

THE SCANDAL OF ANTIOCH

ARLYN DIAMOND, UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS



When I told a colleague of mine in American Studies that I was writing on multiculturalism in the Middle Ages, he said that he had always thought that in my period multiculturalism meant swords and bloodshed. It was depressing not to be able to tell him that he was wrong, but if Robert Bartlett's compelling account in *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Social Change* (1993) is correct, those of us who study the culture of medieval Europe must reconcile ourselves to a hegemonic narrative, driven by an ideology of conquest and colonization. Whatever we understand by contested terms like 'diversity' or 'multiculturalism', it seems clear that we employ them in our scholarship because of the world we wish to live in now, one which might tolerate, even celebrate heterogeneity. Just as feminists refused to accept a past uniformly dominated by clerical misogyny and patriarchal scholarship, discovering instead the complexity of women's presence and a whole new realm of texts and ideas, so now we seek a narrative of reciprocity, in which encounters with difference were productive, not inevitably hostile. Unfortunately, so far what we find are examples of interaction which, if positive, are only local or temporary or exceptional. Moreover, that which we seek, examples of change and growth nurtured by encounters with those who did not belong to the feudal Christian West, is exactly that which, for obvious reasons, our European sources (like, unfortunately, our Anglo-European scholarship) ignore or repress.

Richard of Devizes, in his chronicle of the reign of Richard I, while praising Richard's mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, says:

Many know what I would that none of us knew. This same queen, during the time of her first husband, was at Jerusalem. Let no one say more about it; I too know it well. Keep silent!

While on crusade with her in 1148, her husband, Louis VII, "that most Christian ruler," as chroniclers like to refer to him, became suspicious of the attentions paid to Eleanor by her uncle, Prince Raymond. On the advice of his courtiers and against her will he dragged her away from the temptations of Antioch, to Jerusalem and then back to Paris, where at her insistence they were divorced. What is being silenced here by Richard, and, as far as I can tell historians and biographers ever since, is more interesting and potentially more subversive than sexual scandal.

The domestic drama which is all that students have seen in this episode obscures the possible meanings of Antioch for Eleanor. Reduced to the role of unfaithful and/or aggrieved wife, she is denied the full complexity of her decision to take the cross, and her status as heiress of Aquitaine, able to contribute a large contingent of troops. We might like to believe that women are inherently more peaceful than men, but we know that a number of women, despite discouragement from the church, went on crusade. Eyewitness accounts describe them not just suffering equally en route, but helping build fortifications, haul supplies and weapons, and even fighting on occasion. These women appeared to share fully in the ideology and experience of crusading, just as some aristocratic women participated fully in the aggressive and unstable governance of Outremer. For example Alice, the daughter of Baldwin and widow of the younger Bohemond, refused to give up the rule of Antioch. Despite the fact that after the death of

Henry II Eleanor showed herself to be an effective ruler, commentators seem unable to imagine that she might have seen in Antioch an opportunity to engage more fully in the kind of high-stakes political maneuvering characteristic of her era and class.

To stay in Antioch, for Eleanor, might also have implied a choice of cultures rather than lovers. Her marriage to Louis meant a change from the more cultivated and open world of the south, one which Maria Rosa Menocal has argued was strongly influenced by Arabic art and learning, for a court dominated by religious patriarchy. Commentators like Bernard of Clairvaux, one of Louis's chief advisors, were deeply suspicious of the pleasure that those Crusaders who settled in the so-called Holy Land, figures like Raymond, took in their new, hybrid, sophisticated environment. It is almost impossible to get a sense of peaceful interaction between Franks and others, Christian and Jewish and Muslim, from European sources, except in the area of trade, since most of their authors were propagandists for the Crusades. In particular, we know very little about the contact that women of the upper classes might have had with local populations. Nonetheless, in Arabic sources such as the writings of the traveller Ibn Jubayr, who marvels at the way Christians and Muslims travel freely through each other's territory, or Usama Ibn Munqidh, to whom Templars apologize when a newly-arrived Frank tries to prevent him from praying, we get a sense of mutual accommodations of difference and perhaps even respect.

Was Antioch merely a theater in which the dramas of the West played themselves out, or did the East represent something more? For the bold, the curious, the dissatisfied—and Eleanor was all of those things—perhaps the East was the realm of possibility. Its very difference might have suggested alternatives to the xenophobic and narrow world the Crusaders came from, but we do not know what differences Eleanor might have seen or welcomed since accounts have focussed on her alleged infidelity rather than on her perceptions and desires. She could not stay in Antioch. The power of state and church, Louis VII and the Pope, were too much for her. According to John of Salisbury, it was claimed that "it would be a lasting shame to the kingdom of the Franks if in addition to all the other disasters it was reported that the king had been deserted by his wife, or robbed of her." The very familiarity of this narrative, a soap opera in which Eleanor has been the star for over 800 years, has blinded us to the more significant scandals of Antioch: the unwritten drama of women's real presence in the East, and their roles in the paradoxical epic of the Crusades. "Travel to exotic new lands, meet interesting people, and kill them," as the old anti-war slogan said.

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WRITING "POCAHONTAS AT THE MASQUE"

KAREN ROBERTSON, VASSAR COLLEGE

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When visiting the Jamestown settlement, I saw a young boy of about eight, fair haired and blue eyed, who with his parents was looking at the statue of Pocahontas, a pleasant bronze of a girl that marks the entrance into the museum. The boy said, "Dirty Indian" and spat at the statue. The parents said nothing in reprimand or comment. I was startled by the suddenness of his hostility as well as by their silence. That moment crystallized a long curiosity I had had about the interactions between the earliest English settlers, the native inhabitants, and the formation of our present codes. My decision to write about Pocahontas was formed after several years of teaching both Renaissance drama and "Introduction to Women's Studies," a course which emphasizes a recognition of the grids of race and class that intertwine in the construction of gender. To examine the construction of race in the early seventeenth century, I decided to try to reconstruct the perspective of Pocahontas, an outsider, albeit a highly privileged one, who actually saw English society herself.

Traditional lore about Pocahontas centers on her rescue of an English colonist, John Smith, when he was about to be killed by her father's warriors. This is often represented as a romance narrative, and it is frequently erroneously assumed that at her subsequent marriage to an Englishman, she married John Smith, not John Rolfe. She visited England, as a demonstration of Virginia Company success, and died at Gravesend on her return to America. The core of this story can be found in three major sources: John Rolfe's letter justifying his marriage to an Indian woman, Ralph Hamor's description of her kidnapping and conversion (1615), and most extensively in John Smith's *A True Relation* (1608), and his much later *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624). English observers in London, John Chamberlain, and Samuel Purchas, a popularizer of narratives of voyage and colonization, also describe her briefly. The curious fact, recorded in John Chamberlain's letter to Dudley Carleton, that Pocahontas on her visit to England had attended a masque at court before returning to Virginia offered me an intriguing conjunction of a native American woman in the audience of a dramatic performance.

Here are some of the problems I found in considering that odd conjunction. First I had to remove the accretions of romance that have encrusted the story. Then I had to evaluate the narratives written by Englishmen for evidence of their attitudes toward women and American Indians. While I could not recover direct evidence of Pocahontas's reaction to the English, I found textual and visual moments that suggest the challenge that she made to European discursive systems. In what I would call a process of feminist archaeology (Deborah Rubin's term), I moved from more traditional activities of literary history—analysis of Ben Jonson's masque and colonial narratives—to the feminist application of the perspective of gender to the historical study of literacy—a task that