‘Women’, mulieres, or, more rarely, feminae, are not a social stratum in the sense of pauperes, milites or principes. From the very large numbers of women on the First Crusade who could be ranked among the pauperes through to the much smaller number of women who came with their relatives and guardians among the male magnates, the women of the crusade could, in fact, be distributed among these social layers and be considered as a component part of them. To divide the women of the movement in this way would be reasonable and reflect the very different experiences of women from different social backgrounds. Can, say, Elvira, wife of Count Raymond of Toulouse have had much in common with a runaway female serf? But the women of the First Crusade were also, in several instances, identified collectively by the sources and treated as a coherent grouping; consequently any discussion of their presence on the expedition and their contribution to the social dynamics of the crusade has to examine this sense that women were a distinct category of those persons present.

A striking comment occurs in the history of Albert of Aachen, as he described the popular enthusiasm for the crusade to which he was an eyewitness: ‘crowds from different kingdoms and cities gathered together; but in no sense turning away from illicit and sexual intercourse. There was unbridled contact with women and young girls, who with utter rashness had departed with the intention of frivolity; there was constant pleasure and rejoicing under the pretext of this journey.’¹ This comment and others of a similar nature have, at times, led modern historians to assume that when the sources referred to the women of the First Crusade, they were indicating the presence of ‘camp followers’.

¹ AA i.25 (48): His itaque per turmas ex diuersis regnis et ciuitatibus in unum collectis, sed nequaquam ab illicitis et fornicariis commixtionibus auesis, inmoderata erat commessatio cum multi-eribus et puellis, sub eiusmod levitatis intentione egressis, assidua delectatio, et in omni tementitate sub huius uie occasione gloriatio.
prostitutes. After all, women dependent for their living on soldiers have travelled in the wake of European armies for centuries.

This natural assumption is, however, mistaken with regard to the First Crusade. Albert of Aachen was a monk and this affected his perception of women joining the crusade in two ways. Firstly, a pilgrimage is a time of abstinence, a time for penitence. Given that Albert saw the expedition as a pilgrimage, it was entirely inappropriate in his eyes for men and women to undertake the journey together without adhering to a spirit of abstinence. Secondly, for a medieval monk to leave their monastery without the agreement of their abbot was an extremely serious breach of discipline. Cases of ‘wandering monks’ were treated with a sense of outrage that proper social order had been undermined. There is something of this same outrage in Albert’s comment about women using the crusade as a pretext to leave their former lives. In other words, this passage is not about prostitution, it is about women who may have had perfectly respectable careers, indeed may have been married. Nevertheless, they were upsetting the proprieties of the enterprise by their unregulated presence among the pilgrims.

There is another aspect to the report made by Albert that deserves attention. He described how there was a sense of rejoicing among the women who joined the crusade. This observation might well reflect an important feature of their involvement. Did some women seize upon the opportunity presented by the expedition to cast aside roles and circumstances that oppressed them, to obtain a new form of freedom? Albert’s report is echoed by another eyewitness to the gathering of the crowds who set forth on the expedition, Ekkehard, abbot of Aura and member of the crusade of 1101. Ekkehard wrote that a great part of the common people set out with wives and children, laden with the whole household. These included ‘degraded women’ who had joined the Lord’s host under the guise of religion.

Certainly there were women who, when they learned of the crusade, emerged from obscurity to be local leaders of pilgrims. The most notorious example of this, seized upon by contemporary writers across Europe, was the woman who claimed to be the mistress of a goose that was divinely inspired. Guibert of Nogent was amused rather than outraged at the ‘wretched woman’ whose fame spread through
When she reached Cambrai it was an occasion for a major assembly. That, at least, seems to be the impression created by Guibert’s description of the full church through which the woman and goose walked to reach the altar. Having learned that the woman died in Lotharingia, Guibert couldn’t resist joking that she would have more displayed greater sanity on her journey to Jerusalem if she had eaten the goose the day before she departed.

Behind the mockery lies a significant movement, the crowds that followed the goose were noted with hostility by Albert of Aachen and the Jewish chroniclers of the era, not least because they merged with those who had attacked the Jewish communities of the Rhineland. Another popular movement with women at the head of it is discernable in the report of Baldric of Dol that he saw may of the common people setting out behind a cross that, due to the presumption of certain foolish women, they believed had been created from heaven. Again, the disdain cloaks a report of popular enthusiasm for the crusade being focused by women.

Very many women desired to take up the crusading message. Orderic Vitalis, who wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* between 1123 and 1141, noted that the determination to either go to Jerusalem or to help others who were going there affected ‘rich and poor, men and women, monks and clerks, townspeople and peasants alike. Husbands arranged to leave beloved wives at home, the wives, indeed, sighing, greatly desired to journey with the men, leaving children and all their wealth.’ That thousands of women acted on this inclination is clear. Guibert of Nogent described how ‘the meanest most common men and even unworthy women were appropriating to themselves this miracle [the mark of the cross].’ The Anglo-Saxon chronicler, writing in Peterborough, had very little to say about the Crusade, but he did think it noteworthy that countless people set out, with women and children

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4 GN 331: *mulieris miserarum.*

5 Ibid.


7 BD 17.

8 OV 5, 17: *Dixitibus itaque et pauperibus, viris et mulieribus, monachis et clericis, urbis et rusticis, in Jerusalem eundi aut euntes adiuuandi inerat voluntas mirabilis. Mariti dilectas coniuges domi relinquere disponebant, illae vero genentes relictia prole cam omnibus dixitlis suis in peregrinatione uiros suas sequi ualde cupiebant.*

9 GN 330: *...quilibet extremae vulgaritatis homines et etiam muliebris indignitas hoc sibi tot modis, tot partibus usurpavere miraculum.*
The near contemporary Annals of Augsburg say that along with warriors, bishops, abbots, monks, clerics and men of diverse professions, ‘serfs and women’ (coloni et mulieres) joined the movement. The Monte Cassino Chronicle reported that the desire to join the Holy Journey seized men and women and that, together with noble people, ‘ignoble men and women’ carried crosses on their shoulders.

The epic poem, the Chanson d’Antioche, which, it is generally accepted, contains eyewitness material, has the lines: ‘There were many ladies who carried crosses, and the (freeborn) French maidens whom God loved greatly went with the father who begat them.’ Anna Commena, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor, Alexios I, writing in the 1140s gave a brief description of the People’s Crusade whose unusual makeup must have been a striking feature. She remembered seeing ‘a host of civilians, outnumbering the sand of the sea shore or the stars of heaven, carrying palms and bearing crosses on their shoulders. There were women and children too, who had left their countries.’ In his description of the disastrous aftermath of the battle of Civetot, 21 October 1096, Albert of Aachen wrote of the Turks who came to the camp of the crusaders: ‘entering those tents they found them containing the faint and the frail, clerks, monks, aged women, young boys, all indeed they killed with the sword. Only delicate young girls and nuns whose faces and beauty seemed to please the eye and beardless young men with charming expressions they took away.’ This description by Albert is particularly important in that it draws attention to the, often overlooked, presence of nuns on the crusade.

Even after the slaughter at Civetot, many women were assimilated into the Princes’ Crusade. It is clear, indeed, that large numbers of women were travelling with the Princes’ contingents. In Brindisi, 5 April 1097, the first ship of those sailing with Robert of Normandy capsized.

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11 Annales Augustani, MGH SS 3, 134.
12 MC 174: ignobilis viris ac mulieribus.
14 AC x.5 [309].
15 AA 1.21(42): tentoria vero illorum intrantes quosquos repererunt languidos ac debiles, clericos, monachos, mulieres gradeus, pueros, sugentes, omnem vero etatem gladio extinxerunt. Solummodo puellas teneras et moniales quaram facies et forma oculis eorum placere videbatur, iuvenesque inberbes et vulva venustos abduxerunt.
Fulcher of Chartres wrote of the incident that four hundred ‘of both sexes’ perished by drowning.\textsuperscript{16} Fulcher described the united army at Nicea as containing women and children.\textsuperscript{17} The\textit{ Chanson d’Antioche} indicated that the camp of the crusaders had a particular women’s section, which was raided by the Turks shortly after the siege of Nicea:

Firstly, turning their violence on the ladies,  
Those who attracted them they took on horseback,  
And tearing the breasts of the old women,  
When the mothers were killed their children cried out,  
The dead mothers suckled them, it was a very great grief,  
They climbed up on them seeking their breasts,  
They must be reigning [in heaven] with the Innocents.\textsuperscript{18}

The anonymous author of\textit{ Gesta Francorum}\ reported that at the battle of Dorylaeum, 1 July 1097, the women in the camp were a great help, for they brought up water for the fighting men to drink and bravely always encouraged them, fighters and defenders.\textsuperscript{19} The\textit{ Chanson d’Antioche} has a description of the same scene:

The baronage was thirsty; it was greatly oppressed;  
The knights of Tancred strongly desired water.  
They were greatly served by them who were with them.  
The ladies and maidens of whom there were numerous in the army;  
Because they readied themselves, they threw off their cloaks,  
And carried water to the exhausted knights,  
In pots, bowls and in golden chalices.  
When the barons had drunk they were reinvigorated.\textsuperscript{20}

During the battle, Turkish horsemen were sent to cover a possible line of retreat, and the near contemporary\textit{ Historia Vie Hierosolimitane} recorded that they ‘cruelly put to the sword almost a thousand men, women, and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[16]{FC I.viii.2 (169).}
\footnotetext[17]{FC I.x.4 (183).}
\footnotetext[18]{CA 2034–2040: Premierement as dames vont les resnes tornant; celes qui lor contekent es seles vont montant. Et as toibles vielettes les mameles torgant. Quant les meres sont mortes, si crient li enfant, Sor les pis lor montoient, les mameles querant, La mère morte alaitent, ce est dolor molt grant! El rene as Innocens doiventestre manant. See also Susan B. Edgington, ‘Women in the Chanson d’Antioche’, p. 155.}
\footnotetext[19]{GF 19.}
\footnotetext[20]{CA 2144–2152: Li bornages ot soi, si est molt esgorés, Molt desiroit de l’aigue li chevaliers Tancrèz. Mestier lor ont eit celes de lor regnés, Les dames, les puceles dont il i ot assés. Quar eles se rebracent, s’ont lor dras jus jetés, S’ aportèrent de l’aigue les chevaliers membres As pos, as escuïes et as vaisains dorés. Quant ot but li bornages, si est resevironés. See also Susan B. Edgington, ‘Women in the Chanson d’Antioche’, p. 155.}
\end{footnotes}
unarmed, common folk. Further along the march in the arid stretches of Asia Minor, in July 1097, Albert of Aachen noted with sympathy the suffering of very many pregnant women, who miscarried or gave birth to premature babies. Again, Albert of Aachen was attentive to the presence of ‘many thousands’ of women and children at the siege of Antioch that began 21 October 1097. The Gesta Francorum had a description of a woman in the camp of Bohemond being killed by an arrow during that siege. In the plague that followed the capture of the city women were notably more likely to be victims. At the climactic denouement of the First Crusade, the capture of Jerusalem, women were still present in considerable numbers, sharing the work and bringing water and words of encouragement to the men. Indeed, according to William of Tyre, who although writing some three generations after the events had access to local traditions in Jerusalem, the women even presumed to take up arms.

This, by no means exhaustive selection of references to women on the Crusade, from a range of sources, establishes without a doubt that women were present in large numbers. But is it possible to focus more closely on the women present in the First Crusade and indicate something of their motivation?

One group of women whose presence and role is most easily understood are those who were members of the aristocracy. Because the sources were largely written for the benefit of the aristocracy and because historians such as William of Tyre were interested in the genealogy of the leading noble families in Outremer, we are in a position to name some of the aristocratic women involved in the First Crusade. Raymond of Toulouse brought with him on the Crusade his third wife, Elvira, daughter of Alfonso VI of Castile by his mistress, Ximene. Baldwin of Boulogne, later lord of Eddessa, also brought his wife, Godvere of Tosni, ‘a most noble’ lady from the Kingdom of

21 GP 86–7: crudeliter ense necauit, Mille viros ferme, mulieres, vulgus inerme.
22 AA iii.2 (138–140).
23 AA iii.38 (198).
24 GF 29.
25 WT 7.1 (344).
26 WT 8.13 (403).
28 FC l.xxxiii (320); GN 134.
England. Godveré’s first cousin, Emma of Hereford came on the crusade with her husband Ralph I of Gaët. It is likely that Count Baldwin of Bourcq brought at least one of his sisters with him as she later, 12 September 1115, married Roger, prince of Antioch. Walo II, lord of Chaumont-en-Vexin brought his wife, Humberge, daughter of Hugh Le Puiset and sister of the crusader Everard. On the death of Walo, Humberge was described as being supported by a band of mature ladies (matres). In all likelihood the wives and sisters of many other lesser nobles intending to stay in the newly won crusader states were present, but by and large they did not come to the attention of the chroniclers of the Crusade. We know that Hadvide of Chiny, for example, journeyed with her husband Dodo of Cons-la-Grandville only due to charter evidence. An unnamed woman of great nobility and beauty was unfortunate enough to be captured during the siege of Antioch, while playing dice in an orchard with Adelbero, son of Count Conrad of Luxembourg and archdeacon of the Church of Metz. After being taken back to Antioch, raped and tortured, the head of this woman was placed in a catapult with that of Adelbero and flung back towards the Christian army. Emeline, wife of Fulcher a knight of Bullion, only appears in the historical record as a crusader due to Albert of Aachen taking an interest in the story that although she was captured, because of her beauty an illustrious Turkish knight, a general of Omar, lord of Azaz fell in love with her. At the suggestion of Emeline, this Turkish general contacted Duke Godfrey of Lotharingia with a view to leading a revolt against Ridwan of Aleppo. Other than this example, aristocratic women seem to have played no independent role in the course of the expedition. Their actions or words are not mentioned. This is hardly surprising given that for an aristocratic woman to have a measure of authority c. 1100 she

29 AA iii.27 (182): nobilissima; WT 3. 18 (453). See also S. Geldsetzer, Frauen Auf Kreuzzügen, p. 186.
30 OV 2, 4 (318). See also S. Geldsetzer, Frauen Auf Kreuzzügen, p. 185.
31 WT 12. 9 (498).
32 RM 794–6; GP 127. See also S. Geldsetzer, Frauen Auf Kreuzzügen, p. 186.
33 GP 126.
36 AA v.7 (346). See also S. Geldsetzer, Frauen Auf Kreuzzügen, p. 185.
would have had to be a widow with a sizeable patrimony or a mother with significant influence over powerful sons.

It was the next generation of aristocratic women who controlled property in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, who were able to wield some political power, or indeed those women left behind by their noble husbands. The women of the nobility present on the initial expedition were brought to generate families should the conquest be successful and were not in a position to play an independent political role during the campaign. Indeed if their male guardian died on the crusade such aristocratic women could be placed in a difficult position; Humberge was given a speech on the death of Walo that includes the question: ‘other than with a man, can a woman live following the camp?’

Although dependent on Ovid for the phrase, Gilo posed the question in the contemporary setting of the Crusade, using the classical reference to indicate the dependency of the position of aristocratic women on their guardians.

Beyond the aristocratic women there were far greater numbers of women of the other social orders. There is no possibility of finding out their names or much detail concerning their backgrounds. Eyewitness descriptions of the gathering of forces for the First Crusade, however, have important information to offer. It is clear, first of all, that many women from the social order of pauperes, both urban and rural ‘poor’, came with their husbands and children on the crusade. Guibert of Nogent’s passage about the poor families who put all these possessions in a cart and came on the expedition has been noted in Chapter Three, with regard to the pauperes, but it also important evidence for the presence of large numbers of women.

From Pope Urban II’s letter to the clergy and people of Bologna of September 1096, it is clear that the unexpected departure of large numbers of non-combatant forces was a concern and a development to be restrained. But it is hardly surprising that peasants undertaking the crusade with the expectation of finding a better life moved in entire families. As Ekkehard disapprovingly observed, ‘the farmers, the women and children, roving with unheard of folly, abandoned the land of their birth, gave up their own property and yearned for that

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37 GP 128–9.
38 GN 120.
of foreigners and go to an uncertain promised land.’⁴⁰ There can be no question of describing such women as prostitutes or camp followers. These married women were non-combatant participants like the elderly, the clergy and the children on the crusade.

In addition to married women of urban and rural poor families, there is also evidence that unattached women participated in the Crusade. Albert of Aachen’s anger that what should have been a chaste undertaking in the manner of all pilgrimages was contaminated by licentiousness is perhaps the most striking example, but a less hostile observation to the same effect comes from the history of Raymond of Aguilers. Raymond gave very detailed accounts of the speeches of peasant visionaries, from which it is possible to detect elements of the political programme of the poor crusader. In one vision of St Andrew to Peter Bartholomew, 30 November 1098, evidence that the body of unmarried women was still a cause for concern is presented, as the saint was reported as saying that ‘amongst your ranks is a great deal of adultery, though it would please God if you all take wives.’⁴¹

A more precisely observed episode of relevance occurred at a moment of great strain for the Crusade, January 1098, during the siege of Antioch, when famine was causing the movement to disintegrate. During this crisis the higher clergy managed to gain an influence over the movement, which they were not subsequently able to maintain. Their argument that to weather the crisis, particularly devout behaviour was required carried the day and therefore their hostility to the presence of unmarried women on the crusade surfaced in the form of a decision that women should be driven from the camp. Fulcher—at the time in Edessa—wrote that ‘the Franks, having again consulted together, expelled the women from the army, the married as well as the unmarried, lest perhaps defiled by the sordidness of riotous living they should displease the Lord. These women then sought shelter for themselves in neighbouring towns.’⁴² William of Tyre described the same incident as being a more limited purge of solely ‘light foolish women’ (leves mulierculae).⁴³

⁴⁰ EA 140.
⁴¹ RA 171 (269): *Inter vos caedes et... plurima adulteria: quum Deo placitum sit, si uxores vos annus ducatis.*
⁴² FC LXX.IV.14 (223): *tunc facto deinde consilio, eiecerunt feminas de exercitu, tam maritatas quam immaritatas, ne forte luxuriae sordibus inquinaret Domino displicerent. Illae vero in castris adhucis tunc hospita sibi adsapserunt.*
⁴³ WT 4. 22 (264).
This incident reveals the presence of significant numbers of unmarried women on the crusade, but also that in times of crisis, they were a body of people who became scapegoats for the hardships experienced by the Christian army. The clergy of the First Crusade, as supporters of Pope Urban II, would have subscribed to notions of pilgrimage that were closely related to the Truce of God, a clerically led peace movement that emphasised chastity and abstinence. This would inevitably have led to tensions between them and the women of the First Crusade, tensions that in at least one instance erupted in the forced expulsion of the women from the crusade.

There is a contrast between the disapproval of the presence of women expressed by the regular clergy and a more sympathetic position taken by the spokespeople of the poor. That is the impression created not only by the report of the vision of Peter Bartholomew, but also in the eyewitness report of the recruiting activities of Peter the Hermit by Guibert of Nogent. ‘[Peter the Hermit] was liberal towards the poor showing great generosity with the goods that were given to him, making wives of prostitutes [prostitutae mulieres] through his gifts to their husbands.’44 Again, the message is one that the position of unattached women should be regularised by marriage, not that they should be turned away altogether.

In an article unrelated to the crusades, Georges Duby made a comment that is extremely helpful in analysing the description given by Guibert of the activities of Peter the Hermit. In discussing the consequences of the drive to reform the church from 1075–1125, Duby wrote: ‘Prostitution flourished in the rapidly expanding towns, thronging with uprooted immigrants. Above all, there were those women without men that the reform movement had itself thrown out onto the street, the wives abandoned by husbands because they were priests, or if laymen, because they were bigamists or had contracted an incestuous union. These women were to be pitied, but they were also dangerous, threatening to corrupt men and lead them astray.’45

The fact that Peter the Hermit was providing dowries to ‘prostitutes’ has been noted by E. O. Blake and C. Morris as showing that his was

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44 GN 121:... dilargitione erga pauperes liberalis, prostitutae mulieres non sine suo munere maritis honestas.

an urban audience. But it seems possible to draw a further conclusion, that Peter the Hermit was using his gifts to gather a following amongst marginalised women. Those who accompanied him on crusade should therefore not be considered camp followers in the conventional sense.

Guibert’s use of the term *prostitutae* needs to be examined. Particularly as he wrote a very important passage on the relationship between men and women during the First Crusade in which the term reappears. Guibert reported that the measures taken on the crusade against unmarried women were far more severe than desiring they be married off. Having made the point that those requiring the protection of God should not be subject to lustful thoughts, he wrote that:

> It happened there that neither a mention of harlot nor the name of a prostitute was tolerated...because if it was found that any of those woman was found to have become pregnant, who was proven to be without a husband, she and her procurer were surrendered to atrocious punishments...Meanwhile it came to pass that a certain monk of the most famous monastery, had left the cloister of his monastery and undertaken the expedition to Jerusalem, being inspired not by piety but by shallowness, was caught with some woman or other. If I am not mistaken he was found to be guilty by the judgement of red-hot iron, and finally the Bishop of Le Puy and the others ordered that the miserable woman with her lover be led naked through all the corners of the camps and be most fearfully lashed by whips, to the terror of the onlookers.

That Guibert is particularly vehement on this point is unsurprising given his purpose, which in part, would have been the edification of his readers and the monks for whom he was responsible as abbot. But the substance of the incidence is supported by a similar report by Albert of Aachen. The context was that of a heightened religious feeling in the Christian camp at Antioch. Christmas had just been celebrated when, 30 December 1098, a serious tremor shook the land. A devastating famine along with disease was killing thousands. Therefore a special assembly took place with all the bishops and clergy, discussed with

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47 GN 196: *Unde fiebat ut ibi nee mentio scorti nee nomen prostituli toleraretur haberi...quod si gravidam inveniri constisset aliquam earum mulierum, quae probabantur carere maritis, atrocibus tradebatur cum suo lenone suppliciis. Contigit interea quendam predicatissimi omnium coenobii monachum, qui monasterii sui claustra fugaciter exsererat et Iherosolimitanam expeditionem non pie tate sed levitate provocatus inierat, cum aliqua femina ibi deprehendi, igniti, nisi fallor, ferri judicio convinci ac demum Pudensiis episcopi exterorumque precepto per omnes castrorum vicos miseram illam cum suo amasio circumduci et flagris nudo ad terrem victimantium dirimse verbeari.*
regard to the role of Adhémar in Chapter Eight. The council passed very many laws for the regulation of the army and these concerned theft and other crimes as well as an injunction against fornication and adultery. It was in the aftermath of this council that Albert reported that a man and woman were caught in the act of adultery, stripped and whipped through the whole army.48

The important question to resolve is whether the sanctions were directed against prostitutes or women participants of the crusade? Albert, better informed about the details of the expedition than Guibert, does not mention the term prostitutae. Moreover, when a scholarly clerical writer of the era like Guibert employed the term, they did so with a sense that is quite different to the modern term ‘prostitute’. In contemporary clerical thought, for a woman to fail to give an appearance of modesty, let alone for her to engage in sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage, meant she was considered a prostitute.49

The application of the term to such a broad pattern of behaviour meant that canonists found it very difficult to define prostitution. A letter by Jerome (ca. 342–420) contained the definition that ‘a whore is one who lies open to the lust of many men’. In the same letter Jerome clarifies this by saying that ‘a woman who has been abandoned by many lovers is not a prostitute’.50 It was the first formulation that was to be used by Gratian for his widely distributed Decretum (ca. 1140).51 In other words, the early twelfth-century concept of prostitutae was far wider and much more detached from financial exchange than the modern term prostitute. The term was used by Church reformers to refer to priests’ wives, women who would have considered themselves entirely respectable. Given this context, it seems reasonable to understand Guibert’s prostitutae mulieres as unattached women—his sense of proper place being offended in a manner similar to his attitude towards runaway monks—rather than their literally being ‘prostitutes’. In the period of the First Crusade these women were prostitutae only in the sense that they were unmarried and as such a cause for concern, particularly to

48 AA iii.57 (228).
50 Jerome, Epistula, 64.7, PL 22, col. 611: Meretrix, quae multorum libidini patet; col. 612: Non meretricem, quae multis exposita est amatoribus.
51 Gratian, Decretum, C.XVI. See J. A. Brundage, Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages, XIV, 827.
the clergy who were anxious at the potential social disorder they might cause and the contamination of the purity of the pilgrimage.

A further piece of direct evidence for the presence of large numbers of unmarried women on the crusade, an excerpt from the chronicle of Bernold of St Blaisen (Constance), sheds more light on the issue:

At this time a very great multitude from Italy and from all France and Germany began to go to Jerusalem against the pagans in order that they might liberate the Christians. The Lord Pope was the principal founder of this expedition... an innumerable multitude of poor people leapt at that journey too simple-mindedly and they neither knew nor were able in any way to prepare themselves for such danger... It was not surprising that they could not complete the proposed journey to Jerusalem because they did not begin that journey with such humility and piety as they ought. For they had very many apostates in their company who had cast off their monastic habits and intended to fight. But they were not afraid to have with them innumerable women who had criminally changed their natural clothing to masculine clothing with whom they committed fornication, by doing which they offended God remarkably just as had also the people of Israel in former times and therefore at length, after many labours, dangers and death, since they were not permitted to enter Hungary they began to return home with great sadness having achieved nothing.\footnote{Bernold of St Blaisen (Constance), \textit{Chronicon}, 1096, pp. 527–9: \textit{His temporibus maxima multitudo de Italia et omni Gallia et Germania Ierosolimam contra paganos, ut liberarent christianos, ire cepti. Cuius expeditionis dominus papa maximus auctor fuit... Nimium tamen simpliciter innumerabilis multitudo popularium illud iber arripuerunt, qui nullosmodo se ad tale periculum praeparare noverunt vel potuerunt... Non erat autem mirum, quod propositum iber ad Ierosolimam explere non potuerent, quia non tali humilitate et devotione, ut deberent, illud iber adorsi sunt. Nam et plures apostatas in comitatu suo habuerunt, qui abiecito religionis habitu cum illis militare propuserunt. Sed et innumerabiles feminas secum habere non timuerunt, quae naturalem habitum in virilem nefarie mutaverunt, cum quibus fornicati sunt; in quo Deam mirabiliter, sicut et Israelicitius populus quondam offenderunt. Unde post multos labores, pericula et mortes, tandem, cum Ungariam non permittentur intrare, domum inacte cum magna tristicia ceperunt repedare.}}

The importance of Bernold’s work is that it is the most contemporary eyewitness account of the setting forth of the Crusade. He did not wait for the end of the year to write up his chronicle and therefore it is particularly valuable in recording the immediate response to events. It is notable that he shared with Guibert of Nogent and Albert of Aachen a sense that women leaving their allocated social position were similar to monks casting off their habits. Bernold’s description of women dressing as men in order to go on crusade is supported by an entry in the Annals of Disibodenberg which states that news of the expedition...
depopulated ‘cities of bishops [and] villages of dwellers. And not only men and youths but even the greatest number of women undertook the journey. Wonderful indeed was the spirit of that time in order that people should be urged on to this journey. For women in this expedition were going forth in manly dress and they marched armed.\textsuperscript{53}

It is possible to see women taking men’s clothing as a form of protection for their journey. Their action could also be a form a social statement, indicating a desire to be considered pilgrims. Both ideas are present in a twelfth century saint’s life, that of St Hildegund, who is disguised by her father, a knight, during their travels on crusade to Jerusalem and who retains her garb to become a famous monk whose secret is only revealed upon her death.\textsuperscript{54}

The prescriptions against women wearing men’s clothes would have been well known at the time of the First Crusade, for example that in Burchard of Worms’ widely disseminated \textit{Decretum}: ‘if a woman changes her clothes and puts on manly garb for the customary female clothes, for the sake, as it is thought, of chastity, let her be anathema.’\textsuperscript{55} Guibert of Nogent also told an interesting story in his autobiography in which men and women overcame their fear and distaste of cross-dressing in order to disguise themselves for an escape.\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, by this time there was an almost respectable tradition of pious women disguising themselves as men to escape persecution or to live like monks, for example, Pelagia, Thecla, Anastasia, Dorothea, Eugenia, Euphrosyne, Marina and Theodora.\textsuperscript{57} Whether these tales had any influence over the cross-dressing crusaders is entirely speculative, but it is possible to draw at least one unambiguous conclusion from the description in Bernold and the Annals of Disibodenberg, which is that these women did not

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Annales S. Disibodi}, MGH SS 17, 16: \textit{regna rectoribus, urbes pastoribus, vici vastantur habitatoribus; et non tantum viri et pueri, sed etiam mulieres quam plurimae hoc iter sunt aggressae. Mirabilis enim spiritus illius temporis homines impulit ad hoc iter aggregiendum. Nam feminae in hanc expeditionem euntes virili utebant habitu et armatae incedebant.}


\textsuperscript{55} Buchard of Worms, \textit{Decretum}, VIII.60, \textit{PL} 140, col. 805A: \textit{Si qua mulier propter continentiam quae putatur, habitum mutat, et pro solito muliebri amictu amictu virilem sumit, anathema sit.}

\textsuperscript{56} Guibert of Nogent, \textit{Monodiae}, III.9.

attach themselves to the movement as prostitutes: male attire and the bearing of arms being completely inappropriate for such a role.

Insofar as historians have considered the role of women on the First Crusade they have tended to make the assumption that the majority of women were associated with the movement as camp followers, prostitutes. A closer examination of the evidence suggests that this is an error and that the thousands of women who went on the crusade—to find a promised land, or to get away from the towns in which many of them had been abandoned—did so as participants, as pilgrims.