

**Nathasha R. Hodgson, Katherine J. Lewis, and Matthew M. Mesley, eds,**  
*Crusading and Masculinities, Crusades – Subsidia 13* (London: Routledge,  
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*Review*

Consisting of nineteen essays, this extensive volume provides a relevant contribution to the field of masculinity studies and opens up points to new gender-oriented approaches to the crusader movement. Crusades studies have long been curiously reluctant to engage on a wide scale with gender studies, aside from the seminal *Gendering the Crusades* (eds. Edgington and Lambert, 2001). The present collection, however, remedies this absence by providing diverse explorations of gender and crusade from a variety of standpoints. Ranging from the 11th to the 16th century, and in geographical scope from Iberia to the Baltic, the volume engages with literary, documentary, and narrative expressions of the issue in question.

The volume is structured thematically into five sections. The first part, *Sources and Models*, deals with models of behaviour construed for a crusader audience, and crusaders as models of behaviour. In ‘Propaganda and masculinity’, Maier argues that, though Old Testament figures are used as models for crusaders in sermons, the hybridisation with clerical masculinity does not necessarily entail their renunciation or modification of pre-existing forms of masculinities. In ‘The valiant main and the villain in the tradition of the *Gesta Francorum*’, Parsons contextualises the most famous depiction of Bohemond within the contemporary chansons models, especially the ones dedicated to William of Orange, to show that the author is not simply praising Bohemond, but rather employing some of the language typically reserved for villainous characters to signify Bohemond’s changeable masculinity and to negotiate masculinity and social status and the negotiation of the intersection of masculinity and social status. Further

chapters by Barber and Dubois address masculinity in the historical memory of the Fatimids through historical accounts of the vizierate of Al-Afdal b. al-Jamali, and in pamphlets aimed at adolescent knights which offer crusaders as ideal masculine models, written by Mendicant authors such as Vincent of Beauvais. In Part Two, *Contrasting Masculinities*, the contributors examine how crusading masculinities can be defined and defended against their opposite. In ‘Masculine attributes of the other: the shared knightly model’, Friedman argues that ideals of chivalry can be developed from cross-cultural contact with Muslim ideals and demonstrates how the chivalry of Muslim knights can be praised. Nicholson highlights how, although both sides of the crusades codify appropriate behaviour towards women according to their own social and religious canon, the ideal still does not correspond to the norm. In ‘Contrasting masculinities in the Baltic crusades’, Murray investigates seasonal campaigns against the pagans in the Baltic as occasions for lay aristocrats to experience crusade and as signifiers of exclusive social status, while Doherty shows how Old Norse sagas, instead of presenting crusaders through religious prisms, highlight their interactions with sex, wealth, and plunder.

In the third part, *Emasculation and Transgression*, the contributors examine the failure of crusading masculinities, and the effects of this failure on the identity of combatants. In ‘Crusader masculinities in bodily crises’, Phillips explores Joinville’s *Vie de Saint Louis* in order to examine the relationship between corporeality, leadership and masculinity, showing how preoccupations with social status, bodily health, and leadership performance intersect. Edgington analyses how a German verse adaptation of Robert the Monk depicts the historical character Whicher the Swabian fighting an absurdly hyper-masculine Saracen giant. The episode, Edgington argues, highlights both chivalric competitiveness and the comical emasculation of one’s enemies. In ‘Fighting women in the crusading period through Muslim eyes’, Christie

probes how Muslim chroniclers display admiration and anxiety in contextual depictions of women in combat.

The contributors of *Masculinity and Religiosity* engage with the complex intersection of religiosity and holy war, and with the definition and glorification of martyrdom. Hodgson looks at Abbot Martin's portrayal in the *Historia Constantinopolitana* as a man in a problematic crusade against Christians that needs justification in writing. The presentation of Martin as a model testifies to the flexibility of crusader masculinities, and to the tensions within the crusader movement as to what makes a good crusader. In 'Martyrdom as masculinity', Spacey highlights how the First Crusade established models of crusader behaviour that later crusaders had to attain, and shows how embodiment of good masculine qualities fits these models. Through depictions of Alfonso XI of Castile and Abu Yusuf Yaqub, Jones explores how the cross-contamination resulting from close collaboration and enmity causes Muslim and Christian narratives to complicate and shade each other's depictions. In 'A Jewish solution to the problem of excessive Christian virility in the war against Spanish Islam', Tritle investigates how the mid-15th century bishop Alonso de Cartagena described the ideal knighthood necessary for taking Granada from the Moors and complete the Reconquista, exploring ideas concerning Judaism and femininity to contextualise and critique the subject.

The final section, *Chivalry and Kingship*, examines how historical depictions of crusading masculinities can memorialise the past and influence the present by offering correct models of behaviour for the elite, whose ideals of masculinity can be most efficiently embodied by the model of the crusader. Focusing on England, Mesley explains how the idea of crusade was still relevant to Henry II, who capitalised on key images to legitimise his rule by assuming the mantle of idealised crusader manhood, while Lewis uses Caxton's *Godefroy de Bolygne* to

investigate the common characteristics shared by masculinity, chivalry, and kingship after the Hundred Years War. Moving to Spain, Cantor-Echols demonstrates that Alfonso XI of Castile, who had inherited his ancestors' war against the Muslims, commissioned a number of works about the previous conflict in an attempt to legitimise himself as worthy heir. Finally, Desjardins explores how, in the 1440s, unsuccessful Burgundian crusader Waleran de Wavrin and his uncle Jean came together to try and rewrite his crusading enterprise, showing the potential vulnerability of elite males who failed at this endeavour.

As Ruth Mazo Karras underlines in the 'Afterword', the collected essays highlight the importance of masculinity studies in helping us to deconstruct the performance, expectation, and relevance of manhood through the crusader lens. By focusing on one particularly fertile, but so far mostly ignored, manifestation of elite masculinity in the medieval era, this volume contributes to the exploration and definition of the identity of what Karras calls the "unmarked gender": men at holy war, and the rich variety of insights their success, failure and memorialisation of their enterprise can offer us. The volume is to be praised for the sheer breadth of methodological and thematic approaches: by systemically engaging with broad, complex ideas such as martyrdom, propaganda, nationhood and alterity, it effectively shows how rewarding an intersectional enquiry into crusader gender studies can be. Far from proving the last word on the subject, the volume displays the potential and the need for broader engagement with this subject into the field. It is to be greatly hoped that this example shall soon be followed.

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