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FINDING THE FAMILIAR IN THE FOREIGN: SARACENS, MONSTERS, AND MEDIEVAL GERMAN LITERATURE

by

Carl Roland Follmer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Arts
degree in German in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Glenn Ehrstine

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MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Carl Roland Follmer

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the
thesis requirement for the Master of the Arts degree in German
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To Robin, Peyton, Michael, and William

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INTRODUCTION

DEFINING THE OTHER, DEFINING THE SELF

All cultures, both ancient and modern, grapple with the question of self. What is it that defines one culture from another? At least part of the answer comes through defining, and often excluding, other peoples. Whether based on geographic location, religion, wealth, race or lineage, most societies identify themselves, at least in part, by what they are not. A clearly defined cultural identity allows a society to compare itself to, and insulate against, "Others." Indeed, "the self does not reach an understanding of itself without the clear demarcation to 'the other' and also through an intricate interaction with 'the other.'"[1]

In medieval Europe, the legendary East represented the ultimate "Other" for several reasons. First, and most obviously, the East was, simply put, not the West. In an age that saw little travel, geography magnified cultural otherness. For most people, even travelling small distances represented a long and often dangerous journey to an unfamiliar area. Given this, the vast distances from Europe to the Middle East yielded radical cultural differences. Additionally, the cultural and natural distinctions between regions became the subject of lore. Returning European crusaders told of different climates and animal life than could be found in Europe. An individual's experience of the East and its marvels insisted upon his or her own subjectivity. In other words, European travelers

[1] Albrecht Classen, "The Self, the Other, and Everything in Between: Xenological Phenomenology of the Middle Ages," in *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York: Routledge, 2002), xi.

and crusaders judged the foreign peoples and regions with which they came into contact on the only standards they knew: their own.

Second, because the Catholic Church loomed large over medieval Europe, anything that deviated from medieval Christian ideals seemed incredibly foreign. Inside of Europe, Jews endured cultural marginalization and overt racism while living *among* their tormenters. Medieval Christians did not generally view their Jewish neighbors with the same level of fear and revulsion that they largely reserved for the imagined monstrous races of the East, but Jewish persecution resulted from a similar imaginative construct imposed to varying degrees upon Jews, Muslims, and monstrous or hybrid peoples.[2] While European Jews did not seem totally foreign, most medieval Europeans viewed the Muslim 'Saracens' of the East at large as an absolute "Other." This idea, based largely on hearsay and pseudo-fact, created a distorted view of Islam shared by most, if not all Europeans. Christian Europeans participated in crusades abroad and pogroms at home, thus establishing their faith as superior in all regions of the known world. This had a profound impact on the disparate communities of Europe, which between 950 and 1350 gradually began to think of themselves in terms of a singular Christian European identity.[3]

Third, economic status played a key role in defining one homogeneous group from another, regardless of location or religion. Indeed, many of the nobility regarded the common man to be incredibly foreign. As David F. Tinsley

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[2] Paul Freedman, "The Medieval Other: The Middle Ages as Other," in *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University, 2002), 6.

[3] Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 15. Kontje is careful to note that *national* identities did not take shape until the early modern period, but that the identity in this case transcends modern geographic borders.

notes, "for the nobility…commoners are foreigners by blood and peasants are slightly more than animals."[4] Consequently, nobility from one land occasionally felt more akin to the nobility of another than to a commoner from his or her own region. While native aristocracies often struggled for survival after European incursion, European aristocrats occasionally mingled with native elites after invading Eastern lands, allowing for the survival of some indigenous aristocracies.[5] Additionally, medieval princely courts entertained foreign dignitaries, which enabled potential foreign brides or suitors to create aristocratic cross-cultural connections through marriage.[6]

Finally, while cultural demarcations based on family lineage were not a major source of division (excepting economic differences between families), one cannot ignore the element of racism in the formation of cultural identification in medieval Europe. This racism extended beyond skin color to the monstrous, quasi-human creatures that supposedly inhabited the East, as recorded in many medieval narratives. Medieval European Christians frequently used the term *Saracen* to describe "a racialized figure of ultimate difference," most often a Muslim, but at times a member of other non-Christian cultures.[7] While the medieval notion of race inherently centered on the body's skin and unique physical characteristics (such as the One Stars, a mythical cycloptic race in *Herzog*

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[4] David F. Tinsley, "The Face of the Foreigner in Medieval German Courtly Literature," in *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York: Routledge, 2002), 48.

[5] Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* (London: Penguin, 1993), 56.

[6] Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, 230.

[7] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "On Saracen Enjoyment: Some Fantasies of Race in Late Medieval France and England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31:1 (2001): 115.

Ernst), race in the Middle Ages also incorporated gender, theology, and sexuality.[8]

Like other European literatures of the period, German literature shows a fascination with the East and its inhabitants, both real and fictional. The appeal of the East for medieval society was driven by fantasy, escapism, or simply fear of the unknown.[9] However, treatment of Eastern civilizations in medieval German literature is by no means universal and may oscillate between "cautious tolerance and outright hostility."[10] Three representative genres of the medieval period illustrate that no set formula exists for the representation of foreign peoples in medieval German narratives. In the first case the Spielmannsepos *Herzog Ernst* features the protagonist interacting, both negatively and positively, with the monstrous and yet often courtly peoples of the East. Second, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, perhaps the best-known German Arthurian romance, portrays the nature of religious, cultural, and even racial conversion in the story of Gahmuret, his heathen bride Belacane, and their son Feirefiz. Finally, the German adaptation of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* by Otto von Diemeringen embarks on a much different journey than the original version. The Diemeringen redaction of the travel narrative often emphasizes European cultural and religious superiority where Mandeville's original work promotes a medieval form of cultural acceptance.

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[8] Cohen, *On Saracen Enjoyment*, 116.

[9] John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Press, 1981), 24.

[10] Timothy R. Jackson, "Cristen, Ketzer, Heiden, Jüden; Questions of Identity in the Middle Ages," in *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*, ed. James Hodkinson and Jeffrey Morrison, (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2009), 31.

An investigation of these works brings two main questions to the fore. First, how are the peoples of the East portrayed? More importantly, how does this portrayal fit in with the medieval European ideals of chivalry, honor and piety? In other words, are there any cultural commonalities that the peoples of the East share with their European counterparts despite differences in race, religion, or culture? If "other" peoples indeed exhibit some cultural similarities to Europeans, what effect does this have on a European identity? As we will see, the peoples of the East are often depicted in medieval German literature as barbaric, monstrous, or demonic, yet this caricature is by no means uniform. Medieval authors just as frequently depict Eastern races as virtuous, chivalric, and even pious. The unknown author of *Herzog Ernst* projected these values onto several groups of creatures, while Wolfram portrays courtly nature in *Parzival* as a guide from heathendom to Christianity. Diemeringen, on the other hand, represents an adaptation of Mandeville's original text through attributing salutary Eastern traditions to European influence, thus portraying Europe as part-creator of the medieval East.

Herzog Ernst, *Parzival,* and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* have received relatively little attention as they pertain to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, which claims that the Western world consistently places itself academically, politically, and militarily above the East. They examine Eastern cultures through a lens of a perceived European cultural and intellectual superiority, which enables clear statements to emerge about Eastern value as seen from a European perspective. The Orientalist lens reveals that Herzog Ernst uses European courtly values of chivalry to judge Eastern civilizations, that Muslim purity and virtue in Wolfram's *Parzival* is only realized through religious and racial

conversion, and that Diemeringen's adaptation of Mandeville's *Travels* devalue Eastern curiosities and traditions in an effort to promote European influence and Christian unity. The impact of Orientalism is most poignant in Diemeringen's rendering of Mandeville's *Travels*, which despite being the most popular medieval German language *Travels* version remains somewhat obscure, and receives attention in conjunction with Orientalism here for the first time.

Further, each author deals with the Eastern "Other" differently in both positive and negative depictions. This allowed for a dynamic portrayal of the East from one text to another, rather than a flat treatment across genres. The depictions of the monstrous races of the East served to satisfy Western curiosity regarding foreign lands and helped to enable a cultural identity for the white Christian inhabitants of Europe. This identity was based, at least in part, on an assumption of European supremacy whose foundation lay in the general European idea of the nature of the East, its peoples, religion, and geography.

CHAPTER I

ORIENTALISM AND MEDIEVAL GERMAN LITERATURE

Any discussion of medieval Europe's literary encounters with the East first requires a cultural framing regarding Western attitudes. In the introduction to his book, *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said notes that the East was an "integral part of European *material* civilization and culture."[11] Most of his discussion pertains to Western discourse since the late eighteenth century, but significant portions of the phenomena he identifies pertain to the medieval era. Said's omission of medieval Orientalist elements is curious given Western efforts to conquer Jerusalem during the Crusades, as well as the overall hostile tone of medieval literature towards the Orient.[12] While medieval Europe did not yet exercise the cultural hegemony at the heart of Said's Orientalism, the Crusades proved to be precursors of Western colonialism.

Said's argument is based on the Foucauldian idea of viewing the world through discourse. Discourse inherently generates knowledge and a sense of "truth" that is passed among conversational participants, though the information may not be wholly accurate. Further, discourse encompasses "institutional and conceptual structures," and ascribes authority to discourse contributors.[13] In this context, Said argues for the existence of a shared European discourse, in which Europeans engaged, and to a certain extent continue to practice (with the aid of

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[11] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2. For the purposes of this discussion, we can understand Said's "Orient" to describe the larger Eastern world seen in the literature discussed in this paper.

[12] Suzanne Conklin Akbari, "From Due East to True North: Orientalism and Orientation," in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 19.

[13] Burton Hatlen, "Michel Foucault and the Discourse(s) of English," *College English* 7 (1988): 787.

the larger Western world), a self-inflating school of thought that downplays Eastern contributions to Western society and promotes a motif of Occidental superiority. One of his many definitions of the term *Orientalism* is that of "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[14] Said focuses his definition of Orientalism to include political/military and academic authority over the East. Germany's scattered power structure during the Middle Ages did not allow for unified military action. Despite Friedrich Barbarossa's co-sponsorship of the Third Crusade, German participation in the Crusades mostly came in the form of bands of individuals for whom war was a moral action.[15] While monasteries offered education to the clergy, Germany's fledgling university system provided higher-level instruction, but only to male nobility and other high-ranking members of society.[16] Despite having German universities in Prague and Heidelberg by 1386 many Germans seeking higher education travelled Italy or France.[17] These institutions became participants in a pan-European learned discourse that contributed to the formation of a European identity.

While medieval Germany witnessed a minimal amount of scholarly work regarding the East, it saw no shortage of non-academic fiction writing on the topic of Saracens or Eastern wonders. This contributed to the formation of

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[14] Said, *Orientalism*, 3. Said's definition of the term *Orientalism* is incredibly fluid, and occasionally self-serving. While he successfully brings the West's biased treatment of the East to light, his argument attempts to reach a bit too far at times. Regardless of any weaknesses in his argument or style, his main ideas are accurate and important.

[15] Carl Erdmann, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 19.

[16] Rainer Christoph Schwinges, "Die Universität als sozialer Ort des Adels im deutschen Spätmittelalter," in *Grand Tour: Adeliges Reisen und europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Rainer Babel and Werner Paravicini (Ostfildern, Germany: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2005), 359.

[17] Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, 288.

German Orientalism. Participation in the larger European Orientalist discourse proved vital for Germans who sought to overcome their sense of cultural and political marginalization and confirm their place among other European powers.[18] Drawing on Said's definition of Orientalism as Western domination over the Orient, Todd Kontje notes that medieval German literature "conceives of the non-Christian world as an enemy to be overcome, a bride to be won, and an ancient realm of partial revelation since superseded by Christian truth."[19] This, combined with Germany's scattered power structure "contributed to the development of a peculiarly German Orientalism. German writers oscillated between identifying their country with the rest of Europe against the Orient and allying themselves with selected parts of the East against the West."[20] While Kontje may overstate German writers' willingness to ally Germany with the East, he is certainly correct that one of the main driving forces of German Orientalism came from writers, and not necessarily academics. Said's model of European domination did not merely occur in a physical manner, such as colonial occupation, but in a pan-European imaginative form as well, a phenomenon in which Germany fully participated.[21]

The concept of *imaginative* Orientalism pertains to medieval Germany more than any other of Said's Orientalist forms. Said acknowledges a constant interchange between academic and imaginative Orientalism, and describes

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[18] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 5.

[19] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 20.

[20] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 2.

[21] Said, *Orientalism*, 2-4.

Germany's participation in Orientalism as mostly classical and intellectual.[22] In other words, Germany's view of the Orient was, for the most part, realized in "lyrics, fantasies and even novels" rather than in political, military, or even, in the case of the Middle Ages, academic influence.[23] Consequently, Orientalism in medieval Germany expressed itself through literary works. Said's notion of imaginative Orientalism lays the groundwork for viewing *Herzog Ernst*, *Parzival*, and *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* as works that display, and are rooted in, an inherent Western bias towards Christianity, chivalry, and courtly virtue. As Said notes, Orientalism consistently "puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[24] None of these three works exhibit the same amount of Orientalist tendencies; the common Orientalist thread in *Ernst, Parzival* and Mandeville's *Travels* is that all three employ "'strong' ideas, doctrines and trends ruling the culture" to judge the peoples and natural phenomena of the East. While *Ernst*, *Parzival*, and the *Travels* advocate for European culture, they also strike a relativist tone through the acknowledgement of Eastern beauty and virtue. These moments transcend the perceived European superiority common in medieval narratives and instead recognize the unique worth of Eastern cultures. Herzog Ernst's willingness to assimilate into a culture of cyclopses, Wolfram's "sense of humor and tolerance towards the foreign," and Mandeville's acknowledgement that Muslim piety may

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[22] Said, *Orientalism*, 19.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Said, *Orientalism*, 7.

exceed that of Christianity are examples of a proto-relativist theme running throughout these narratives.[25]

Nevertheless, the imposition of European values on foreign cultures took great prominence in the Middle Ages as discussions of foreign peoples, both human and monstrous, often went beyond simple exoticism and into Eurocentric moral implications of difference and likeness.[26] In *Herzog Ernst*, Ernst views Eastern cultures through the lens of European chivalry, which he finds abundant in certain monstrous, yet courtly races. Similarly, Wolfram's *Parzival* portrays the heathen kingdom of Zazamanc in courtly terms, which enables an unusual blending of racial and religious characteristics that consistently point towards Europeanization through conversion to Christianity. *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* place value on the capability of certain Muslim areas to convert to Christianity, though Otto von Diemeringen's highly Orientalist German adaptation discounts any value attributed by Mandeville to Eastern cultures. Through close textual analysis of each narrative a clear Orientalist pattern emerges.[27] This pattern contributed to a larger movement to shape the discourse within Europe about the East, and can be seen across the two hundred years between the appearances of *Herzog Ernst* (around 1170) and Diemeringen's *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (around 1360).

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[25] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 9.

[26] Freedman, *The Medieval Other*, 2.

[27] Said, *Orientalism*, 21. In such analyses, Said suggests examining textual elements such as style, setting, and narrative devices.

CHAPTER II

HERZOG ERNST: MONSTROUS CHIVALRY, SARACEN AGGRESSION

Herzog Ernst represents the medieval literary genre of the *Spielmannsepik*, and probably appeared sometime in the late 12th century.[28] Typically, *Spielmannsepen* are an amalgamation of various oral performance traditions and literary structures. Kurt Ruh stresses an open definition for *Spielmannsepen* as they are neither Arthurian works, nor are they works of antiquity.[29] Their rhyme structure lends itself particularly well to reading aloud, but not towards the individual recitation used by bards.[30] Of the five works traditionally included in the category of *Spielmannsepen*, only *König Rother* appears in a single version, namely in verse form; all of the others appear, at some point, in both verse and prose versions.[31] Additionally, *Spielmannsepen* usually feature a *Problemstruktur* that is akin to the *Doppelwegstruktur* seen in Arthurian romance, in that the hero suffers some form of misfortune and sets about to regain his former standing. In terms of content, *Herzog Ernst* is the only member of the genre that lacks a bride quest.[32] Despite the somewhat muddled nature of the genre, there are some general characteristics most *Spielmannsepen* exhibit. For example, most incorporate some version of a crusade and at least one encounter with not only a

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[28] Bernhard Sowinski, ed., *Herzog Ernst* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1970), 422.

[29] Kurt Ruh, *Höfische Epik des deutschen Mittelalters* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1967), 61.

[30] Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, 63.

[31] David Blamires, *Herzog Ernst and the Otherworld Voyage* (Manchester: University Press, 1979), 1.

[32] Blamires, *Herzog Ernst*, 69. Blamires does note, however, that in the strophic version, Ernst is successful in rescuing the Indian princess and couple later weds. Excepting this single instance, *Herzog Ernst* remains the only *Spielmannsepik* to exclude a strong romantic element.

foreign people, but often a monstrous race of quasi-human origins. Indeed, *Herzog Ernst* features no shortage of monstrous beings encountered by Ernst during his Eastern travels. As *Spielmannsepen* contributed in large measure to the public imagination about the East, the treatment of Eastern races in *Herzog Ernst* is of primary concern.[33]

Herzog Ernst does not originally intend to mount a crusade and interact with foreign peoples, but does so only after a violent falling out with the Emperor, his stepfather. Having succumbed to the lies of his advisor, Count Heinrich, the Emperor believes that Ernst represents a threat to the power of the Emperorship and launches an attack on Ernst's castles. After a failed assassination attempt by Ernst against the Emperor, Ernst sees no other option than to venture on a crusade to the Holy Land (although Ernst does not make this destination explicitly clear, it is implied) in an effort to obtain honor from man and forgiveness from God. However, Ernst's motives do not entirely represent a form of chivalry, nor are they overly pious.

> wir haben wider gote getân
> daz wir im billîch müezen
> ûf sîn hulde büezen,
> daz er uns die schulde ruoche vergeben
> her nâch, obe wirz geleben,
> und wider heim ze lande komen.
> Swaz uns der keiser hât benomen,
> Daz wirt uns allez wider lân.[34]

After proving to God and man that he and his group of warriors are worthy of honor, they can return with the hope of receiving their original stations again.

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[33] Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, 64.

[34] *Herzog Ernst*, 1818-1825.

This represents a practical side to Ernst and demonstrates that he does not allow his personal devotion to God to dominate his equally strong pragmatic nature. He is willing to serve the Lord, certainly for forgiveness of his sins, but also to re-obtain his property. This amounts less to a dichotomy of the physical and spiritual than to an implicit spiritual foundation underlying all of Ernst's actions. In other words, while the narrative obeys the medieval requirement of basing certain knightly actions on the spiritual (i.e. mounting a crusade), Ernst himself is completely comfortable living in the physical realm without much mention of God or faith. Ernst's decision to not immediately perceive the world around him in spiritual terms, but rather through pragmatic observation, allows him to see other creatures/peoples not just as heathen or Christian, but as beings capable of helping or hindering his survival.

Indeed, aside from a few broad statements, when remarking on the races he interacts with, Ernst rarely mentions differences in faith at all. This is not to assert that he never mentions God, especially in moments of peril. The Magnet Mountain episode (where Ernst's ship becomes trapped, and most of his men die of starvation and thirst) illustrates Ernst's faith, though the narrator actually alludes to divine aid more often than Ernst. When dealing with the Grippians, the fierce crane-necked people of the East, Ernst mentions a potential difference in faith only a single time.

> Daz sullen wir hiute ervarn,
> Ob sie heiden sîn od cristen,
> Unde handeln daz mit listen,
> Daz sie uns spîse ze koufe geben.
> Habent sie niht cristen leben,
> Sô lâzent sie uns niht genesen.[35]

[35] *Herzog Ernst* 2272-2277.

Ernst is only concerned about the potential faith of the Grippians only as far as his safety and that of his men are concerned. Aside from this statement, Ernst never again concerns himself with the faith, or lack thereof, of the Grippians. Nor does the question of faith ever come into a conversation between Ernst and his men. But its presence helps the narrative maintain the crusade motif of encountering other peoples and using religion as a point of emphasis in discerning friend from foe. It is also used to remind both his men and the reader of the mission's ostensible purpose, namely a mission to serve God. Ernst's gratitude to God for providing food, as well as his belief that God may be testing his men, are examples of religious formulae that adhere to convention.

Ernst is willing to adopt a wait-and-see approach, which is contrary to the traditional Crusade narrative. Barbara Haupt describes the standard crusaders' interactions with native peoples in the following words, "Die religiös gebundenen Kreuzfahrer zeichneten sich in der Regel durch einen kulturellen Überanspruch aus und suchten nicht den Austausch, sondern die Konfrontation."[36] While Ernst and his men certainly prepare themselves for battle, they do so defensively, and enter the Grippian city with caution and awe, as opposed to recklessly charging through town. This suggests a diminished importance of religion for Ernst, in contrast with that of the typical crusader. Additionally, any form of 'kultureller Überanspruch' disappeared when the men began observing the city in detail.

The lengthy passages describing the beauty and splendor of the multi-colored city wall and the grand palace supersede any discussion of Christianity

[36] Barbara Haupt, "Ein Herzog in Fernost. Zu Herzog Ernst A/B", in *Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Paris 2005*, ed. Jean-Marie Valentine, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 7: 157.

or heathenism by Ernst, his men, or the narrator.[37] The city contains no marker of Christianity, such as a church or a cross in a visible place, but the lack of discussion on this point hints at a measure of respect for the grandeur of this previously undiscovered culture. Ernst is so impressed with the city that he begins to act "like a lover tempted by irresistible beauty."[38] Together with his friend and trusted advisor Count Wetzel, Ernst becomes intoxicated by the exotic, as evidenced by rashly returning to the city, using the bathhouse, and generally soaking up the surrounding splendor. This intoxication is a prime example of what Ruh describes as a generalized vision of an Eastern world full of opulence and curiosities, as well as dangerous endeavors and spectacular rewards.[39] Ernst experiences an exotic and curious land, which the general European imagination eagerly absorbed.

Once Ernst and Count Wetzel see the Grippians, they exhibit a dual attitude: they admire the Grippians' courtly appearance, but detest their distinctly vicious behavior. This is fitting because the Grippians are, in and of themselves, dual in physical appearance and behavior. After immediately noticing that the Grippians' heads resemble those of a crane, Ernst and Wetzel observe the Grippians' courtly attire, but see no potential difficulty in fighting creatures with long, flimsy necks. The narrator notes of the Grippians, "ir beider hosen ûz gesniten, zerhouwen wol nâch hübeschen siten," and, "si gebârten

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[37] Blamires, *Herzog Ernst*, 29. Blamires points out the excessive use of the words *wunder* and *wunderlîch* to describe the city.

[38] Rasma Lazda-Cazers, "Hybridity and Liminality in Herzog Ernst B," *Daphnis* 33 (2004): 82.

[39] Ruh, *Höfische Epik*, 64.

zühteclîche, dâ der künic rîche ze tische mit der briute saz."[40] While the Grippians may appear in dress as quasi-courtly and even observe proper manners, they exhibit behavior that is, by courtly standards, barbaric. Not only have the Grippians raided a portion of India, killed the king, and kidnapped his daughter, the Grippian king insists on forcing his beak into the princess's mouth, an action that carries clear sexual overtones. Ernst does not seem to be confused by the juxtaposition of the Grippians' outward courtly appearance, and simultaneous barbaric behavior. He recognizes that, while the Grippians are more advanced in architecture, and similar to his home court in dress, they still amount to a quasi-human race harassing a woman of true, fully recognizable nobility. Ernst solidifies his opinion of the Grippians during his flight to the ship, as he expresses his frustrations with the Grippian fighting method. He states of the Grippians' use of arrows,

> daz muote harte sêre
> den herzogen hêre
> und was im vaste unwerde
> daz se in ûf der erde
> niht strîtes staten wolden.[41]

Not only are the Grippians a hybrid of human and animal in physical form, but in many of their mannerisms, especially combat, they are hybrids of courtly and non-courtly characteristics.

The other creatures of fantasy in *Herzog Ernst* are not hybrids, but are actually humans with physical quirks, such as the One-Stars (a cycloptic race), the Flat Hoofs (who lie under their massive feet for protection), and the people with massive ears. But what is one to make of these human creatures? Are they

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[40] *Herzog Ernst,* 3005-3006 and 3183-3185 respectively.
[41] *Herzog Ernst*, 3807-3811.

creations of God, accountable for their own actions? Because of such questions, monsters posed a significant problem to those living in medieval Europe.[42] Medieval Christians struggled with the idea of monstrous or hybrid races because they did not fit in neatly with biblical records.[43] One main question centered on how a monstrous race of cyclopses could have survived the great flood of Noah's era. Further, did these races represent divine variety in creation, or rather a perverted form of a once perfect creation? St. Augustine answered that most monstrous peoples should be regarded as human, but that the head of a being was the best indicator of its humanity.[44] In other words, Augustine would probably view the crane-headed Grippians as more beast than human, though this view conflicts with their significant architectural abilities and courtly dress. This debate has a profound impact on our discussion of the 'other' peoples of the East. If monstrous races can be regarded as human (or at the very least human-like), they can be seen as being either Christian or heathen, as well as courtly or non-courtly.

Ernst unknowingly follows Augustine's reasoning in that instead of immediately refusing to deal with the monstrous races he encounters, he uses chivalry and courtly behavior as a litmus test in order to gauge their trustworthiness. Indeed, Ernst encounters no less than six monstrous races, and to none does he pose more than a passing query as to their faith, but instead surveys their attire, weaponry, and mannerisms to determine if they are courtly.

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[42] Clara Strijbosch, "Between Angel and Beast: Brendan, Herzog Ernst and the World of the Twelfth Century," in *The Brendan Legend Texts and Versions*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch (Boston: Leiden, 2006), 275.

[43] Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 88.

[44] Strijbosch, *Between Angel and Beast*, 275. She notes that the distinction between human and animal usually centered on language, as well as the physical head of the being in question.

Ernst handles himself particularly well with the One-Stars, from whom he eventually acquires a fief. Upon Ernst's appearance, a count of the One-Star King speaks of the new arrivals in the following words, "si vernement unser sprâche niht: ir gebaere ist vil manlîch."[45] Following this, the King is pleased:

> dô schouwete der künic rich
> ir helme schilde unde swert.
> Sie wâren im liep unde wert.
> im geviel vil wol ir leben.[46]

This reverse assessment proves the king's (and by extension his whole race's) nobility and courtly mannerisms. This is an unusual reversal of cultural power in a medieval narrative. The "other" king assesses the group of Europeans, and determines *them* to be courtly. By using the same courtly standards to measure foreigners as his European counterparts do, the king of the One-Stars shows that he, too, is courtly.

The motif of cultural reversal runs throughout Ernst's dealings with the One-Stars. Rather than imposing his own native language on his hosts, Ernst spends a year learning their tongue, and learning their ways (especially in regards to their relations with other nearby peoples). Ernst's behavior is, at first, difficult to understand. He is, after all, European in an age that witnessed Europeans generally regarding themselves as the cultural paragon of the known (and unknown) world. Ernst is Christian, courtly and cultured. Why then, does he not attempt to impose this on the One-Stars, or any of the other peoples he comes into contact with? First of all, Ernst comes to the One Stars with only a handful of men and is practically destitute. Having just escaped the horror of the

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[45] *Herzog Ernst*, 4592-4593.

[46] *Herzog Ernst*, 4594-4597.

Magnet Mountain, Ernst's remaining men are forced into relying on their hosts. Consequently, they are not in a position to dictate matters of culture, language, or faith. Secondly, as already stated, Ernst does not observe large differences between the courtly society that he knows so well and that of the One-Stars (excepting, of course, physical differences). Finally, it is possible that Ernst simply appreciates certain elements of other cultures. He and his men are certainly impressed at the splendor of Grippia, as they are at the noble manner with which the One-Stars hold themselves.

The end of the narrative and the final battle with the King of Egypt make a profound statement about the nature of Islam in the medieval world. Ernst appears in Ethiopia with a plethora of strange creatures of varying shapes and sizes that he has collected during his travels. The number and variety of creatures under his command demonstrates Ernst's power over the exotic East. Though physically different, the monstrous army is loyal to Ernst and fights alongside Christians in the Holy War against the Saracens of Egypt; in fact, a giant carries the banner for the Christian forces as the battle commences. Up to this point, Ernst has not encountered Saracens, but here they emerge without introduction as natural enemies of Christianity. While Ernst uses his own courtly background to judge the monstrous races he meets, the nature of the Saracens requires no judging; Ernst and the narrator assume Saracen hostility and incorrectness. The social commentary here is clear, namely that even monstrous giants and cycloptic creatures from the world of fantasy display more honor and courtly values than the Muslim Saracens of the East. However, after defeat, the Egyptian king does agree to peace, and even keeps his promise to release hostages. Rather than understanding this move as exhibiting some

semblance of honor, one should see it as a gesture of post-defeat desperation. Without such an agreement, Ernst could have obliterated the Saracen forces. Additionally, the prisoner exchange after the battle exhibits the merciful nature of the Christian/monster forces.

In summing up the discussion of *Herzog Ernst* in relation to "other" peoples of the East, it is easy to take Ernst's proto-cultural awareness too far. While Ernst certainly seems to be curious about and, in the case of the One-Stars, take part in foreign cultures, he has no qualms about wiping anyone out. However, rather than imposing an artificial dividing line between two cultures, in terms of faith, language, or physical attributes, Ernst approaches other peoples with two thoughts in mind. Ernst's first concern is for his own survival. He enters Grippia to find food and drink for his starving men and later happily accepts desperately needed aid from the One-Stars. Ernst then looks for courtly qualities to determine the trustworthiness of a given culture. Yet in the case of the Saracens, Ernst encounters them in full health and already knows of their hostile nature, so he meets them in battle. Additionally, Ernst arrives in Africa just prior to the outbreak of the previously announced holy war and supports the Christian forces; in other words, Ernst and his diverse group of creatures arrive just in time to defend Christian culture in a war they had no part in starting. These actions vary greatly from the traditional Crusade-style invasion based on a presupposed cultural superiority.

While Ernst's dealings with monstrous races vary between civil and violent, his encounter with Saracens is one of total conflict. The Saracen battle becomes the proving ground for Ernst and his monstrous retinue. In effect, both Ernst and the narrator prejudge the Saracens without examining their virtues.

Every other race in the narrative received the benefit of Ernst's assessment of their courtly or barbaric nature. Here the Saracens are portrayed as permanently and diametrically opposed to virtuous, courtly Europe. Ernst makes no effort to learn their language or acquaint himself with their culture. On the other hand, Ernst's tendency to use a given culture to his advantage applies in the Saracen battle as well. Ernst needs an enemy to fight in order to regain the honor he lost from his expulsion from his home court. The Saracens represent an ever-present enemy about whom no justification is required for battle. The use of another culture for personal gain is distinctly Orientalist, but Ernst goes even further by spilling Saracen blood to prove his worthiness to regain his place in European society.

CHAPTER III

PARZIVAL'S GAHMURET STORY: FROM CHRISTIANITY TO HEATHENISM AND BACK AGAIN

Appearing early in the 13th century, Wolfram von Eschenbach's Arthurian romance *Parzival* conveys a greater degree of cultural understanding than most other literary narratives of the era. Whereas Muslims do not receive the benefit of the fairly even-handed judgment that *Herzog Ernst* reserves for the narrative's monstrous races, Wolfram's treatment of certain individual Muslims borders on compassionate. While Wolfram's contemporaries Walter von der Vogelweide and Hartman von Aue were writing crusade poetry, Wolfram adapted Chretien de Troyes' *Perceval* to portray Muslims as capable of exhibiting great virtue, bravery, and beauty.[47] Crusade motifs notwithstanding, Wolfram is situated in a brief period around 1200 in which greater cultural exchange between East and West began to overcome some previous misconceptions about Islam, and before the growing racism indicative of the later Middle Ages.[48] Wolfram certainly seems to be tolerant of Muslims, but always through the Orientalist lens of Christian superiority. The Gahmuret story, which is an invention of Wolfram's, and the legacy that Gahmuret's son and Parzival's half-brother Feirefiz inherits, point continually toward an eventual conversion to Christianity.[49] Indeed, Feirefiz represents the bridge between his heathen black mother and his son

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[47] James Hodkinson and Jeffrey Morrison, "Introduction," in *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*, ed. James Hodkinson and Jeffrey Morrison (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2009), 7.

[48] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 17.

[49] Cyril Edwards, "Wolfram von Eschenbach, Islam, and the Crusades," in *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*, 36.

John, who eventually becomes Prester John, the legendary Christian King in India.

The cross-cultural experiences of Gahmuret in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* in many respects do not differ greatly from those of Herzog Ernst. The story of Gahmuret serves several purposes for the overall narrative. First, it establishes knightly lineage for Parzival (this proves important later as Parzival discovers courtly traits inside himself, stemming from his father). Second, Gahmuret displays many of the same strengths and weaknesses with which Parzival later grapples. Finally, and for the purposes of this discussion most importantly, Gahmuret makes the acquaintance of heathen Muslims and experiences their court and customs. It is in the Saracen land of Zazamanc that Gahmuret meets the heathen queen Belacane, who he marries, impregnates, and later abandons.

Just as part of Gahmuret's function is to lay the path of chivalry for his progeny, so too is the narrator explicit in his description of Gahmuret's inherited legacy of chivalry and courtly virtues. Not only did Gahmuret's father die in knightly combat but he also maintained his honor and valor until his death. As Gahmuret praises his brother (the King), his brother notes, "hêrre, ir lobt mich umbe nôt sît ez iuwer zuht gebôt."[50] Clearly, a direct line of courtly lineage extends through the generations of Gahmuret's family and is something he passes on to Parzival as well. This knightly upbringing not only serves as the identifying mark of a tradition he inherited and will pass on, but also functions

[50] Wolfgang Spiewok, ed., *Parzival* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 9, 17-18. Depending on the translation, the essence of Gahmuret's courtly upbringing gets stronger or weaker. The modern German translation "gute Erziehung und Sitte" seems a bit weaker than the Middle High German, yet the English translation from Mustard and Passage strengthens this idea with the phrase "knightly breeding" (7).

as a signal to the audience of how Gahmuret should act. Additionally, Gahmuret's solid legacy of courtly virtues is important in his later interactions with the heathens of Zazamanc. As with Herzog Ernst, Gahmuret is well equipped to spot chivalry and courtly mannerisms, even in foreign cultures. Consequently, Wolfram's chivalric code cuts across religious, racial and geographic borders: his protagonists fight for the Baruch of Baghdad (described by Wolfram as the pope of Islam), the Knights of the Round Table, and as members of the Grail Court.[51]

However, Gahmuret's courtly and chivalric credentials should not be overstated. While Gahmuret's courtly heritage is legitimate, his actions are not always befitting of such a tradition. In revealing his plans to his brother, namely to leave court and travel, Gahmuret discloses his true ambition: "Ich will kêren in diu lant/ich hân ouch ê ein teil gevarn/ob mich gelücke wil bewarn/so erwirbe ich guotes wîbes gruoz."[52] On this, Blake Lee Spahr contends that Gahmuret's attitude towards love is frivolous and little more than a light-hearted game.[53] More pragmatically, Holgar Noltze argues that Gahmuret's *wanderlust* is actually economically driven, and that Gahmuret's desire to serve the Baruch was one of several economic opportunities available to a wandering knight.[54] While Gahmuret's intentions are not as completely self-serving and flippant as Spahr

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[51] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 22.

[52] *Parzival*, 8, 8-11.

[53] Blake Lee Spahr, "Gahmuret's Erection: Rising to Adventure," *Monatshefte* 83 (1991): 405. Spahr treats Gahmuret in the harshest terms. While his scathing rhetoric is somewhat over the top, his overall point of Gahmuret's questionable character is extremely relevant.

[54] Holger Noltze, *Gahmurets Orientfahrt* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1995), 51. The three options listed by Noltze are "Raubrittertum," "Turnierwesen," and Gahmuret's choice of "Söldnerdienst."

describes, the notion of traveling in the hopes of finding love is important because Gahmuret's destination is unknown. Indeed, he informs his mother, "vrouwe, des enweiz ich niht/in welhem lande man mich siht."[55] Gahmuret assumes that wherever he travels, he may be able to find a courtly woman who approves of him. Either Gahmuret knows of courtly societies well beyond the borders of his homeland, or he simply knows of nothing else. However, regardless of his eventual destination, with his brother the King permanently at court, Gahmuret adopts a new coat-of-arms and enters the wide and unknown world as he travels to foreign kingdoms.

The portrayal of Zazamanc is simultaneously familiar and foreign. Wolfram portrays Muslims grouped together under the umbrella term "heidenschaft" that encompasses heathen peoples from Greenland to China.[56] Ostensibly, heathen-kind and Christianity are total opposites from one another, but the reader finds in Zazamanc a heathen kingdom very hospitable towards Christians. The first mention of Zazamanc is inextricably tied with chivalry and informs the reader/listener that, while populated with black heathens, this nation is not wholly foreign or without proper courtly customs. Immediately upon Gahmuret's arrival, he happens upon a people in mourning. The loss of Isenhart, a brave and noble knight (Belacane refers to him as such) who died in service to the queen causes the people much grief. At the same time, the ensuing conflict and siege of the capital by the friends of Isenhart against the beautiful and virtuous queen is distinctly hostile.

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[55] *Parzival*, 11, 23-24.

[56] Edwards, "Wolfram von Eschenbach, Islam, and the Crusades," 46.

Having died trying to win her hand, Isenhart's death is chivalrous and is the first of many examples of Wolfram generalizing chivalry and courtly behavior to other cultures. This universalizing of courtly virtues is new to the overall tradition of Parzival, which dates back to Chretien de Troyes' earlier *Perceval*. In fact, three major differences between the French version and Wolfram's play a major role in the Gahmuret story: the universal applicability of chivalry for the known medieval world, the problematic relationship between Christianity and Islam, and the new religious designation of the courtly knight.[57] *Parzival* is rife with courtly societies, both in the Arthurian world as well as the Grail court at Munsalwäsche. Indeed, the pervasiveness of courtly society in the narrative is surprising, in that it extends from the standard European court to both the African/Middle Eastern kingdoms, as well as the fantastic spiritual realm of the Grail. At the same time, the extent and influence of courtly societies in the narrative do not transcend all religious and cultural divides. Ultimately, the clash of heathen and Christian ideals brings down the short marriage of Gahmuret and Belacane. It is true that the conflict of knightly service and love may have contributed to Gahmuret's premature departure from Belacane, as Hilde Swinburne suggests, yet the only reason cited by Gahmuret himself (besides a desire for further adventure) is the religious difference between himself and his wife.[58] Regardless of the circumstances behind their breakup,

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[57] Christa Ortmann, "Ritterschaft: Zur Frage nach der Bedeutung der Gahmuret-Geschichte im 'Parzival' Wolframs von Eschenbach," *Deutsche Viertaljahrsschrift für Literaturswissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 47:4, 664.

[58] Hilde Swinburne, "Gahmuret and Feirefiz in Wolfram's Parzival," *The Modern Language Review* 51 (1956): 198. Swinburne notes that Chrétien often stresses the conflict between chivalry and love, and this bleeds into Wolfram's version as well.

the cross-cultural nature of the relationship between Gahmuret and Belacane is never censured by Wolfram. It is surprising that the Gahmuret narrative lacks the strong religious overtone and service-to-God motif consistent throughout the rest of the narrative. In a work that features a complete fall from knightly and spiritual grace based on Parzival's failure to ask a simple question, a marriage between a white Christian and a black heathen surprisingly yields no reproach.

On the contrary, Wolfram's narration frequently stresses Belacane's worthiness. At various moments in his narration, Wolfram refers to Belacane as, "diu süeze valsches âne," and, "si hete wîplîchen sin und was aber anders ritterlîch."[59] Of course Wolfram's most important supportive statement of Belacane occurs during Gahmuret's moment of understanding regarding her worthiness:

> Gahmureten dûhte sân,
> swie si waere ein heidenin,
> mit triuwen wîplîcher sin
> in wîbes herze nie geslouf.
> Ir kiusche was ein reiner touf
> und ouch der regen der si begôz,
> der wâc der von ir ougen vlôz
> ûfir zobel und an ir brust.[60]

Belacane's innocence is mentioned even before her purifying and, indeed, sacred tears (which they must be, if they can be compared to the sanctified water used for baptism). While her beauty may have won over Gahmuret, her courtly and even religious credentials are due to her pure behavior, mannerisms and quality. Yet even more convincing than the narrator's endorsement of Belacane is Gahmuret's apparent approval of her, which he demonstrates through marriage.

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[59] *Parzival*, 16, 8 and 24, 8-9 respectively.

[60] *Parzival*, 28, 10-17.

In doing so, Gahmuret believes that Belacane's purity transcends their cultural, racial, and religious differences. Spahr notes, and rightly so, that the narrator praises Belacane extensively, while the narrative's characters themselves (rather than Wolfram himself) provide the bulk of praise for Gahmuret.[61] Regardless, Gahmuret views Belacane as a suitable mate until their cultural and religious differences simply become too large for him.

Belacane's purity and Gahmuret's chivalry leave a lasting impression on the outcome of the narrative, which could not end as it does without Wolfram's generalization of courtly society and even Christian virtue onto foreign culture. The lasting impression of Belacane's virtue lends Feirefiz an amount of moral credit until such time as he is properly baptized into the Christian faith. Additionally, Feirefiz inherits knightly virtue from Gahmuret, which drives Feirefiz's *wanderlust*. King Arthur recognizes the seed of knighthood in Feirefiz as he remarks,

> von dem vater dîn,
> Gahmurete, dem neven mîn,
> ist ez dîn volleclîcher art,
> in wîbe dienst dîn verriu vart.[62]

Like his father, Feirefiz left a heathen wife in search of knightly deeds, only to fall in love with a Christian and marry again. Gahumert's second wife, Herzeloyde, and Feirefiz's second wife, Repanse de Schoye, represent virtuous Christian alternatives to the heathen marriages of both men.

While Gahmuret's marriage to Herzeloyde represents a return to his white Christian roots, Feirefiz's courting of Repanse de Schoye requires his cultural and

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[61] Spahr, "Gahmuret's Erection," 404.

[62] *Parzival*, 572.

religious conversion to European Christianity, for which his chivalric conduct and knightly deeds prepare him. Feirefiz and his half-brother Parzival do not meet until the end of the narrative as they face each other in combat. Without knowing the identity of their opponents, the fight continues until Parzival's sword breaks. Feirefiz's refusal to kill his unarmed opponent is distinctly chivalric as such a victory would be without renown, and leads to the discovery of Parzival's identity. As further evidence of Feirefiz's knightly virtue, Cundrie, the messenger of the Grail court, deems Feirefiz worthy to accompany Parzival from Arthur's court to Munsalwäsche. Before leaving Arthur, Feirefiz further exhibits his acquaintance with courtly tradition by bestowing gifts on the membership of the court.

Despite Feirefiz's virtue and familiarity with courtly tradition, he is still largely heathen in nature, as indicated by his numerous allusions to the god Jupiter, as well as his inability to see the Grail at the Grail court of Munsalwäsche. Though surrounded by Christians, he does not express interest in converting to Christianity until he sees the beautiful Repanse de Schoye, sister of the Grail King Anfortas. Only by accepting baptism (and by swearing off his first wife, Secundille) can Feirefiz hope to marry Repanse. Feirefiz's desire for the white European Christian Repanse ultimately leads to his own cultural and religious conversion.

While both Belacane and Feirefiz enjoy positive depictions, their real value is in their contribution towards eventual religious, cultural, and racial conversion. Belacane's purity and tears provide her with a sufficient baptism to obtain the worthiness necessary to marry a Christian knight. Feirefiz's magpie appearance, the result of being fathered by a white Christian and born of a black

heathen mother, is indicative of a journey from being dark-skinned to light, as well as from "heidenschaft" to Christianity, and anticipates his eventual conversion and redemption.[63] Their mobility towards something resembling traditional European ideals suggests the inherent correctness of "Europeanness", but also the ability of foreign people to assimilate (assuming an individual already possesses strong courtly attributes). This assimilation occurs not only culturally, but in Feirefiz's case, physically as well. Feirefiz's eventual conversion to Christianity is the main aspect of a larger process of occidentalization or a shift towards Greco-Roman civilization, and the birth of his son (the future Prester John) becomes the confirmation of Feirefiz's total conversion.[64]

In this sense, Feirefiz is the paragon of Orientalism in Wolfram's *Parzival*. Feirefiz's benevolent absorption by the Grail court is similar to the larger condition of Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages: Christianity's occasional tolerance of heathen culture, which Kontje likens to a temporary kindness a cat might provide a mouse before the kill.[65] The most that can be said of high level of heathen civility exhibited by Belacane and Feirefiz is that it prepared them for a gradual conversion to European culture, religion, and physical appearance. This is the very essence of Orientalism, namely that only when judged through a European lens does Eastern culture assume any value. While Wolfram certainly is gentler in his treatment of Islam than most of his contemporaries, he manifests proto-relativity more in his gentle handling of Belacane and Feirefiz, than in their overall roles as heathens.

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[63] Edwards, "Wolfram von Eschenbach, Islam, and the Crusades," 38.

[64] Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, 295.

[65] Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, 31.

CHAPTER IV

MANDEVILLE AND DIEMERINGEN: TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME JOURNEY

The Travels of Sir John Mandeville constitutes a tour of the Holy Land and the medieval East, as ostensibly viewed through the eyes of the English knight John Mandeville. The existence of an actual knight named Mandeville is highly uncertain, and the identity of the work's author is still in dispute. The record of Mandeville's travels is quite clearly adapted from numerous other medieval travel narratives. The book is not the firsthand account it claims to be, but is rather a compilation of as many as two dozen other texts, with particularly large contributions from William of Boldensele's *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (*Book of certain overseas regions* - 1336) and Odoric of Pordenone's *Relatio* (1330).[66] Yet despite having to integrate so many diverse works into a single flowing narrative, the *Travel*'s author manages to create a unified text that is also relatively open-minded in its treatment of the medieval East and its peoples.

There remain no known copies of the original authorial version, though it was written in French and appeared in either France or England sometime between 1356 and 1366.[67] From the original manuscript, three different traditions emerged in the following years: an insular version thought to adhere stringently to the original (appearing in Latin and English manuscripts), a continental

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[66] Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 9.

[67] C.W.R.D. Moseley, ed., *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (London: Penguin, 2005), 9. Through investigating the similarities of the manuscripts produced soon after the original manuscript's emergence, the content of the postulated archetype can be reasonably pieced together.

version that credits the Liège notary Jean d'Outremeuse as a friend of Mandeville (appearing in German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish), and an interpolated continental or Liège version.[68] The Liège version is of particular importance for this discussion, as the German redactor Otto von Diemeringen used it as the main source for his own version of the *Travels*. The Liège tradition is set apart by its liberties with the postulated original text, and by the appearance of the legendary character of Ogier the Dane at various points in the text. Currently, the most popular English tradition of the *Travels* is based on the Cotton Titus manuscript because its adaptations are "infrequent and minor, making the rendering quite a good proxy for the authorial version."[69]

The *Travels* is not just a guide leading the reader from Europe through the Holy Land and eventually to the lands of Java and China, but an exposition on native peoples and their cultures, as well as unusual natural phenomena along the route. This journey encompasses Muslims/Saracens, monstrous human races with various physical abnormalities, and hybrid races, such as the dog-headed people of the Nicobar Islands. It seems counter-intuitive that a medieval narrative written by a European would treat these races with any sense of cultural sensitivity, yet Mandeville exhibits a surprisingly relativist viewpoint for his era. In other words, Mandeville occasionally shows glimpses of the ability to judge a culture on its own merit and not on set criteria of European values. This is by no means the standard throughout the narrative, but he readily expounds on the capability of certain Eastern peoples to exhibit pious and virtuous behavior. He also occasionally criticizes the behavior of Christians.

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[68] Higgins, *Writing East,* 21.

[69] Higgins, *Writing East*, 24.

While the traditional English version of Mandeville's *Travels* exhibits a form of proto-cultural relativism, the overall tone of the narrative is still very much Eurocentric and explicitly Christian. Mandeville follows a pattern of establishing his adherence to a conventional European view, and then making a more controversial statement. This rhetorical device lends Mandeville authority to express unorthodox cultural arguments, while retaining Europe's perceived supremacy in inter-cultural discussions. Mandeville uses this tone of supremacy to create room for his critiques of Christianity, and for establishing shared beliefs between Christianity and other religions. Mandeville's only call to arms to conquer the Holy Land, a land "promised to us as heritage," is tempered with the following critique: "But now pride, envy and covetousness have so inflamed the hearts of the lords of the world that they are more busy to disinherit their neighbors than to lay claim or to conquer their own rightful inheritance."[70] Here Mandeville establishes his adherence to convention by advocating for some form of a Crusade, and only then posits his criticisms of the secular and religious authorities as proud, envious and covetous. This criticism not only strikes at Europe's class system, but at its main religion as well; Mandeville's later criticism of Christianity expressed through the Sultan sounds remarkably similar. While keeping his critique vague, Mandeville's intention could be to address anything from local squabbling to the threat that the Hundred Years War posed to the continuity of Europe. It is the petty squabbling of the ruling classes, both secular and religious, that prevents Christianity from attaining its rightful foothold in the Holy Land.

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[70] Moseley, *The Travels*, 44.

Similarly, after pointing out several deficiencies in Muslim doctrine (seen through the medieval Christian eye), Mandeville proceeds to expound upon the similarities between the two faiths, in particular their shared belief in the power of God and the divinity of Jesus Christ. However, Mandeville's apparent intercultural sensibilities are cut short by his suggestion that "the Saracens have many articles of our faith, if not perfectly; so it would be the easier to convert them and bring them to our truth."[71] Again, as in the example above, Mandeville expressed his true thoughts only *after* establishing adherence to a relative European cultural norm, such as advocating a crusade or conversion attempt. This pattern recurs often in the English Mandeville tradition, and while Mandeville leaves no doubt that European culture and Christianity are the gold standard for any society, he readily acknowledges the positive in other peoples, and their potential to become greater through cultural and/or religious conversion.

While the *Travels* speaks to a wide European audience, it is not traditionally viewed as a work of German literature. In the English tradition Germany itself is mentioned only three times, and then only in passing.[72] From the original French, the *Travels'* rapid dissemination led to translations in most major European languages by 1400.[73] The main contributor to the German *Travels* tradition was Otto von Diemeringen, "eyn doemherre zcu Metze in

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[71] Moseley, *The Travels*, 107.

[72] The references to the English *Mandeville* tradition in this paper are drawn from C.W.R.D. Moseley's translation of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. Moseley's source is the Cotton Titus manuscript, which together with the Egerton and the unhappily named Defective manuscripts, are the three main English translations from the original French.

[73] Moseley, *The Travels*, 9. There are no known manuscripts of the postulated original French left in existence.

Lothringen", who, at some point in the late 14th century, used one French and one Latin *Travels* manuscript to create a German language translation.[74] While other translations appeared in the following decades, particularly one from the German translator Michael Velser, Diemeringen's translation proved to be the only German Mandeville tradition accessible to the public, and thus remained the most popular.[75]

In putting his own stamp on the work, Diemeringen succeeded in creating a distinct German *Travels* tradition, by changing the structure and overall message of the narrative. Indeed, if the main thesis of the *Travels* is that, as Mandeville says in the English translation, "in all those lands, realms and nations...there is no people which does not hold some of the articles of our faith," Diemeringen's work must be more accurately described as an *adaptation* of the *Travels*, rather than a translation.[76] Instead of presenting a picture of the East as a region worthy of not only European curiosity but even a sense of respect, Diemeringen significantly alters the tone and message of the narrative by consistently inserting Eurocentric tangents and removing most of Mandeville's original cultural sensitivities. Additionally, Diemeringen adopted a radically different structure than the original French and English versions, replacing Mandeville's prologue with three of his own, electing to break the work into five main chapters (each further broken down into subsections) and removing all discussion of non-Christian religions from earlier contexts, and instead

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[74] Edward Warren Crosby, "Otto von Diemeringen: A German Version of Sir John Mandeville's 'Travels'" (PhD diss., 1965), xvii.

[75] Eric John Morrall, *Sir John Mandevilles Reisebeschreibung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974), xvi.

[76] Moseley, *The Travels*, 188.

relegating all such references to a brief fifth chapter. Diemeringen's liberties create a nearly sovereign text that drastically alters the *Travels* orientation from a proto-relativist to a proto-Orientalist approach.[77] In this sense, the Diemeringen *Travels* tradition is not simply a translation of the original text, but rather a more independent work with a fundamentally different structure and wholly different message.

Diemeringen's source texts of *The Travels* are particularly important as they provide perspective in understanding the extent of his adaptations to the narrative as well as his own ideological designs. The translator's personal redactions of the source manuscript are not unique to Diemeringen, nor is it unique to German versions of *The Travels*. In contrast to the relatively stringent adherence of the Cotton Titus manuscript to its source text, Diemeringen's use of the French Liège (previously mentioned here as the Interpolated Continental version) and Latin Vulgate (which was also redaction of the Liège tradition) versions as source manuscripts, which themselves deviated notably from the postulated original French version, produced a distinctly Orientalist German version of the *Travels*.

Yet the Diemeringen *Travels* is more than a simple rehashing or even a combination of those earlier versions. This is particularly true of Diemeringen's references to the legendary figure of Ogier the Dane, a character first seen in the 11th century *Chanson de Roland*. Both the Liège and Vulgate, along with the Diemeringen and later Czech traditions belong to a group of manuscripts that include multiple references to Ogier. In these versions of the *Travels*, Ogier functions as a legendary precursor to Mandeville himself, and is portrayed as

[77] Klaus Ridder, *Jean de Mandevilles Reisen* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1991), 236.

being blessed by God to establish several Christian communities in the East. Whether or not Ogier the Dane actually existed remains unclear and is irrelevant to this discussion; much more important here is the extent to which he is incorporated into the various *Travels* manuscripts. The Liège version contains 21 Ogier references, while the Vulgate has only 12.[78] Given that Diemeringen mentions Ogier 23 times, this suggests that Diemeringen created his own *Travels* narrative, rather than repeating previous versions. Diemeringen's two additional references place Ogier among influential medieval rulers such as Alexander the Great, the legendary Prester John, and the Great Khan, and work to cement Ogier's place of influence in medieval society.[79] Clearly, with both the Liège and Vulgate manuscripts at hand, Diemeringen chose to follow the more Eurocentric Liège narrative and even include additional redactions of his own making. The Vulgate tradition is less Eurocentric in its treatment of Eastern cultures than the Liège, but cuts out much of the Eastern content and instead allows for a very pious Mandeville to strongly advocate for Christian orthodoxy.[80] Diemeringen's choice to incorporate so many Ogier redactions is particularly important to this discussion because of the Eurocentric shadow Ogier casts over the medieval East. Each Ogier reference in Diemeringen should then be viewed as both a conscious choice and purposeful endorsement made by the translator, and also as part of a larger overall pattern of Eurocentrism exhibited in Diemeringen's narrative. This pattern includes not only the Ogier references, but also Diemeringen's own revisions of the text, as well as the

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[78] Crosby, *Otto von Diemeringen*, xxiv.

[79] Ridder, *Jean de Mandevilles Reisen*, 237.

[80] Higgins, *Writing East*, 25.

previously mentioned fifth book, in which Diemeringen includes a different discussion of Islam and Christianity than can be seen in any other *Travels* tradition.

Throughout the Liège, Vulgate and Diemeringen versions of the *Travels*, Ogier's appearances often coincide with exotic naturally occurring elements of the East, which are part of the original Mandeville tradition. The self-sacrificing fish of Calonak are prime examples of nature's exotic functions in the East. The fish swim to shore, one species at a time, and stay stationary for three days, thus allowing the inhabitants to take as many fish as they desire. Mandeville in the Cotton Titus manuscript notes that the cause of this unusual occurrence is unknown, other than that "the folk of that land say that God shows them that grace to do honor to their King."[81] While this statement amounts to a mere local rumor, the fact that Mandeville does not criticize the idea of God honoring a Javan king furthers the theme of cultural understanding that is readily visible in the Insular version. Indeed, Mandeville is astounded at the behavior of the fish and remarks, "I am sure it does not happen without some great cause or meaning."[82] While the Diemeringen text relates the same unusual phenomenon, he posits a distinctly European cause for it: Ogier the Dane.

> Auch meynen die lude da zu lande, daz god Oiger von Denemarken mit den fyschen und baümen spÿsete, do er dieselben lande gewynen solde, do sy nicht spyse enhatten. Und daz fyndet man clerlich geschrieben in jren alden croniken.[83]

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[81] Moseley, *The Travels*, 133.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Crosby, *Otto von Diemeringen*, 368.

Diemeringen leaves no doubt as to the origin of this marvelous phenomenon. Some years previously, Ogier and his men received divine sustenance in the form of fish willingly offering themselves for consumption. Furthermore, this account does not stem from local rumor (Diemeringen never mentions the Javan king in this context), but from written records. The effect of this event as well as the documentation of Ogier's divine assistance turn an example of exotic nature into a distinctly European affair, thus robbing the East of one of its trademarks. The spectacular natural phenomena did not exist prior to Ogier and only originated at all because of his voyage to the East. In essence, the East owes this wonder to a European and his God.

Diemeringen's Ogier incorporations are not always radically different from the original tradition, but they still convey a similar meaning of Eurocentrism. Mandeville's brief mention of the Trees of the Sun and Moon, whose fruit lengthened life by 500 years, is brief and based ostensibly on hearsay from inhabitants of the area. After admitting to not having seen the trees, Mandeville relates the myth of the trees' extraordinary power and then moves on to other curiosities of the region. Once again, Diemeringen conveys a similar story, but with an addition, also based on rumor: "Man sagit da in dem lande, das der bisderwe her Oigere von Denemarken, do er in dem lande were, daz er sich und syn folk mit der baume kraft und jre frucht spysete, das er auch davon so lange lebete."[84] As opposed to the account of the self-sacrificing fish, Diemeringen does not fundamentally alter the meaning and nature of the phenomenon under discussion, but Ogier's presence lends credibility to this story. Such instances serve as a reminder to the reader of a legacy of Christian

[84] Crosby, *Otto von Diemeringen*, 544.

presence in the East. Whereas in the original tradition the wonders of Mandeville's East stand on their own, a prior European incursion often supplants the same accounts in Diemeringen, essentially hijacking Mandeville's original meaning.

Diemeringen's Ogier references take on even deeper meaning when examined in the context of Ogier's accomplishments during his travels in the exotic East. Mandeville's brief mention in the Cotton Titus version of the many Christians who live in the Indian city of Serai goes almost unnoticed in the ensuing lengthy discussion of the types of peppers grown nearby. In contrast, Diemeringen makes only passing mention of the peppers, but then sets out to explain the origin of this particular Christian society in India. Centuries earlier, on his travels through the region, Ogier the Dane founded several Christian churches to be erected, as well as found two cities in previously wild areas.[85] Additionally, Ogier is cited as the individual who "von Venedien hant die unsichern, virferlichen und sorglichen wege sicher gemacht durch daz konigriche von Persien."[86] In this context, Ogier represents the finest qualities of European civilization. He is able to safely navigate strange territory and make it passable for future travelers, thus potentially opening up trade routes. He establishes two new cities from previously barren wilderness, which, by the time of Mandeville's fictional journey, are buzzing Christian centers. He also bears the torch of Christianity, building not only Christian edifices, but also Christian societies, seemingly from the ground up. Ogier thus does not receive divine

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[85] Crosby, *Otto von Diemeringen,* 334. The text is unclear as to Ogier's connection to Venice, but it appears that he may have set out from there.

[86] Crosby, *Otto von Diemeringen*, 490.

assistance in the form of self-sacrificing fish, or a tree whose fruit is fortified with wondrous powers, simply because he is a European, or a Christian, but rather because he is doing God's work in the East. The accompanying miracles are manifestations of divine approval for Ogier's work in spreading Christian and European culture abroad.

Finally, Ogier is divinely blessed with an innate goodness that even Eastern peoples recognize and respect, which he often reciprocates. The original tradition of the *Travels* relates the story of Alexander the Great's efforts to defeat the goodly people of Bragman. The people, upon notice of an impending military invasion, write Alexander a letter extolling the many virtues of their own society, which changes Alexander's mind. The same incident is related by Diemeringen, but is attributed again, to Ogier the Dane: "Do her Oiger von Denemarken alle dye lande gewan und von jren dogenden horte sagen, da liess er sy in jren freden und hatte grosse liebe zu jn. Abir do Allexander die lande gewan, der wolde, daz sy jme underdenigh solden syn."[87] Diemeringen never explains how Ogier "won" these lands; Ogier's "victory" may just be an agreement of allegiance to the Dane, rather than the result of a bloody military conflict. In either case, Ogier is portrayed as a more sensible and keen leader than Alexander, more interested in peace than conquest.

But Ogier's most important function is that he stands as a distinct marker of proto-Orientalism in Diemeringen's translation. Together with Diemeringen's selective removal of Mandeville's original proto-relativist statements (along with Mandeville's criticisms of Christianity) the Ogier references take precedent over the East's original natural and religious virtues. Diemeringen's references to the

[87] Crosby, *Otto von Diemeringen*, 535.

Saracens as the "unreinen heiden" as well as his claim that "der glaube ist gestolen von den cristen und judeschem glauben" also further the sense that Diemeringen worked to paint Islam in a negative light when compared to Christianity and even Judaism. Indeed, if Mandeville's main thematic keys are "the insistence on Christian unworthiness to possess Palestine, the corruption and complacency of the Western Church (and) the goodness in works of non-Christians" as Lisa Verner suggests, then all of Diemeringen's above contextual and rhetorical tools drastically alter the meaning of the narrative.[88] The message is thus changed from the idea that similarities between Europe and the East are deeper (and potentially more disturbing) than generally thought, to a vindication of European, Christian culture on the world stage. This altered message certainly appealed to medieval audiences who generally neither cared for accuracy in portrayals of Islam, nor for evidence that contradicted their own personal beliefs about the East.[89]

Aside from the Ogier redactions, the Diemeringen version varied greatly from the original version in several other regards, most notably by eliminating most of Mandeville's passages that express cultural sensitivities. Rather than follow Mandeville's formula by establishing adherence to European cultural norms and then proceeding to make a provocative statement, Diemeringen simply avoids such statements altogether. Indeed, Diemeringen's omissions are just as telling as his additions. A comparative analysis shows that Diemeringen's omissions allow for a consistent portrayal of Europe or European-related

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[88] Lisa Verner, *The Epistemology of the Monstrous Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 126.

[89] Mohamed Hassan Abu-Baker, "The Representation of Islam in Medieval Western Narratives," *Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 5 (2004): 53.

elements (such as Christianity) in a more positive light than in the English tradition of the *Travels*.

One such instance occurs in a key moment in the English tradition as Mandeville relates the Sultan of Cairo's critical words regarding Christianity. The Sultan states that members of the clergy provide a poor example for their parishioners by breaking the very commandments they daily preach.

> And as a result, on holy days, when people should go to church to serve God, they go to the tavern and spend all the day - and perhaps all the night - in drinking and gluttony, like beasts without reason which do not know when they have had enough.[90]

The irony of their "beastly" behavior and total abandon for God's commandments is that these exact traits are used to describe the most uncivilized races of Mandeville's East. Further, this criticism is made all the more poignant after Mandeville's efforts to extol the virtues of the Sultan, in order to "create sufficient moral authority to criticize freely and legitimately."[91] The Saracens, "who have neither a correct faith or perfect law" are portrayed by Mandeville as "keeping their false law better than we do that of Jesus Christ."[92] Here religious devotion becomes the currency of the narrative. Regardless of the truthfulness of Muslim religion and law, strict Muslim devotion lends the Sultan credit to criticize Christianity. Such moments are sporadic and serve as a reminder to the reader that Christians do not possess a monopoly on truth or virtue, and (their race, religion, and customs notwithstanding) that they can be just as uncivilized as the inhabitants of the exotic East.

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[90] Moseley, *The Travels*, 106.

[91] Frank Grady, "'Machomete' and Mandeville's Travels," in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed., John Victor Tolan (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 274.

[92] Moseley, *The Travels*, 108.

The Diemeringen tradition does not feature any such criticism by the Sultan. In fact, given the occasionally scattered order of events as they pertain to the Liège or Vulgate traditions, it is difficult to pinpoint a specific place where this scene could occur. The Diemeringen text follows the Liège, Vulgate and Cotton Titus traditions as far as Mandeville's earlier mention of his military service to the Sultan, and of his polite refusal to convert to Islam and marry the Sultan's daughter. Diemeringen also relates the succession of Egyptian Sultans through the ages. However, after this catalog Diemeringen never returns to discussing the Sultan, and at no point does he relate any specific words uttered by him. The implications are clear: Diemeringen strikes criticism of Christianity at any point and by anyone in his work. By eliminating the positive characteristics of the Sultan, the Saracens, or any of the other wondrous peoples in the narrative, Diemeringen is free to project a long Eurocentric shadow over Mandeville's East. The reader, without Mandeville's reminders of Christianity's problems or similarities with heathen religions, can now observe the East guilt-free and through a lens of innate cultural superiority. This dramatically changes the overall tone and message of the narrative from a begrudging appreciation for another culture's religious devotion, to a pure Orientalist viewpoint.

Diemeringen's alterations hearken back, however inadvertently, to Mandeville’s own sources in their treatment of foreign peoples. It is not surprising that, given the general tone of cultural interaction between medieval Europe and the East, the sources Mandeville drew from to create his own narrative largely criticize Eastern civilizations. Indeed, many of his sources attempted to prove "a society’s pestiferous or abominable behavior," a theme that

Mandeville reversed for his own work.[93] A prime example is Mandeville's erasure of Odoric's account of a brutal Tartarian attack, an event not recorded in any Mandeville tradition.[94] Granted, Mandeville's attempts to establish common ground between Europe and the East mostly are done to pave the road for future conversion efforts. This ulterior motive notwithstanding, Mandeville's work represents a radical shift from traditional medieval thought about the East. Throughout the narrative, Mandeville consistently avoids judging based on categories of Christian and non-Christian, but rather on individual or corporate morality.[95]

One final, yet major, alteration in the Diemeringen version is his fifth book. Diemeringen restructured the *Travels* narrative from the original fifteen chapters into five books, each broken down into their own subsets. The fifth book is comprised of nearly all of Mandeville's original references to Islam and Muslim beliefs, which Diemeringen did not include in their natural positions in the text, but rather transplanted them into their own space at the back of the book. Diemeringen is the only *Travels* redactor known to have employed such a structure.[96] The content does not differ altogether from the expunged passages found in their proper place in other *Travels* traditions, although it is generally compressed; but the contextual differences loom large. Diemeringen expounds upon the beliefs of Muslims, just as Mandeville does in other versions, but Diemeringen refrains from justifying their practices as Mandeville does in the

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[93] Verner *Epistemology of the Monstrous Middle Ages*, 146.

[94] Paola Tornhagi, "Traveling with John Mandeville to the Holy Land," *Words in Action; Diachronic and Synchronic Approaches to English Discourse (2008):* 67.

[95] Grady, "'Machomete' and Mandevilles Travels," 275.

[96] Higgins, *Writing East*, 25.

Liège, Vulgate, and Cotton Titus versions.[97] Diemeringen's lack of context and justification for Muslim beliefs leaves the reader with an entirely different impression of Islam than in these earlier versions: Islam as undeniably alien and hopelessly contrary to European Christian ideals.

The fundamental differences between Diemeringen's version of *The Travels* and that of the Cotton Titus tradition are stark, and represent a conscious effort on the part of the German redactor. Through his adoption and additions to the Ogier motif, Diemeringen maintained the Liège and Vulgate versions' legacy of European influence and supremacy in the medieval East. Diemeringen's selective erasure of Mandeville's criticisms of Christianity, as well as Mandeville's moments of cultural sensitivity, allow the German tradition to craft an image of European and Christian unity, often at the expense of Eastern virtuousness and individuality. Finally, any forthright discussion of Muslim beliefs is relegated to the final few pages, taken out of Mandeville's original context that expressed cultural appreciation. These changes represent a metamorphosis of *The Travels* from Mandeville's original sensitivity interspersed with European sentiments to Diemeringen's wholehearted and purposeful Orientalist vision of the East.

[97] Higgins, *Writing East*, 250.

CONCLUSION

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said posited that Westerners view the Orient through the lens of their own culture.[98] In essence, it is difficult for a Westerner to view the Orient as a region that possesses virtues in its own right and does not require a Western assessment to have value. Wolfram von Eschenbach, Otto von Diemeringen, and the anonymous author of *Herzog Ernst* all varied from one another in their consideration of Eastern races, yet all three authors employed a form of Said's imaginative Orientalism by assessing Eastern cultures with medieval European senses of value.

Herzog Ernst uses courtly standards of dress, manners, weaponry, and courtship to determine the value of a given culture. The Grippians courtly appearance and civic opulence do not make up for their uncivilized behavior and fighting techniques. The Grippian episode demonstrates that Ernst largely reserves judgment on monstrous cultures until he can obtain sufficient evidence to determine the courtly nature of a culture. Yet, where as Ernst gives monstrous cultures such as the One-Stars time to prove their civility, he never provides the Saracens with the same consideration. Rather he simply assumes a lack of Saracen virtue. Additionally, Ernst utilizes his victory over the Saracens to parlay his own return to his home kingdom. In this sense, Ernst is guilty of an Orientalist double fault: assessing Eastern cultures with Western values, and exploiting the East to accomplish his own Western-oriented goals.

Wolfram's Orientalist elements encompass the very nature of heathendom and Christianity. Belacane and Feirefiz's individual virtue is only of worth to the

[98] Said, *Orientalism*, 11.

extent that it pulls them closer towards European Christian ideals and eases conversion. Belacane's tears are so pure that they negate her heathenness and baptize her in the holier order of Christianity. Feirefiz's spotted skin foreshadows his eventual conversion to Christianity, as well as the racial metamorphosis of his family line. Both Belacane and Feirefiz emphasize Christianity's superiority over Islam and, even more telling, that the clearest sign of ultimate Muslim purity is, in fact, becoming Christian.

In his efforts to emphasize European superiority, Otto von Diemeringen simply annexes the Eastern marvels described in the original Mandeville tradition by crediting their spectacular nature to prior incursion by Ogier the Dane. By following the Liège and Vulgate's Eurocentric orientation, and adding to it with his own unique narrative structure and an emphasis on Christian unity, Diemeringen effectively appropriates Eastern value to Europe and Christianity. The affirmation of Christian unity in Mandeville's *Travels* helps establish a collective European identity, while the accounts of Prester John's Christian civilizations give hope for a less foreign (or more European) East.

The three works examined here depict the Eastern "Other" in different ways, but all contribute towards defining the European self while also satisfying European curiosity about the East. At the same time, none of the narratives described here portrays the East as being wholly different from European courtly society. To be sure, strange creatures, uncouth monsters, and untold numbers of Saracens abound in the medieval European image of the East; but the notion of a courtly cycloptic race, a heathen queen living in a sub-Saharan courtly society, or pockets of Christians tucked away in the Indian desert brings a touch of the familiar to the decidedly foreign. By viewing the East positively through the lens

of Christianity, courtly society and chivalry, Ernst, Gahmuret, and Mandeville demonstrate that certain elements of Eastern civilization might be recognizable to Europeans. Such positive portrayals certainly served to ease European fear of the East, as well as instill curiosity for more visions of the foreign, and perhaps the familiar within.

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