Introduction

In 1603, in the middle of the period when William Shakespeare was writing his most famous tragedies, Richard Knolles stated in his English history of the Ottoman Turks that the Saracens were "the first champions of the Mahometane superstition, who … yet held many great kingdomes both in Asia and Affricke, taken for the most part from the Christians."[1] However, as Knolles explains, this now fallen "Saracen" empire – an invented medieval term typically used to describe the Muslim opponents of Christian crusaders – was replaced by that of the Turks. He notes that the Turkish empire has "from a small beginning become the greatest terror of the world, and hold[s] in subiection many great and mightie kingdomes in Asia, Europe, and Affricke … [having] swallowed vp … so much of Christendome as farre exceedeth that which is thereof at this day left."[2] Knolles emphasizes the similarities between the two Muslim empires by stressing how much territory they have taken from Christians. Though he acknowledges that there are many causes for this perceived disaster and loss, he argues that if Christian rulers would unite their forces,

> they might long since not onely haue repressed [the Turkish sultan's] furie, and abated his pride, but … haue againe recouered from him most of those famous Christian kingdomes, which he by force against all right holdeth at this day in most miserable subiection and thraldome; many millions of the poore oppressed Christians in the meane time out of the furnace of tribulation … crying in vaine vnto their Christian brethren for reliefe.[3]

Through statements such as these, Knolles's history creates a link between the medieval and early modern periods through an ongoing pattern of loss and recovery – one that includes Christian realms and the fate of other "oppressed Christians" – that extends back to crusading activity in the eleventh century, when "God in mercie … stirred vp these most woorthie princes of the West … who … recouered the lesser ASIA, with a great part of SIRIA."[4] Despite being written in Protestant England, in many ways

Knolles's widely read history insists upon a continuity between the medieval and the modern world via holy violence that is seldom reflected in our popular or academic understanding of English writing.[5]

Knolles's use of the crusades to link the threat of the medieval Saracens to that of the early modern Ottoman Turks is only one example of a larger phenomenon: the narrative-generating power of crusading. For Knolles as well as for much of medieval and early modern Christian Europe, the explanation of how the Turks captured "Christian kingdomes" and how they, like the Saracens, would be defeated by united Christians extends back to 1095 when Pope Urban II at Clermont launched the series of campaigns that today are known as the First Crusade by telling a similar story of loss and recovery. There Urban is said to have reported that a "race of Persians … rejected by God … has invaded the lands of those Christians" in the area around Jerusalem known as the Holy Land, committing such atrocities so that only Western Christians could achieve the "task … of taking vengeance and wresting their conquests from them," but while doing so each of them would devote himself "as a living sacrifice" to God on this "holy pilgrimage" to acquire entrance to heaven.[6] This version of Urban's speech, which frames the First Crusade as a defensive recovery of lands elsewhere and the earning of personal salvation, is a key example of the remarkably enduring narrative structure of crusading that not only produced military conflicts throughout the Levant, Egypt, Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe, but also resulted in an large body of propagandist, historical, and literary texts justifying, explicating, or imagining such actions.

The similarities between Urban's and Knolles's explanations rely as much on story patterns – that is, a literary structure – as on historical events to represent crusading. From the beginning, crusading had a narrative component that addressed the medieval or early modern person on the individual and collective level: it told a highly compelling yet adaptable story of vengeance and rightful possession, of personal failure and possible expiation, and of loss and recovery. I call this structural pattern one of loss and recovery because it reflects the language of crusade discourse.[7] This book examines crusading's narrative-generating power as it is reflected in English literature from the medieval to the early modern period, specifically from *c.* 1300 to 1604. By synthesizing this pattern of loss and recovery as well as other key elements of crusade discourse into one paradigm, this study then employs that model to identify and analyze the kinds of stories that crusading produced in English literature. In so doing, it indicates how the stories themselves intersect with changing

historical and political concerns, and, by employing an interdisciplinary approach combining attention to cultural context with formal literary analysis, provides a richer understanding of crusading's continued appeal and influence long after Western Christians lost the Holy Land. English crusading literature, rather than merely reflecting historical developments, imagined alternative, albeit abstract solutions to real issues and often engaged in social criticism.

Throughout this study I use the term "crusading" rather than "the crusades" to refer to this general concept and range of behaviors, both because the recent work of historians has questioned the unitary meaning implied by the latter term and because crusading better captures how this historically distant, intolerant phenomenon blended religious discourse, experiential practices, and a narrative framework loosely channeling those practices even as it changed over the course of roughly 600 years. Crusading literature is particularly suitable for exploring several of the key questions that animate contemporary scholarship about interreligious relations and devotional activities in the Middle Ages and the early modern period because it foregrounds the tension between crusading's lofty idealism and religious prejudice and because it highlights how narratives of the past affect the present. This book explores literary representations of crusading activity in various English texts – some anonymous, popular medieval romances that are relatively unfamiliar to today's readers as well as drama by more familiar early modern authors such as Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe – and examines how those texts use crusading elements and narrative patterns as well as how audiences detected or responded to such elements. Placing these narratives in the context of historical and political writing as well as in relation to actual crusading practices, this study shows the significant effects of crusading on the English literary imagination and on English audiences, thus uncovering additional evidence for historical research and contributing to our investigation of medieval literary genres.

CRUSADING IN HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP

Whereas crusading may conjure up images of devout but ultimately misguided armies of medieval Christian knights marching on Jerusalem to fight for their faith against the forces of Islam, the historical reality was far more complex and diverse. Drawing on and mixing pre-existing notions of sacred violence and armed pilgrimage in European Christian thought, crusading could include, among other things, a papally proclaimed

military campaign to Jerusalem, a series of knightly raids against pagans in the Baltic, a war against heretical Christians in Europe, or the armed journey of a few individuals seeking spiritual benefits, and could be accompanied by the persecution of European Jews due to frenzied zeal. Beyond the confusion caused by the sheer range of crusading activities, there is an added terminological difficulty for us, since participants and authors in the medieval and early modern periods generally did not refer to these events as crusades. Words for "crusade" or "crusading" themselves did not exist in Europe until around the thirteenth century, and a term for "crusade" only entered the English language in a very limited form as "croiserie," derived from French, in the fourteenth century; moreover, no term for "crusader" existed until near the end of the twelfth century, when the Latin *crucesignatus* [one signed with the cross] was coined.[8] The word "crusade" was not used frequently in modern English until well into the eighteenth century.[9] Nonetheless, this lack of a unifying terminology arguably contributed to crusading's longevity, as it remained capable of adapting to shifting circumstances and local conditions.

Older historical studies of crusading attempted to resolve this predicament by imposing strict definitions on what constituted a crusade and on how long the movement lasted, with many concluding that crusading was a significant factor in medieval Europe from the military campaigns of the First Crusade (1096–9) and its capture of Jerusalem until 1291 with the loss of the last mainland Christian stronghold in the Holy Land.[10] More recently historians including Jonathan Riley-Smith, Norman Housley, Christopher Tyerman, Thomas Madden, and Helen Nicholson have abandoned this limited view, and instead have produced a considerable body of new scholarship that documents crusading's influence on subjects as diverse as liturgy, preaching, trade, legal privileges, family networks, painting, sculpture, propaganda, and conceptions of medieval social orders, though they generally have considered literary works to have little value as evidence.[11] While exploring different crusading experiences and institutions across multiple regions during a time period extending to the seventeenth century, historians have demonstrated how crusading had always been a collection of diverse activities combining the personal and the popular, the devotional and the political, that continued to be such despite the challenges of the Reformation to its theological underpinnings. Furthermore, although still fascinated by the military campaigns that define the popular image of crusading – the sack of Constantinople by French and Venetian crusaders on the Fourth Crusade (1202–4) or Louis IX of France's failed attempt to capture Egypt on the

Seventh Crusade (1248–54), for instance – historians have begun to study the crusading activity of individuals or small groups, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean, Iberia, or the Baltic, who sometimes acted outside of ecclesiastical authority. Therefore, as this research has shown, for a medieval or early modern audience crusading could mean either a large military campaign or the journey of a solitary pilgrim or small group.

This insight, however, generally is not reflected in English literary studies.[12] Nonetheless, there has been excellent work by literary scholars in the medieval and early modern periods on the relationship among crusading, Islam, and English identity, particularly for how literary texts can represent and transform social aspirations and anxieties related to historical crusading practices.[13] Studies of medieval literature by Geraldine Heng and Suzanne Yeager, for example, powerfully draw attention to medieval romances that represent crusading as the action of massed armies through nuanced theoretical and historical perspectives. Heng traces the origins of the medieval romance to the aftermath of the First Crusade, and views the genre as a cultural fantasy crucial for creating the imagined communal identity of a medieval nation.[14] Yeager's examination of the role of Jerusalem in crusade rhetoric demonstrates how the image of the holy city could be adapted by English authors to promote personal devotion, claims to moral superiority, or national identity. Recent work by Suzanne Conklin Akbari, by comparison, concentrates on the "relationship of religious and geographical alterity" in Western discourses of Islam and the Orient, and notes how this medieval Orientalism was used by literary works to define boundaries between Christian and Muslim.[15] All of these analyses support Nicola McDonald's general argument for the recuperation of popular medieval romances, which in her view cannot be dismissed "as crude, second-rate narratives that unquestioningly reproduce established ideologies," and thus contribute to my inquiry about crusading's narrative power and cultural influence in literary texts here.[16]

Early modern scholars, while also exploring Orientalist discourse and national identity, tend to focus on conversion and race by discussing drama by Shakespeare and his contemporaries for its relationship to the Ottoman Turks, revealing the significant combination of curiosity and fear in English culture resulting from extensive contacts with the East. Daniel Vitkus and Matthew Dimmock, for instance, draw on and extend the insights of Nabil Matar, who contrasts the historical interactions of early modern English people and Muslims with their dramatic portrayals and, importantly, notes the persistence of crusade rhetoric in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.[17] Additionally, Andrew King and Benedict

Robinson have begun to explore the influence of the medieval romance and crusading on depictions of Islam in early modern romance and drama in a way that underscores the value of considering texts from both periods together, though several aspects of the medieval tradition require further attention.[18]

I build on all this scholarship by considering literary texts that portray religious conflict between armies as well as those that present solitary protagonists undertaking a journey of redemption and reform; the latter have been overlooked by historians and literary scholars as crusading literature. By juxtaposing texts such as the anonymous romance *Richard Cœur de Lion*, which focuses on military conflict, with the anonymous *Sir Isumbras*, which describes a solitary journey, this book not only offers a fresh reading of traditional crusading texts but also shows how the different forms of crusading literature could address popular concerns about collective and private action while still constituting a recognizable group of stories.[19] Furthermore, with this richer understanding of the medieval tradition, we can view early modern drama by Shakespeare and his contemporaries not only as focused on conversion and racial identity, as several early modern scholars argue, but also as mainly continuous with medieval narratives in advocating united Christian action against the Turks to the populace despite the conciliatory attitude of Elizabeth I's government or the anti-Catholic polemic of ardent Protestant reformers.

THE CRUSADING ROMANCE REDEFINED

The English medieval romance has vexed literary scholars seeking to impose some meaningful order on it as a genre for some time.[20] Scholars have debated its major characteristics, subject matter, and intended audience, as well as its relationship to French romances, epic, religious writing, and folk material; they also have attempted to explain its features by exploring the arrangement of manuscript collections or the persistence of romance motifs over time, with some even concluding that it is not a genre at all, but simply a mode.[21] It is true that the surviving examples of English romances can appear to have little in common overall; moreover, there was not much theoretical discussion of romance as a genre during the Middle Ages, and the word "romance," originally meaning texts written in the vernacular as opposed to Latin, was rarely used with precision by medieval authors.[22] Nonetheless, most academics today agree that romance did function as a meaningful category and that analysis should avoid arbitrary definition by emphasizing description over prescription.

Although this book does not address the general definition of the medieval romance, its redefinition and analysis of the subgenre of the crusading romance contributes to this larger discussion by suggesting how medieval authors and audiences could associate certain stories based on recurrent but flexible narrative features that pointed to familiar cultural discourses.

Literary critics primarily have examined the influence of crusading on medieval England through the genre of the crusading romance, which they normally define as a romance depicting the confrontation of a Christian military power with a non-Christian one in another country because the latter is non-Christian.[23] Studies of crusading in English romances, while acknowledging variations in the use of crusade discourse, tend to concentrate on a handful of texts, such as *Richard Cœur de Lion*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and *The Sege of Melayne*, and tend to focus on the implications of such texts for the literary parameters of the medieval romance.[24] Other narratives, however, including *Sir Isumbras*, *Sir Gowther*, and *Guy of Warwick*, have occupied an uncertain place in medieval English literature; they have been labeled "homiletic," "secular hagiography," or "penitential" romances because of their peculiar mix of chivalric concerns with religious or edifying themes.[25] In contrast to the traditionally discussed crusading romances, these texts often feature solitary protagonists who, through suffering or hardship, learn or display some moral, Christian virtue; furthermore, some of these texts derive their themes or major plot elements from saints' legends or related material. Critics continue to debate the appropriate category for these romances, but in my view several of them are better understood as crusading romances, as they focus on the personal redemption and salvation of knights who battle Saracens for the defense or expansion of Christendom with or without ecclesiastical approval.

My approach to the crusading romance thus differs from previous scholarship in that I seek to redefine the genre using historians' recent insights about the varying forms crusading could take and then explore its shifting political and cultural concerns about crusading practices themselves over time. Methodologically my view of genre development follows the broad insights of Helen Cooper's study of romance motifs. Cooper, drawing on Alastair Fowler's work on genre, on Hans Robert Jauss's concept that audiences respond to a "horizon of expectation," and on philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of family resemblances in classification, argues that the romance genre is "best thought of as a lineage or a family of texts" that changes over time; similar features are redeployed in different contexts and acquire new meanings as texts adapted to changing circumstances and interests.[26] This book identifies key features of crusade

discourse and uses them to redefine the genre of the crusading romance according to its "horizon of expectation," or the preconceptions and cultural codes for the genre, thereby uncovering a larger array of literary texts belonging to this family. I then assess their engagement with the shifting concerns in historical crusading theory and practice by situating these romances alongside cultural documents and historical events that not only illuminate the romances' topical responses but also reveal their imaginative innovations. Just as crusading remained a personal, penitential action that was aimed at all social levels throughout its history (albeit with shifting expectations for participation) without a definitive terminology, so too the crusading romance appealed to a wide audience, including wealthy merchants and other literate groups in addition to the nobility, without any precise genre label. Moreover, just as crusading practices modified older traditions of pilgrimage and sanctified violence to create something new, so too the various English crusading romances often adapt older sources to offer an imagined solution to crusading's contradictions or problems and to portray a large military campaign or an individual journey for salvation or a mixture of both.

In order to investigate this genre in a descriptive fashion, I propose a formal set of family features for the crusading romance that are drawn from repeated key ideas in medieval crusade discourse, as these would shape authors' and audiences' expectations about what crusading meant and how references to it could be recognized. My examples here, which span the roughly 600 years of crusading history, include early historical accounts of Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont, a fourteenth-century crusading treatise, a fourteenth-century chronicle of a military order in Prussia, and a seventeenth-century English history, though their main concepts can also be found in other forms of crusade discourse, such as papal edicts, crusade sermons, and the evidence of rituals or legal documents. By identifying these concepts in crusade discourse and using them to redefine the English crusading romance, we can assess a given text via the inclusion of these general features, though not all need be present: an ecclesiastically defined military campaign against non-Christians; individual struggles for salvation and the (re)gaining of physical or spiritual goods; the transformative imagery of the cross; the defense or reform of the church or Christendom; pilgrimages leading to or involving armed combat; and the combination of indulgences or penitence with the conversion of or conflict with non-believers. Underlying all of these features is a common narrative pattern of loss and recovery that in my view is crucial to crusade discourse and to the crusading romance. From the beginning crusading was presented not as a

war of conquest but as one of reconquest; this war, motivated by revenge or charitable love for suffering co-religionists or both, could involve the recovery of legitimate possessions for Christendom as well as the individual's "recovery" of a state free from sin.

Though there has been much debate about its foundational status, Urban II's speech at Clermont in 1095 retrospectively became a focal point for crusade discourse because of the subsequent success of the First Crusade in capturing Jerusalem.[27] Several supposed versions of Urban's speech survive from contemporary or near contemporary sources; despite the passage of centuries and innovations in various aspects of crusading, later crusade discourse continued to highlight many of the components of this speech to describe and justify crusading. According to the anonymous *Gesta francorum* [Deeds of the Franks] (*c.* 1101), Urban presented crusading only as a form of personal redemption: taking the cross is a means to save one's soul through suffering, which is the reason to follow "the footsteps of Christ" in the journey to the Holy Land.[28] The version by Fulcher of Chartres in his *Historia Hierosolymitana* [A history of the expedition to Jerusalem] (*c.* 1101–28) maintains this link between personal salvation and the imagery of the cross but adds several other features, linking crusading to pilgrimage, the remission of sins, the redirection of knightly violence, and rightful ownership:

> You must hasten to carry aid to your brethren dwelling in the East … For the Turks … have attacked them … They have seized more and more of the lands of the Christians, have … killed or captured many people, have destroyed churches, and have devastated the kingdom of God. If you allow them to continue much longer they will conquer God's faithful people more extensively … For all those going thither there will be remission of sins … Let those … who are accustomed to wantonly wage private war against the faithful march upon the infidels … Let those who have long been robbers now be soldiers of Christ … Let those who have been hirelings for a few pieces of silver now attain an eternal reward.[29]

Noting how Muslims "terras Christianorum … occupando" [seized … the lands of the Christians], "ecclesias subvertendo" [destroyed churches], and have "regnum Dei vastando" [devastated God's kingdom], Fulcher's version concludes that the crusaders must drive these people from "regionibus nostrorum" [our lands] as a way of protecting the church and of reclaiming lost property.[30] Fulcher's much fuller explanation of Urban's speech broadens the *Gesta*'s focus on personal salvation to include political claims and an implicit pattern of loss and recovery; this tendency can also be seen in Robert the Monk's popular version (*c.* 1107), which contains many of the same main ideas, such as the sign of the cross, the lost lands, and

a pilgrimage resulting in salvation, but his text adds two other components by describing how Muslims forcibly converted Christians and how the "ulciscendum … labor" [task … of taking vengeance] falls to the crusaders.[31] At an early date, then, crusade discourse had already established a group of related concepts that explained crusading and that could be invoked by literary authors to represent crusading practices.

The three other early accounts of Urban's speech by Baldric of Dol (*c.* 1108), Guibert of Nogent (*c.* 1108), and William of Malmesbury (*c.* 1125) repeat equivalent ideas, stressing how fellow Christians, the church, and Christian lands have been attacked, how crusading can lead to or prevent conversion, and how the crusaders would gain the possessions of the enemy as well as the "gloriosum martyrii munus" [glorious reward of martyrdom].[32] Significantly, William's account, the only version by an English author, is found in his *Gesta regum Anglorum* [History of the English kings]; it stresses that "there was no [people] so remote … as not to send some part of itself" on the journey and that Robert II of Normandy took "English and Normans" with him, thus providing a wider sense of the regions participating and indicating how English authors could view the First Crusade not as a "French" invention but as part of their shared historical experience through the Normans.[33] While never losing sight of the *Gesta*'s concern for individual salvation, most early accounts of Urban's speech elaborate ideas of holy warfare and individual pilgrimage that constitute, in the words of historian Christopher Tyerman, an "intrinsic duality" in crusading, since it balanced military aid and motivation with the "transcendent purpose of serving God … as an individual and collective act of piety and redemption."[34]

This duality and several of crusading's key ideas expressed in the Christian historical sources can also be found in the perspective of groups that found themselves the victims of crusader attacks, thus confirming the prevalence of this general understanding of crusading. In the Hebrew crusade chronicle known today as the *Mainz Anonymous*, perhaps composed during the First Crusade, the chronicler describes the unauthorized slaughter and forced conversion of European Jewish communities in the Rhineland, including cities such as Speyer, Worms, and Mainz, by groups of crusaders in 1096.[35] This series of massacres resulted in the deaths of thousands of Jews, many of whom killed their own families and themselves rather than be forcibly converted. The chronicler understands the crusaders' overall purpose and remarks on their behavior, relating that they "united and decided … to wage war, and to clear a way to Jerusalem, the Holy City, and to come to the tomb of the crucified one."[36] However,