrying out their actions more as auxiliary characters to men and within

¹⁸ *Gesta Stephani*, 127.

the tasks of their daily lives. Since these chroniclers described women in the specific context of battle, new active roles are depicted, such as taking and holding captives and leading troops. Also, the violent scenes are rarely described in detail. The scenes in which violence is imminent may not have resulted in much bloodshed because of the nature of the warfare; yet, the destruction to the countryside suggests that there must have been some carnage in these battles, regardless of whether the majority of the action was in the form of sieges. Like the depictions of Maud and Matilda as inciters, the portrayals of these women as actors differ in the representation of their motives; Maud acting on her own behalf and Matilda acting on behalf of herself and her husband and son.

The chroniclers depict the new action for women of holding captives in the Anglo-Norman chronicles. The most important of the captives the chroniclers describe Maud holding was King Stephen. The author of the *Gesta Stephani* writes that after the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, “the Earl of Gloucester took the king with him, and at Gloucester brought him before his sister the Countess of Anjou and then, by agreement between the two of them, put him under guard in the tower of Bristol to be kept there until the last breath of his life.”¹⁹ The author illustrates a sinister intent in Maud and Robert’s decision. The author furthermore, portrays Maud in a negative manner in his descriptions of her behavior and bearing after her rise to power. After much of the kingdom had submitted to Maud, “she at once put on an extremely arrogant demeanour, instead of the modest gait and bearing proper to the gentle sex, began to walk and speak

¹⁹ *Gesta Stephani*, 115.

and do all things more stiffly and more haughtily that she had been wont.”²⁰ The author describes Maud taking on characteristics unbecoming of a female. Yet, he does not term these characteristics masculine, which might be viewed as a compliment, rather he calls her stiff and haughty, revealing her embodiment of characteristics that would be viewed negatively even if assumed by a male. He continues in his narrative to describe Maud no longer relying on the advice of the great men of the kingdom, but arranging everything “according to her own arbitrary will.”²¹ Kings were expected to consult the great magnates of the kingdom and rely on their advice when making decisions; Henry’s choice to arrange Maud’s marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou without the approval of the leading magnates led to many of their beliefs during the civil war that their oaths to accept Maud as Henry’s heir made previous to her marriage were invalid.

Contrary to the author of the *Gesta*’s portrayal of Maud’s imprisonment of Stephen, William of Malmesbury gives a more positive description of events. William describes how Stephen was brought before Maud at Gloucester and then kept at Bristol. Maud is evidently in a position of power over Stephen and in charge of his captivity. His captivity begins in a “manner that was honourable,” but he is eventually “confined in iron rings”²² because of his misbehavior. William portrays Maud as acting within her rights, and does not mention any changes in her behavior that would make her appear to be stepping outside of traditional gender roles or acceptable royal behavior. Orderic offers a more unbiased account of Stephen’s capture and imprisonment than the other two

²⁰ *Gesta Stephani*, 119.

²¹ *Gesta Stephani*, 121.

²² William of Malmesbury, 50.

chroniclers. He writes that “worn out and abandoned by all, he [Stephen] surrendered to Earl Robert his kinsman and was taken prisoner; the earl handed him over to the Countess Matilda shortly afterwards.”²³ The chronicler depicts Stephen’s behavior as passive, thus emphasizing the active, and perhaps masculine, role of Maud in this instance, accepting him as prisoner.

The chroniclers also illustrate Matilda as a holder of a captive. In 1141, when Earl Robert was taken captive, William describes Matilda’s actions positively, as those fitting of a woman and a queen. He illustrates the situation writing, “In the actual capture [of Robert] . . . the queen, though she remembered her husband had been fettered by his orders, never allowed any chains to be put on him or ventured anything that would have dishonoured his rank.”²⁴ Matilda forgives Robert for his ill-treatment of her own husband and makes sure that proper decorum is maintained. The author depicts Matilda as an intercessor and a compassionate woman able to overcome personal grievances.

The chroniclers portray both Maud and Matilda in active roles leading troops and taking part in military action. Both Maud and Matilda were active in the furtherance of their own causes, and the chroniclers do not illustrate either woman shying away from taking an active part in leading troops. All three of the chroniclers mention Maud and her brother’s, Earl Robert of Gloucester’s (d. 1147), arrival in England and their subsequent journey to Bristol, which signified the beginning of the civil war. These passages describe Maud as a leader of troops. The author of the *Gesta Stephani* writes that Stephen had heard that

²³ Orderic Vitalis, Book XIII, 545.

²⁴ William of Malmesbury, 66.

“Robert Earl of Gloucester and his sister, those persistent adversaries of his rule, had united their forces and would shortly enter England.”²⁵ The author continues to illustrate the scene of Maud’s arrival: “while the king was intent on other matters . . . Robert Earl of Gloucester, with his sister the Countess of Anjou, landed at the castle of Arundel . . . and was admitted with a strong body of troops. England at once was shaken and quivered with intense fear.”²⁶ Thus, the author describes Maud’s arrival in England causing negative consequences. William tells of Maud’s entrance into England in a more positive manner. He writes that he will “begin the second book from the year when that woman of masculine spirit (*eadem* [refers to an earlier mention of *imperatrix*] *virago*) came to England to vindicate her right against Stephen.”²⁷ William praises Maud as having a “masculine spirit;” high praise indeed in an era in which masculine was the ideal by which humans were measured. William continues in his narrative to describe Maud’s entry into the country. Although Orderic writes about “the flames of terrible evil that were being kindled,” he also comments upon the ‘foolishness’ of Stephen’s actions. Thus, Orderic portrays the situation in England as consequential of the actions of both Maud and Stephen. Maud’s blame is in her faulty motives, which Orderic describes as the desire for “rapine and slaughter.” And Stephen’s fault is his lack of wisdom and his “foolishness.”²⁸ Orderic sees the destruction of the country as an unacceptable consequence stemming from the selfishly motivated actions of Maud and the idiocy of Stephen.

²⁵ *Gesta Stephani*, 85.

²⁶ *Gesta Stephani*, 87.

²⁷ William of Malmesbury, 24.

²⁸ Orderic Vitalis, Book XIII, 535.

After Matilda is admitted into London and regains the support of Bishop Henry, the author of the *Gesta Stephani* describes Maud leading troops against Bishop Henry. He first calls Maud “cunning” (*uersutiam*),²⁹ and then he writes that she “arrived at Winchester with a highly equipped force to catch the bishop if she could.”³⁰ He then shows Maud taking further action; “Then she, sending out a summons on every side, gathered into a vast army the whole array of those who obeyed her throughout England, and gave orders” for them to harass Bishop Henry’s castle and palace.³¹ The use of the word “cunning” in relation to Maud is perhaps unflattering to her character, but the author also indicates the strength of her actions in her ability to raise large troops quickly and to make the Bishop flee for his safety.

The author of the *Gesta Stephani* describes Matilda leading troops in 1141 into London. He writes that after Matilda used the traditional feminine activity of entreating Maud for her husband’s release, when Maud continued to act unreasonably, Matilda led troops into London on his behalf. The author writes that

the queen, a woman of subtlety and a man’s resolution (*astuti pectoris uirilisque constantiae femina*) . . . when she was abused in harsh and insulting language and both she and those who had come to ask on her behalf completely failed to gain their request, the queen, expecting to obtain by arms what she could not by supplication, brought a magnificent body of troops across in front of London from the other side of the river and gave orders that they should rage most furiously around the city with plunder and arson, violence and the sword, in sight of the countess and her men.³²

²⁹ *Gesta Stephani*, 126.

³⁰ *Gesta Stephani*, 127.

³¹ *Gesta Stephani*, 127.

³² *Gesta Stephani*, 122-123.

Matilda has taken on the role of a military leader of men; she is called a “woman of subtlety and a man’s resolution” (*astuti pectoris uirilisque constantiae femina*).³³ Although in this instance, the chronicler shows her leading men to ravage the city, he first depicts her in the familiar role of intercessor, imploring through traditional means for her husband’s release, and only taking violent action as a last resort. The author praises her ability to take on masculine traits when necessary to help her husband. He further exalts Matilda’s character saying that “The queen was admitted into the city by the Londoners and forgetting the weakness of her sex and a woman’s softness she bore herself with the valour of a man” (*uiriliter sese et uirtuose continere*)³⁴

The accounts of both William and Orderic contain passages in which Matilda leads military actions. William explains her actions around Winchester: “everywhere outside the walls of Winchester the roads were being watched by the queen and the earls who had come, to prevent provisions being brought in to the Empress’s adherents, and the village of Andover was burnt.”³⁵ Orderic describes a similar instance in which Matilda orchestrates the actions. He writes that “The queen besieged Dover with a strong force on the land side, and sent word to her friends and kinsmen and dependants in Boulogne to blockade the foe by sea. The people of Boulogne proved obedient, gladly carried out their lady’s commands and, with a great fleet of ships, closed the narrow strait to prevent the garrison

³³ *Gesta Stephani*, 122-123.

³⁴ *Gesta Stephani*, 126-127.

³⁵ William of Malmesbury, 59.

receiving any supplies.”³⁶ In both chronicles, the authors describe the queen’s actions without using gendered language. Rather, they show her resourcefulness and her organization of events in the civil war.

Not only do the chroniclers portray women as actors in the violence of the civil war and inciters of the violence, but they also portray women as peacemakers, an established feminine and queenly role. During the twelfth-century civil war, there were various attempts at establishing peace and one peaceful exchange in which Earl Robert was exchanged for King Stephen. The different chroniclers note Maud and Matilda participating in and facilitating these situations to various degrees. The Anglo-Norman chroniclers’ depictions of female peacemakers differ from the saga writers’ in that the women are no longer excluded from the legal space, but rather were expected to take part in the peace negotiations. Like the saga illustrations of peacemakers, the Anglo-Norman illustrations also often depict failed peace attempts. But these depictions vary from the peacemaker illustrations of the sagas because the reasons for failed peace appear different. No longer does the main motive for establishing of peace appear to be to protect male kin and thus secure the woman’s personal security, rather the women are acting on their own and their family’s behalf in the power struggle.

Both the author of the *Gesta Stephani* and William mention failed peace attempts in the 1140s. William describes events in 1140 near Bath; he writes that “a parley was appointed between the Empress and the king, on the chance that peace might be restored . . . on the Empress’s side her brother Robert was sent and the rest of her advisers, on the king’s, the legate and the archbishop, and

³⁶ Orderic Vitalis, Book XIII, 520.

likewise the queen.”³⁷ William placed both Maud and Matilda as critical to the peace discussions. He then mentions that the sides parted without making peace but that they “did not separate for the same reasons,” for Maud was “more inclined to good, having sent a message that she did not fear the decision of the Church, whereas the king’s envoys were entirely opposed to this as long as they could hold the upper hand to their own advantage.”³⁸ William offers a portrayal of Maud in which she not only seeks peace, but she also expresses greater faith in the justice of the church and in her own cause. William then contrasts this image of Maud with the image of those on Stephen’s side, notably mentioned Queen Matilda, as holding on to their advantage while they could regardless of the church’s ruling. William further shows Matilda and those of King Stephen’s side as malevolent by explaining that “near the end of November,” the legate brought back “instructions that would have benefited the country had there been anyone to combine words and deeds.”³⁹ He argues that Maud would have “agreed at once,” but Stephen “put off a decision . . . [and] made the whole plan of no avail.”⁴⁰ William portrays Maud as the traditional peacemaker in this instance; she seeks peace for the kingdom rather than seeking gains for herself.

The author of the *Gesta Stephani* describes a situation in 1146 in which attempts for peace were made. He writes that “the king with his supporters, and the countess with hers, had met together to establish peace.”⁴¹ The author blames

³⁷ William of Malmesbury, 44-45.

³⁸ William of Malmesbury, 45.

³⁹ William of Malmesbury, 45.

⁴⁰ William of Malmesbury, 45.

⁴¹ *Gesta Stephani*, 124.

both Maud and Stephen for the failure of the meeting because of their pride.⁴² In this instance, both male and female are portrayed as too prideful to come to an agreement for the benefit of the country. Thus, both Maud and Stephen are not favorably illustrated.

William also depicts Matilda taking actions as a peacemaker in a way slightly different from the more traditional female images of peacemakers. In 1141, Matilda aided in the peaceful exchange of her husband and Earl Robert, both of whom had been held captive. William writes that there was

an agreement that the king and he [Robert of Gloucester] should be released on the same terms . . . on that day the king emerged from captivity. On that same day he left his queen and son with two men of high rank at Bristol as sureties for the earl's release immediately the king could reach Winchester by traveling at speed; for that is where the earl was kept.⁴³

Matilda takes Stephen's place in prison as surety that Earl Robert would be released once the king returned to Winchester. The chronicler further illustrates the queen's part in this prisoner exchange writing that after Stephen released him, "The earl went away, leaving his son William there as a hostage in the same manner until the queen's release. So he traveled rapidly, came to Bristol and released the queen, and on her return the earl's son William was released from custody as a hostage."⁴⁴ This procedure of exchanging men and leaving hostages as surety was common, and Matilda is portrayed as an unusual type of female peacemaker.

⁴² *Gesta Stephani*, 124.

⁴³ William of Malmesbury, 61.

⁴⁴ William of Malmesbury, 61-62.

In the accounts regarding the events of the twelfth-century English civil war, the chroniclers use the traditional female roles in their portrayals of women involved in the struggle; yet their uses are more realistic, and less formulaic than those of either the Scandinavian chroniclers or the crusader chroniclers. The nature of the situations, namely a succession crisis, places the women in positions that are recognizable from traditional tropes found in twelfth-century chronicles. Yet, they are less involved in peace negotiations than they are involved in inciting men and leading troops. The chroniclers show Maud and Matilda actively participating in the promotion of their causes. Both Maud and Matilda were aware of the gender expectations of their society and both women chose to manipulate the framing of their actions in differing ways. The contrasts in opinions about Maud and Matilda were not due to great differences in behavior, but rather to the distinct framing of the performance of similar behaviors by both the women themselves and the chroniclers. Although, Maud and Matilda are depicted as inciters, actors, and peacemakers in the violence, they are depicted in different ways. Matilda, while seeming to remain in the socially accepted feminine boundaries, often moved outside of the typical roles in much the same way as Maud. The main difference in their objectives was Maud was fighting for the throne in her own right as justified by the oaths sworn to her prior to her father's death, while Matilda was fighting for her husband and her own rightful place on the throne. The twelfth-century chroniclers of the civil war manipulated the traditional roles and their subsequent portrayal of women to emphasize the characteristics of the individuals that they either sought to praise or to vilify.

Therefore, the Anglo-Norman chroniclers' depictions of women in the traditional roles for women in violent situations of goader, actor, and peacemaker, differ from both the saga writers and the crusader chroniclers' depictions of women in the same identifiable roles. The inciters in these illustrations are more aptly termed "entreaters" and are more likely to use feminine language to invoke pity from men for their defenseless nature and need for aid than to use the more goading behavior of insulting the man's honor. The chroniclers show the actors taking official action as leaders of military troops and holders of captives rather than describe the actions of these women in detail or invent dialogue for these women in ordering the violent events. And the Anglo-Norman writers show the female peacemakers working within the legal framework and with different motives, but still ultimately failing in their attempts. The crusader chroniclers take these traditional roles for women and further transform them to fit into their own narratives that work to record events in a new religious and geographic context.

Chapter Four

CRUSADER CHRONICLERS' PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN

The chroniclers' portrayals of women reflect the new context of the violence for Christians during the crusades. The crusader chroniclers, like those of Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman England, show women during the time of the First Crusade and in the Crusader Kingdoms taking part in violence as "goaders," actors, and peacemakers; although chroniclers still portrayed women's actions motivated by considerations for personal security and maintenance of their and their family's honor, they changed certain aspects of these roles, particularly the framing of women who carried them out and the portrayal of religious motivations for their actions. Christian chroniclers' portrayal of women in their accounts of the events of the First Crusade reveals the alterations that the traditional female roles underwent during the time of the crusades.

As with the chroniclers who narrated the twelfth-century English civil war, the crusader chroniclers provide sources of information of the events regarding women in the First Crusade and in the Crusader Kingdom. While the chroniclers of the twelfth-century English events were writing about women in recognizable circumstances, namely women during a succession crisis, the chroniclers of the crusades were writing about women in a new religious and geographical context, in a religious war in the East. The crusades offered a new mode of salvation that did not require the renunciation of the world by Christians

by choosing to live monastic lives.¹ Crusader chroniclers often had an agenda to emphasize God's role within the events they narrated.

Chroniclers such as the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* (d. c. 1101), Guibert de Nogent (born between 1053 and 1065), Fulcher of Chartres (b. 1058 or 1059), Orderic Vitalis (d. c. 1143.), and William of Tyre (d. 1190) provide detailed accounts of the First Crusade including the conquest of Jerusalem and the establishment of the Crusader Kingdoms, particularly Jerusalem. These men themselves carried out diverse roles within the crusade and occupied a different set of social positions in the medieval continuum of rank. The oldest account of the First Crusade and conceivably the source for the rest of the chroniclers' works under consideration is the *Gesta Francorum aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, or *Deeds of the Franks and other Pilgrims of Jerusalem*. The author of the *Gesta Francorum*, a layman and a soldier,² wrote shortly after or during the events that he described.³ Fulcher of Chartres, as the chaplain to King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (d. 1118), lived in Jerusalem from the end of 1100 until at least 1127,⁴ and wrote *Historia Hierosolymitana* after the First Crusade was completed with the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099.⁵ Guibert de Nogent, a monk, used the *Gesta Francorum* as a source of information for his account of the First Crusade, *Dei gesta per Francos*, written in the first decade of the twelfth

¹ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 48-49.

² Rosalind Hill, "Introduction," *The Deeds of the Franks and the other Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962), xiii.

³ His account ends abruptly most likely because he "found himself a soldier's grave" in Jerusalem; Hill, xv.

⁴ Harold Fink, "Introduction," *Fulcher of Chartres: A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1969), 3.

⁵ Fink, 18.

century. He wrote to glorify God and to emphasize the role of the Franks as God's chosen people based upon what he had heard, rather than what he had seen, because he neither participated in the battles of the crusade nor witnessed the events. William of Tyre, born in Jerusalem,⁶ wrote his chronicle, *Historia Rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* at the request of King Amaury between 1169 and 1173⁷ to provide "the Latin kingdom with an account of its foundation and history, spanning the period from the preaching of the First Crusade in 1095 until the year 1184."⁸ William's perspective was one of an "archbishop and churchman"⁹ closely linked to the royalty of Jerusalem. He based his account upon earlier chronicles. Finally, Orderic Vitalis wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* from his abbey. Orderic offers more descriptions of women's actions and invents more speeches than his contemporary writers. He devotes much space to women trying to guide the actions of men through their positions as wives and mothers.

Although crusader chroniclers still portrayed women in a manner highly reminiscent of women in other medieval situations, they transformed the familiar roles for women in violent situations in both subtle and obvious ways. Women "goaders" turn into "encouragers," who urge men to fight to protect Christendom. Women actors joined the armed pilgrimage; or, more often, remained home, offering money and prayers for the cause of the crusade and sacrificing

⁶ Peter W. Edbury and John Gordon Rowe, *William of Tyre: Historian of the Latin East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13.

⁷ Louis Bréhier, "William of Tyre," *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 15, Ed. by Charles George Herbermann, Edward Aloysius Pace, Condé Benoist Pallen, Thomas Joseph Shahan, and John Joseph Wynne (New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation Inc., 1913), 639.

⁸ Edbury and Rowe, 1.

⁹ Edbury and Rowe, 2.

emotionally and monetarily. The role of peacemaker took on a negative connotation for Christians, while taking on a positive connotation for non-Christian women, who could urge their kinsmen to cease violent acts against the crusaders.

The treatment of the traditional female role of “goader” was significantly affected by the context of the violence described in the crusader chronicles. The view of women “encouragers,” rather than the more traditional “goaders,” stemmed from the positive association of women encouraging men to aid and to protect their Christian brothers and the Holy Land. After the Council of Clermont in 1095, the traditional feminine role of goading men to violent action became a church sanctioned role for clergymen.¹⁰ Fulcher of Chartres records that Pope Urban said “with earnest prayer, I, not I, but God exhorts you as heralds of Christ to repeatedly urge men of all ranks whatsoever . . . to hasten to exterminate this vile race from our lands and to aid the Christian inhabitants in time.”¹¹ Thus, with the Pope encouraging the urging of men to participate in the crusade, this action was clearly in compliance with the Peace and Truce of God, which Christianized knighthood and channeled the violence of the knights into a Christian mission: to protect the church and those who could not protect themselves.¹² Although,

¹⁰ This is not an entirely novel phenomenon, as the idea had been developing over the course of the eleventh century with the Spanish Reconquista and the fighting in Southern Italy and Sicily.

¹¹ Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, Trans. Frances Rita Ryan, Ed. with Intro. by Harold S. Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1969), 66.

¹² For more information about the Peace/Truce of God see: C. Warren Hollister and Judith M. Bennet, *Medieval Europe: A Short History*, 10th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2006), 133-134 and 226-227 ; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 5; and Keen, *Chivalry*, 27-28.

women could now use new methods to goad men into crusading, the scenes in the chronicles are often quite similar to non-crusade sources' versions of women urging men to acts of illicit violence. While women could emphasize the chance for an indulgence, the goal of liberating Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulcher, or the help needed by fellow Christians in the East, they more often enticed men to demonstrate their military prowess and to maintain their honor by fighting for Christ in the Holy Land. Yet, this traditional role acquired a new favorable context in crusading literature.

Many chroniclers provide a favorable depiction of Adela, Countess of Blois (d. 1137) as an example of a wise woman inciting her husband, Stephen, to crusade. Orderic provides the lengthiest account of her activity after her husband left the Crusade and returned back to Europe following a minor wound:

Adela also frequently urged him to it [return to the crusade], and between conjugal caresses used to say, 'Far be it from you, my lord, to lower yourself by enduring the scorn of such men as these for long. Remember the courage for which you were famous in your youth, and take up the arms of the glorious crusade for the sake of saving thousands, so that Christians may raise great thanksgiving all over the world, and the lot of the heathen may be terror and the public overthrow of their unholy law.'¹³

In this instance, Orderic first shows Adela urging through an assault on her husband's honor, a method of goading that is often seen in accounts of female "goaders." She asks Stephen if he is willing to "endure" the "scorn" of lowly men. She further emphasizes the lack of dignity in his current situation by invoking his previous reputation for courage. After this traditional approach

¹³ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History Book X in The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, Vol. V, Ed. and Trans. by Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 325.

aimed at Stephen's honor, Orderic shows Adela invoking the new religious context of the violence. She asks Stephen to go on the "glorious crusade" to save his fellow Christians and to "overthrow" the "unholy law" of the heathens. After his description of Adela's goading, Orderic explains that she often presented Stephen with similar speeches, and he describes her as a "wise and spirited woman"¹⁴ (*mulier sagax et animosa*).¹⁵ Guibert, likewise, portrays Adela, as the wife of Stephen, "the wisest of women"¹⁶ (*sagacissima feminarum*)¹⁷ whose "wisdom, generosity, bountifulness, and opulence"¹⁸ are praiseworthy (*cuius prudentiam, munificentiam, dapsilitatem opulentiamque si laudare velimus*).¹⁹ Thus, the chroniclers praise women like Adela who encourage their husbands to crusade.

The crusader chroniclers use the role of women as actors in violence less prevalently than their Scandinavian or Anglo-Norman contemporaries. The pope preached the crusade to those fit to bear arms. Although Michael Evans argues that "Pope Urban II included women in those unfit for arms when preaching the First Crusade at Clermont in 1095,"²⁰ the record of the Council of Clermont in Robert of Rheims' chronicle (written around 1107), in which the phrase "unfit to bear arms" appears, indicates that those "unfit to bear arms" were simply those that were too "old or feeble" for the task and that women simply required the

¹⁴ Orderic Vitalis, Book X, 325.

¹⁵ Orderic Vitalis, Book X, 324.

¹⁶ Guibert of Nogent., *The Deeds of God through the Franks: Dei gesta per Francos*, Trans. Robert Levine (Great Britain: Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 1997), 54.

¹⁷ *Guibert de Nogent Dei Gesta Per Francos et Cinq Autres Textes*, Critical Edition, Ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1996), 132.

¹⁸ Guibert, trans., 54.

¹⁹ Guibert, Critical Edition, 132.

²⁰ Evans, 45.

accompaniment of their “husbands or brothers or legal guardians” to participate²¹ (*Erit universes haec ex parte Dei una vociferation: Deus vult! Deus vult! Et non praecipimus aut suademus ut sense aut imbeciles et usui armorum minime idonei hoc iter arripirant; nec mulieres sine conjugibus suis, aut fratribus, aut legitimis testimoniis, ullatenus incedant.*)²² Therefore, it was quite possible for women to participate. The examples of women participating in the crusades as well as the often nonchalant manner in which the chroniclers describe these women relate the acceptable nature of female active participation in the First Crusade. Riley-Smith lists a number of women who joined the crusade, “among whom were seven wives traveling with husbands, a nun from Trier . . . and the religious leader of a sect which believed her goose was filled with the Holy Spirit.”²³ Women who actively participated in the pilgrimage of the crusade often filled “stereotypical female roles” in battle situations, such as “those of washerwoman or prostitute.”²⁴ Yet, the chroniclers’ accounts uncover other actions for women, including aiding in undermining defenses and bringing water to thirsty men on the battlefield.

The authors most often depicted women actors accompanying a male family member. Guibert offers the example of Raymond, Count of Saint Gilles’ wife. He records that Raymond, “having left behind his own son to rule his land, he brought with him his present wife and the only son he had with her.”²⁵ This

²¹ Robert of Rheims’ account of Pope Urban’s speech as translated in *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, Second Edition, Ed. by Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 29.

²² Robert the Monk, RHC Oc 3, 729.

²³ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusaders, 1095-1131*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 107-108.

²⁴ Evans, 45.

²⁵ Guibert, trans., 55.

woman took part in the pilgrimage and was present for the violent events that ensued. The actions of women aided in killing the enemy and certainly placed women in danger. Although women's roles on crusade placed them as "ancillary workers,"²⁶ their activities were vital to the crusaders' success; and as a result, "women could get quite close to the warfare."²⁷ Guibert describes the death of a woman during the battle of Antioch. He records that "a cloud of missiles flowed in the midst of Bohemond's camp, and one woman died when struck by one of the arrows."²⁸ Guibert does not specify this woman's actions, but she was obviously close enough to the action to be in danger from the enemy forces.

Women's active participation in the crusades included supporting men in their fighting. Both William and the author of the *Gesta Francorum* write about women in supporting roles. The author of the *Gesta Francorum* records that while the men bravely withstood the onslaught of the Turks' attack at Dorylaeum, "the women in our camp were a great help to us that day, for they brought up water for the fighting men to drink, and gallantly encouraged those who were fighting and defending them."²⁹ As a layman and fighter, his most prominent mention of women regards women bringing water to men while they fight. This role of women was possibly one of the most appreciated by the male crusaders who suffered from excessive heat and thirst and needed refreshment to continue

²⁶ Matthew Bennett, "Virile Latins, Effeminate Greeks and Strong Women: Gender Definitions on Crusade?" *Gendering the Crusades*, Ed. by Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) 25.

²⁷ Bennett, 26.

²⁸ Guibert, trans., 76.

²⁹ *Gesta Francorum et Aliorum Hierosolimitanorum*, Ed. and Trans. Rosalind Hill, Medieval Texts (London, Edinburgh, Paris, Melbourne, Toronto, and New York; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962), 19.

battling.³⁰ William also offers an account of women bringing men water while they are battling. He writes that during the final battle for Jerusalem in 1099, “the women also, that they might have their share in the work, cheered the fighters to renewed courage by their words and brought them water in small vessels that they might not faint upon the field of battle.”³¹

The chroniclers also portray women actors aiding with creating defenses or undermining enemy defenses and in fighting. Guibert provides a further example of women’s active participation in his depiction of women helping men destroy enemy defenses during a battle at Antioch, making sure to include the social rank of the women actively participating:

They [the crusaders] had already begun to undermine a lofty tower, digging a long tunnel which they shored up with planks and posts; they dug and scraped steadily every day with great energy, and women and the wives of the nobles, even on holidays, in flowing robes or tunics, carried off the material that had been dug up. When those inside the citadel discovered what our men were trying to do, they put up great resistance to those carrying out the digging, doing them great harm.³²

In this instance noble women help men break down the enemy’s defenses, earning the praise of the chronicler. Guibert depicts the women doing messy work, but the dirtiness of the work is eliminated from the description; rather the women are illustrated as wearing beautiful clothing and working. The women’s participation places them in as dangerous a situation as the male fighters, for the enemy “put up

³⁰ Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*, Trans. Frances Rita Ryan, Ed. with Intro. by Harold S. Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1969), 87.

³¹ William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, Vol. 1, Trans. and Annotated by Emily Atwater Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 367.

³² Guibert, trans., 122.

great resistance to those carrying out the digging, doing them great harm.”

William of Tyre includes women in his account of the successful battle for Jerusalem in 1099. He writes that:

Even women, regardless of sex and natural weakness, dared to assume arms and fought manfully far beyond their strength. Thus the Christians advanced with one accord to battle. All tried to push newly constructed engines closer to the wall so that they might more easily attack those who were putting up a strenuous resistance on the ramparts and the towers.³³

In William’s account the women actually bear arms and join in the violence of battle. He depicts women fighting despite the “weakness” of their sex, just as valiantly as the male crusaders.

The chroniclers further depicted women’s active participation as their sharing of the sufferings and privations of those undertaking the armed pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Fulcher provides two examples in which he specifically mentions both men and women in his descriptions of the suffering. First, he describes the crossing of Romania where, “one day we suffered such extreme thirst that some men and women died from its torments.”³⁴ The emphasis of the crusaders’ thirst and the many ways in which they sought to alleviate the thirst as well as the many instances of women bringing water to the men during battle arises because of the difference between the climates of the Holy Land and the Crusaders’ native lands; this difference caused the heat of the East to seem unbearable when compared to the climate of Northern Europe. Therefore, water was a vital component of the recounting of the crusade. Later in his chronicle, Fulcher comments upon the suffering of the crusaders; he “saw many persons of both sexes and a great many

³³ William of Tyre, 362.

³⁴ Fulcher, 87.

beasts die one day because of these freezing rains.”³⁵ The chroniclers describe both women and men suffering and dying for the sake of freeing the Holy Land and aiding the oppressed eastern Christians. In his account of the capture of Nicaea, William explains that while “both sexes” were suffering from “the double distress of intolerable thirst and extreme heat,”³⁶ women bore special burdens because of their sex;

Pregnant women brought forth their offspring prematurely Mothers, in agony of spirit, cast forth their babes into the camp, some living, some dead, and others in a dying condition. Other women, moved by feelings of deeper humanity, clasped their babes to their breasts and, regardless of their sex, rolled themselves along the road half nude, concerned rather with the imminent danger of death than with maintaining the respect due to their womanhood.³⁷

William describes women’s unique form of torments linked to their reproductive and nurturing functions.

The actions of women also took a passive form in the accounts of the chronicles, in that the women’s sacrifices, both monetary and emotional, became a form of participation in the crusade. Christian husbands and wives expressed sadness upon their long-term separation as a result of the crusade. Various chroniclers offer accounts of tearful farewells between men and women; while this may be a common literary *topos* of tearful farewell, its invocation serves to express the sacrifices of both men and women. Fulcher describes the European scene as follows:

Then husband told wife the time he expected to return, assuring her that if by God’s grace he survived he would come back to her. He commended her to the Lord, kissed her lingeringly, and promised

³⁵ Fulcher, 131.

³⁶ William of Tyre, 174.

³⁷ William of Tyre, 174.

her as she wept that he would return. She, though, fearing that she would never see him again, could not stand but swooned to the ground, mourning her loved one whom she was losing in this life as if he were already dead. He, however, like one who had no pity- although he had – and as if he were not moved by the tears of his wife nor the grief of any of his friends – yet secretly moved in his heart – departed with firm resolution. Sadness was the lot of those who remained, elation, of those who departed.³⁸

Thus, the acute suffering of Christian women reveals the extent of their sacrifice for the crusading effort. Women willingly, albeit tearfully, relinquished contact with their husbands for the sake of freeing the Holy Land. Guibert also provides an illustration of the leave taking of husbands from their wives. Early in his chronicle he comments that the brave crusaders,

Leaving behind their superb wives and their fine sons, they put aside whatever they felt great affection for, choosing instead exile . . . what surprises us most is the way in which loving husbands and wives, attached even more closely to each other by the bond of children, could be separated, when there was no present danger to either.³⁹

Guibert shows that the separation of husbands and wives was a mutual decision;⁴⁰ men and women both sacrificed their happiness together not in order to protect themselves but to protect Christianity and do the will of God. In this account tears are not mentioned, but the sacrifice is still evident. The writers praise both women and men for their dedication to the crusade. The women suffer by being left behind and expected to assume sole responsibility for their households and the raising of their children, while the husbands suffer from their longing to return to

³⁸ Fulcher, 74.

³⁹ Guibert, 53.

⁴⁰ Husbands were not supposed to crusade without the consent of their wives; Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, 22. Riley-Smith notes Robert the Monk, 'Historia Iherosolimitana', RHC Oc. 3, p. 729 and H. Hagenmeyer, *Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100* (1901), p. 138.

their wives and the comforts of home. However formulaic these farewell scenes seem, to their contemporary readers they would have appeared realistic and reminiscent of recently-occurring events. Remaining home becomes an active sharing in the suffering and sacrifices made for the sake of the crusade. These women are positively depicted as surrendering the emotional and physical security attached to a husband's presence. William further emphasizes the mutual sacrifice when he mentions that "husband was separated from wife, wife from husband . . . no bond of affection was proof against this [crusading] enthusiasm"⁴¹ (*"Dividebatur enim maritus ab uxore, uxor a marito . . . nec erat caritatis vinculum quod huic fervori preiudicium posset facere."*)⁴² William stresses the equal burden placed upon men and women by separation by transposing the spouses in the two clauses.

The chroniclers further transform the traditional female roles in their depictions of peacemakers. The portrayals of peacemakers and intercessors are frequently the most positive images of women in medieval texts. However, in the crusading context, chroniclers could not portray Christian women promoting peace without showing them acting in a way that was detrimental to the Christian cause. The chroniclers could, however, depict non-Christian women who sought peace in the context of the crusades in a positive manner.

Many chroniclers portray Kerbogha's mother as an example of a woman acting in the role of peacemaker and promoting Christianity. Kerbogha (d.1104) was the governor of Mosul, a significant trading center "located on the west bank

⁴¹ William of Tyre, 93.

⁴² Guillaume de Tyr, *Historia Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum*, Ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Turnholti: Typographi Brepols, 1986), 136.

of the Tigris across from the ancient city of Nineveh.”⁴³ Guibert invents a speech for his mother when Kerbogha was planning an attack on the Christians by sending a message “throughout the provinces of Persia.”⁴⁴ Kerbogha’s mother urges her son not to fight the Christians, imploring him to make peace. Guibert’s chronicler presents her speech to her son as follows,

Son, best of men, I dare to appeal to your native nobility not to fight them, lest you mar your reputation. Since the brilliance of your arms gleams as far as the furthest reaches of the Indian Ocean, and remote Thule resounds with your praise, why would you soil your weapons with the blood of poor men, whom it does not pay to attack, and from whose defeat you can gain no glory? . . . My son, I say that you rightly despise them as individuals, but you should know for a fact that the authority of the Christian religion is superior. Therefore I beg you not to attempt something that you will later regret having undertaken.⁴⁵

Guibert depicts her in a flattering light as she urges her son to accept the “authority of the Christian religion.” Although, she admits that she does not care for the crusader leaders, she desires for her son to make peace with the Christians because of her belief in Christ’s power. She further says to her son,

I beg you not to shun their leader, Christ. Perhaps they do not have the power to fight you, but victory is certain for their God, if he wishes to prevail. . . . May your foresight hear, my son, how severely he punishes those whom he permits to be ignorant of him. . . . Who except a madman would dare attack the sons of God? I predict that if you fight them, you will bring upon yourself great discomfort and shame. You will undergo certain military defeat, enrich the Christians with booty taken from you, and you yourself will run off in ignominious flight.⁴⁶

⁴³ Reeva S. Simon, “Mosul,” *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, Ed. Philip Mattar, Vol. 3, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 1582.

⁴⁴ Guibert, 96.

⁴⁵ Guibert, 96.

⁴⁶ Guibert, 96-97.

Guibert continues in his positive description of Kerbogha's mother by illustrating her as steadfast in her belief of Christ's power even after her son rejects her advice. Guibert writes that, "the mother collected whatever supplies she could gather and spurned by her son, retired to . . . Aleppo."⁴⁷ Thus, Guibert reveals Kerbogha's mother seeking peace and maintaining her position even when she is forced to leave the protection of her son, who perhaps is not the best protection, as she has predicted his imminent failure.

Orderic provides another account of Kerbogha's mother, but his account shows her berating her son rather than beseeching him to seek peace. Orderic writes that "Kerbogha's mother came from the city of Aleppo to her son and began to criticize him severely for the enterprise he had undertaken, prophesying to him distinctly that he would be defeated by the Christians and would die within the year violently but not in battle."⁴⁸ In this account, Orderic transfers the trope of peacemaker to a non-Christian woman. He describes Kerbogha's mother as a "sorceress"⁴⁹ whose speech berates him for his violent actions, rather than seeks to stop him from these actions. In this passage, Orderic explains that Kerbogha, as a "boastful warrior silence[d] his tearful mother with haughty promises."⁵⁰ Therefore, Kerbogha's mother may have had hope that with this berating speech to her son, she would be able to halt his violent actions against the Christians.

The illustrations of Kerbogha's mother show that the traditional role of the female

⁴⁷ Guibert, 98.

⁴⁸ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History Book IX in The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, Vol. V, Ed. and Trans. by Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 97.

⁴⁹ Orderic Vitalis, Book IX, 97.

⁵⁰ Orderic Vitalis, Book IX, 97.

peacemaker was present in accounts of the crusades. Women are most often beseeching sons or husbands not to fight out of their love for them and their desire for the safety of their male kin. Yet, images of women in this role were altered in their depictions. For instance, as seen in the case of Kerbogha's mother, non-Christian women now urge peace because they recognize the power of the Christian God. Her portrayal in the sources reveals a woman acting in the traditional role of peacemaker while also acting as a mother advising her son in an attempt to keep him safe.

While crusader chroniclers maintained the traditional roles for women in violent situations within their portrayals of women creating images that are reminiscent of depictions of women in both Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman sources from the twelfth-century, they also changed many characterizations of women in these traditional roles to fit within the new context of a holy war. They adapted the roles of women as inciters, actors, and peacemakers to their situations. Chroniclers now portrayed female "goaders" as "encouragers," urging men to protect Christendom, while also protecting family honor. Hence, women were still portrayed in the traditional role, motivated by conventional concerns, and using conventional tropes. For the actions of men still greatly affected the standing of women in society and therefore, they would urge men to the actions that would reflect best upon them both and that would best secure their well-being and status. Yet, often those women encouraging men to crusade were also presented as having more devout motives as well. Also, women were still revealed as taking part in actions. For instance, women were present during

battles and they aided in breaking down the enemy's defenses as well as in the refreshment of men. Although the chroniclers at times depict women taking up weapons, the images of female actors show less violent depictions than those found in other medieval texts. Women were able to take part in the crusades even while staying at home, as their urging of men to participate, their prayers for the success of the Christian men, and their emotional and monetary sacrifices could be viewed as a new form of active participation. As Constance Rousseau so aptly expresses, "women could provide significant and meaningful assistance by wielding the spiritual and fiscal weapons of holy war, if not weapons on the battlefield."⁵¹ And finally, the role of female peacemakers evolves into one in which non-Christian women urge their male kin to cease violence against the Christians and perchance even to accept the Christian God. However, these women still use traditional modes of beseeching male kin. Hence, chroniclers still portrayed women in the traditional roles, motivated by conventional concerns, and using familiar tropes. The chroniclers' depictions of women reveal positive images of females in violent situations of the crusades as well as a transformation of the traditional roles.

⁵¹ Constance Rousseau, "Home Front and Battlefield: The Gendering of Papal Crusading Policy (1095-1221)," *Gendering the Crusades*, Ed. by Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 38.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

The standard roles for both male and female characters that medieval writers present in their texts create recognizable stock characters. This is particularly apparent in portrayals of violent women. Women continually appear as inciters, actors, and peacemakers in violent situations. Although these roles remain recognizable, nevertheless, they changed according to the location and context of the violence. Chroniclers from twelfth-century Scandinavia, Anglo-Norman England, and the Crusader Kingdoms portrayed women in these roles with various interpretations and characteristics according to the situations and regions in which they lived, showing both the versatility of these roles (in the fact that they remain present in texts through space and time) as well as their malleability (in their evolution to fit particular circumstances).

The Scandinavian saga writers portray women in violent situations that were typical of their everyday life. In these instances, the writers at times insert judgment of actions within their texts; in certain instances, writers imply evaluations of actions through references to Christianity. Such references often reveal women's actions as violent and rash and thus against Christian teachings. In reflecting upon earlier Scandinavian society in which power was less centralized, saga writers most often use negative language to discuss violent women that act in a manner that destabilized the community. These women, such as Hallgerda of *Njal's Saga*, are those who incite men to violence or commit violent acts themselves that appear to be performed without an acceptable

provocation and thus create discord within the community. Yet, women who incite men to violence or act violently themselves with their family's honor in mind or the best interests of their husbands or communities in mind are often either praised or described without obvious comment upon the acceptability of their actions. These women's actions were considered a normal part of everyday life. Furthermore, female peacemakers are almost always depicted positively; but, they are only successful when they verbalize their dependence upon their male kin for their personal safety and standing in society. Women obviously played an important part in the feuds; although female participation includes a wide range of actions, writers most often portray female characters as inciters of feuds. Therefore, the saga writers portray women acting in feuds, initiating, perpetuating, and resolving violent situations in accounts of their daily lives away from the formal legal proceedings.

When considering the three groups of texts examined in this thesis, it becomes evident that the female characters of the sagas are the most formulaically portrayed. Furthermore, the saga writers' depictions of violent women are often more detailed than their contemporaries' portrayals possibly because of the legendary nature of many of their accounts. Notably, the Scandinavian saga writers of the twelfth century were the farthest removed from the events that they recorded, perhaps lending to the formulaic quality of their depictions. Also, the saga writers were often simply recording original oral tales, rather than attempting to record historical events as they occurred. This too may add to the use of

recognizable characters in their portrayals of individuals particularly in the violent events that drive their narrative plots.

While saga writers' female portrayals include some implications of positive and negative ascriptions to their actions, the chroniclers of the twelfth-century civil war in England include more overtly positive and negative depictions in their portrayals of women as goaders, actors, and peacemakers. These depictions of the leading women, Maud and Matilda, are increasingly gendered, often emphasizing masculine characteristics of these women in times of their involvement in violence.

The chroniclers depict both Maud and Matilda, the leading women of the opposing sides of the civil war, in the recognizable roles for women in violent situations in the Middle Ages; they are both shown as goaders, actors, and peacemakers. Yet, these roles were adapted in the texts to the specific situations of the authors; in this case, the familiar occurrence of a succession crisis. The women are shown as goaders, but this role becomes one that may be termed "entreater." While they still use evocative language calling into question male honor like the women of the sagas, Maud and Matilda also entreat men to act on their behalf by emphasizing their frailty as women and thus the necessity of the male's aid. This use of perceived female vulnerability is often seen in the sagas when women are acting as peacemakers, but within the context of the civil war, this becomes a tool for "entreaters." When the chroniclers depict Maud's and Matilda's actions, they are most often official, such as leading troops or holding captives. These actions either led to or were the result of violence, yet, the

chroniclers do not mention specific violent actions of the women. This differs from the sagas in which women's involvement in violence is depicted with details, including the drawing of blood or the particular weapons used. And finally, the chroniclers also portray both women attempting to establish peace. But, the motive for peace is most often revealed to be a desire for an end to the war favorable to their particular cause. Thus the chroniclers do not depict the women using language in which they emphasize the need for a cessation of violence through their need of their male kin; therefore, the chroniclers do not illustrate either woman establishing peace.

The twelfth-century Anglo-Norman chroniclers often depict women positively as taking on masculine characteristics to carry out tasks that were required of them, therefore, revealing their allegiances. Yet, at times, the chroniclers sought to vilify the woman whose cause they opposed and in these depictions they used words such as "arbitrary" and "evil" to describe the actions of the woman or the events following certain actions.

The crusader chroniclers take these traditional roles for women and further transform them, emphasizing the religious aspect of female participation in the violence of the Crusades. While the chroniclers still depict women acting in the recognizable female roles in medieval violent situations including many familiar motives, they also include an emphasis upon religious inspiration for these women's actions. Along with their accentuation of religious motives, the chroniclers include language of praise for female actions within the events of the Crusade.

The Crusader chroniclers, like their contemporaries, include the three recognizable roles for violent women while transforming them to fit their situations. Female goaders become “encouragers,” urging men to carry out violent acts for the sake of Christendom. The portrayals of these women often include possible directly spoken dialogue, unlike those of their Anglo-Norman contemporaries whose entreaties were often relayed through letters and messengers. Within the dialogue, the chroniclers illustrate the women speaking directly and urging men not only to uphold their honor and maintain their reputation for military prowess, but also to carry out the mission of the Church as sanctioned by the Pope. Because of this religious support for the violence, female “encouragers” are depicted positively; they help their husbands find and maintain their courage and honor, while supporting the mission of the Church and aiding their fellow Christians in the East.

As actors, women take part in all aspects of the violence; they bring water to the men on the battlefield; they help in undermining defenses; and they even take up weapons and fight for Jerusalem. Also, within the specific context of the Crusades, women were able to take passive actions by offering support through prayers and fiscal contributions as well as through ensuring the running of the family estate while men were away. The most drastic alteration of female roles in crusader literature occurs in the portrayals of female peacemakers. In the Crusades, Christian females could not act as peacemakers while supporting the Christian mission. Thus, this role becomes one in which chroniclers may only portray non-Christian women positively. Thus crusader chroniclers show non-

Christian women in a positive manner in their urging of men to cease fighting the Christians, showing the women's reverence for and belief in the power of the Christian God. Furthermore, they may portray these women converting to Christianity (as in the case of the Muslim queen in the *Song of Roland*). Yet, even with the new qualifications for women carrying out this traditional feminine role, the chroniclers still portray these women using traditional modes of beseeching male kin, through the emphasis on their reliance upon them for social status and physical safety.

The twelfth-century texts examined within this thesis demonstrate the chroniclers' use of recognizable roles for women in violent situations. Despite medieval beliefs regarding gender and sexuality, indicating women's weakness and frailty, women had active roles within the violence of their societies. It is evident from medieval texts that women did in fact take part in violent events, the outcome of which greatly affected their well-being and social standing. The texts from the three areas considered, Scandinavia, Anglo-Norman England, and the Crusader Kingdoms, illustrate the presence of these roles for women in reality, in oral tradition, and in literary tradition. Further studies of medieval texts from other centuries and locations, such as the thirteenth-century text *Nibelungenlied* depicting violent Germanic women may show a continuation of these roles in medieval literature and oral tradition. This work has examined the wide-spread presence of depictions of active roles for women in violent situations in twelfth-century texts and the transformation of the nuances in these roles in particular locations and circumstances.

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