

**“What, is Sarezyns flesh thus good?”: Cannibalism  
and the Humors in *Richard Cœur de Lyon*<sup>1</sup>**

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In the late medieval Middle English romance *Richard Cœur de Lyon*, the title character twice eats Saracen flesh. On the first occasion, he does so unknowingly, while seeking a cure for an illness that stems from the “unkynde cold and hete” and the “strong eyr off þat cuntree” of the Saracens that also produces his uncommon longing for pork (ll. 3044-3045; 3071).<sup>2</sup> Richard’s aversion to the Saracen climate is healed, ironically, through the ingestion of Saracen flesh, when an old knight of the king’s retinue suggests cooking a young Saracen rather than the desired but hard to find pork. Richard’s healing ensues after the ingestion of the Saracen flesh, following a nap, during which he “slepte, and swette a stounde” (l. 3117). His sweating, through the emission of excess fluid, subtly points to a humoral transformation that is part of the healing process, and he awakes refreshed and ready for battle. Afterwards, when he finds out about his unintended cannibalism, he decides to commit the grim crime again publicly and purposefully – this time when hosting a banquet for Saracen emissaries during peace negotiations with Saladin – to intimidate his Saracen opponents with his increasingly violent and bellicose nature. On this second occasion, Richard serves up the heads of renowned Saracen prisoners of war to the emissaries, while publicly savoring his own portion. The violence of this cannibalistic act is thus cloaked in mock hospitality and portrays the protagonist of the tale as an emotionally volatile and cruel aggressor.

My argument assesses the transformational force of cannibalism, that metamorphic moment where a humored body of one race ingests the humored body of a different race and, through this violent act, assumes its, in this case, aggressive and choleric humoral constitution.<sup>3</sup> As a humoral being, Richard’s identity pre- and post-cannibalism is never stable, but constantly in flux, requiring to be refueled in its choleric nature by further acts of cannibalistic consumption. I consider within my discussion how medieval contemporaries describe what happens to one’s identity when food consumption becomes complicated through taboos such as cannibalism,

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<sup>2</sup> According to this description (of having both heat and cold – which might indicate a desert climate), it is a bit difficult to categorize how the medieval writer/adaptor saw this territory in terms of which climatological zone it belongs to. However, thoughts regarding possibilities will be discussed especially towards the end of the article, where Marian J. Tooley’s article on “Bodin and the Mediaeval Theory of Climate” (*Speculum* 28.1 (Jan. 1953): 64-83) offers some plausible suggestions for how to read this reference and subsequent characterizations of Saracens who live in the climate.

<sup>3</sup> Richard’s ‘race’ is, in this fictional example, complicated by the idea that his father is English (or at the very least European, given that the French heritage of his father is suppressed in the narrative), while his mother, Cassiodorien, is of undeterminable origin (but, as most scholars have suggested, might be either Oriental, given the goods her father’s ship carries, or from the faery realm, given her supernatural exit from the narrative). Richard’s character has thus largely been discussed as a hybrid of sorts (faery/human or Oriental/European). Tooley’s research suggests that the opposite was suggested by several sources, meaning that, while there was a causal connection between location and complexion, the process was seen by some to be one of reaction rather than assimilation. In this way, cold climates were seen to produce hot temperaments and hot climates, cold temperaments (Tooley 72). This suggestion will be discussed in greater detail later in the article.

especially when cannibalizing one's enemy. This analysis requires a foray into medieval perceptions of food consumption, digestion, and their theological and medicinal resonance in discourses concerning human identity, in body and soul.

*Richard Cœur de Lyon* has been the subject of much scholarly debate, especially regarding its complex manuscript history, questions about what genre the text constitutes, and finally, regarding its confusing representations of a hybrid otherworldly/human Richard, as the narrative takes liberties with what we know of the historical King Richard, making him, in this scenario, the progeny of an otherworldly (or possibly Oriental) mother and a human father.<sup>4</sup> The text's cannibalistic episodes have been discussed in detail by several scholars, including Alan Ambrisco, Geraldine Heng, and Heather Blurton, whose work on the text provides a context for my argument, especially for thinking about articulations of identity. While these scholars do not consider the

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<sup>4</sup> Of the extant editions, there are seven manuscripts and two 16<sup>th</sup>-century printed editions by Wynkyn de Worde (Blurton 121). Karl Brunner's 1913 edition of the text is seen as the standard scholarly edition of *Richard Cœur de Lyon* and is also the version I rely on in this article; however, his edition is a composite that merges two distinct manuscript traditions, which Brunner designates as A and B versions (Blurton 121). The B version is shorter by 1200 lines and usually also treated as the "older" version of the two, also being featured in the Auchinleck Manuscript (Blurton 121). Scholars also treat the B version as the more "historical" version of the two (Blurton 121). John Finlayson suggests that the A version is a later adaptation of the B version, and that the genre of the text becomes blurred through this process of adaptation (Finlayson, "Richard, Coeur de Lyon", 156). The B version is also extant in more versions, accounting for five of the seven manuscript versions available (Finlayson, "Richard, Coeur de Lyon", 179). The B version of the manuscript is extant not only in the Auchinleck manuscript (also known as National Library Scotland MS Advocates 19.2.1), but also in British Library Egerton MS 2862, British Library Harley MS 4690, College of Arms Arundel MS 58 and Bodley Library Douce MS 228 (Blurton 121). All of these manuscripts were apparently crafted in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries (Blurton 121). The A version of the manuscript is extant in the following fifteenth-century manuscript collections: the Thornton manuscript (also known as British Library Additional MS 31042) and Gonville and Caius College (Cambridge MS 175). This version also forms the model upon which the two early printed editions of Wynkyn de Worde are based, and Karl Brunner incorporates the A version into his composite early 20<sup>th</sup>-century editions (Blurton 121). The A version, extant in only two fifteenth-century manuscript collections, is a possible adaptation of B, and attempts to re-create the history as a romance, includes plot points which have been labeled as "stock romance episodes" by several scholars (including Blurton and Finlayson) (Blurton 121). These episodes include: the romantic meeting of Richard's parents (Henry and Cassiodorien, who replaces the historical figure of Eleanor of Aquitaine in this fictionalized account of Richard's life); Cassiodorien's escape (by flying through the window of the church) at the sight of the Eucharist; a lengthy account of Richard's captivity in Germany and his subsequent dalliance with Margery, a German princess; Richard's escape from imprisonment by killing a lion in single combat; and Richard's first cannibalism (Blurton 121). As these are moments upon which this chapter will also focus, it is important to keep in mind that these episodes are not featured in all the manuscripts, but are significant additions to the B version. Finlayson emphasizes that the audience for *Richard Cœur de Lyon*, especially the A version, might well have been aristocratic, although this is contrary to previous discussions about potential audiences for the text (Finlayson, "Legendary Ancestors", 308). Due to the nature of the additions, he draws connections to similarities of the additions to other romance texts, and connects the adaptor of *Richard Cœur de Lyon* to the same authorship and patron circles that produced *Guy of Warwick* (Finlayson, "Legendary Ancestors", 304). *Richard Cœur de Lyon* therefore should be treated with an awareness of its manuscript and transmission history, as additions to the text may speak to the idea that the "Ur-text" (similar to the B version) may well have been intended as a more historical account of Richard's crusading ventures, while the A version re-creates the text in the fashion of other medieval romances and expresses, more vociferously, supernatural and superhuman elements within this newly adapted romance. *Richard Cœur de Lyon* has been described as a work that blurs genre boundaries and that, like its protagonist, it shows a confusion regarding its own identity. Partly a history featuring a crusade narrative, partly romance centered on chivalric masculinity and episodes of *fin amour*, and yet also in part a work that is deeply influenced by the *chanson de geste* genre, *Richard Cœur de Lyon* represents a text whose genre is hard to determine based on its complex transmission history. For a more detailed discussion of the genre question, see Finlayson's "Richard, Coeur de Lyon: Romance, History, or Something in Between" (*Studies in Philology* 87.2 (Spring 1990): 156-180).

impact of the humors, they lay a foundation for considerations about identity, race, and nation-building that is useful for my arguments about humoral theory and discourses of cannibalism. In addition, Nicola McDonald has recently introduced the idea of an “alimentary logic” that drives the plot of this romance and her argument provides a springboard for my humoral analysis of food consumption within the text.<sup>5</sup>

Discussions by scholars such as these have led to a greater understanding of *Richard Cœur de Lyon*. What has not, however, yet been noted is that medieval discourses of food were also closely linked to considerations of humoral psychology. Not only human beings were prone to the ebb and flow of different humors which influenced their emotions, but animals and plants – potential foodstuffs for people – were also subject to the elements of the universe. Every living

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<sup>5</sup> Among the additions incorporated within the A version are the cannibalistic episodes of the title character. Scholars have, naturally enough, been fascinated by the cannibalistic moments in *Richard Cœur de Lyon*, mostly because of its outlandish attribution to a historical figure who, as far as we know, has not been known to incorporate human flesh in his regular diet. Various scholars have drawn different conclusions from these instances in the narrative. Alan Ambrisco, in his discussion of the cannibalism inherent in the text, makes note of the fact that the title character was transformed from the historical Richard, who was, in Ambrisco’s eyes, a “French duke”, to an “English King” (499). Part of his argument rests on the texts’ snubbing of French sources that deal with the same subject matter as well as open belittling of French characters in the tale, but that the text is, at the same time, equating Englishness with the barbarity that also drives Richard to cannibalize Saracens through psychological warfare (499-504). Geraldine Heng, in various adaptations of what ultimately became a chapter of her book *Empire of Magic*, relates the cannibalistic *Richard Cœur de Lyon* moment to a series of other medieval accounts (fictional or historical) of cannibalism. In her chapter on *Richard Cœur de Lyon*, she reads the cannibalistic moment as a communal joke that solidifies English proto-nationalism while subtly evoking a certain nervousness about racial others (Heng, “The Romance of England”, 63-65). Heng argues that the Saracens mentioned in the text function, in a way, as placeholders for sentiments the English felt about racial others in their own lands – more specifically, Jews (Heng, “The Romance of England”, 78). The Romance of *Richard Cœur de Lyon* is thus a way to reprocess history and express fantasies about racial otherness close to home (Heng, “The Romance of England”, 72). Heather Blurton also touches on ideas of nationhood but centers more closely on questions of genre and othering, because, while the text portrays a Christian community of England within foreign lands, it portrays that community as a community that commits cannibalism, while those who are not English (but from the East) refuse to commit these acts (Blurton 120). By doing so, the text frustrates the genre of the *chanson de geste* form (upon which Blurton focuses in her book) because it breaks the stereotype of the Saracen cannibals who usually eat defeated Christian knights (Blurton 120-121). Blurton thus argues that *Richard Cœur de Lyon* “appropriates the *chanson de geste* form deliberately in order to reverse its signifying agenda” and because of its role-reversal, the adaptation of this form thus becomes “the basis for the romance’s politics of asserting a model of English dominance in a post-crusading Europe” (Blurton 121). Suzanne Conklin Akbari also points to the romance’s quest for national identity, which centers on Richard’s identity; however, as she reasons, his identity “is founded on a paradox” because he is a “monstrous half-breed (half human and half faery), in the tradition of Merlin and Alexander” (Akbari 198). Akbari points to the Eucharistic symbolism of the tale, and argues that the community of Englishmen is “united by a sacrificial act, performed by one of its members on behalf of the group as a whole” (Akbari 199). Cannibalism thus becomes a Eucharistic symbol and establishes a “framework out of which the discourse of nation emerges” (Akbari 199). These tendencies are echoed by other scholars, such as, for example Merrall Llewelyn Price, who briefly mentions *Richard Cœur de Lyon* as part of a discussion on medieval fascination with cannibal warriors, like the Tafurs in the first crusade, and she also references Richard’s barbarity as being tied to his monstrosity (Price 10). While these scholars thus reach their arguments about nationhood through different means, their arguments remind us of *Richard Cœur de Lyon*’s importance as a romanticized adaptation of crusading narratives. Lynn Shutter centers on discourses of masculinity and chivalry, while looking at animal imagery associated with Richard’s problematic identity. Nicola McDonald, in her article, centers on discourses of food. Her approach differs from previous discussions of the text in so far as she centers on the so-called “alimentary logic” which pervades the text. McDonald emphasizes that this poem is driven by food (by “feast and fast” as she argues), and mentions about 20 recorded meals or instances of eating (McDonald 131-132). She acknowledges, like Akbari does, the implications of theophagy in some of those instances of eating and in fantasies of cannibalism, but also ventures into other food taboos which are discussed in the poem (McDonald 132-140).

and growing thing was thus seen to have an effect upon humans' humoral make-up, especially if humans incorporated them in their diet.<sup>6</sup> Taking these discourses into account while revisiting the cannibalistic episodes in *Richard Cœur de Lyon* demonstrates that the poem's implications of nationhood and fear of otherness acquire added meaning when placed within the context of late medieval scientific rationalizations. *Richard Cœur de Lyon* shows awareness of food politics, as McDonald has pointed out, but it also, I wish to add, reveals an awareness of the terminology and phenomenology inherent in medieval humoral psychology, an awareness that can help us more fully understand the text's reliance on cannibalism as a narrative device.

Richard, the fictional cannibal in this romanced crusading narrative, becomes a paragon for paradoxical and fluctuating identities through the poem's frustrating muddling of the literal and metaphorical; at the same time, his fluctuating identities as hero, chivalric knight, and devilish monster, are driven by the fluctuating nature of the humors. His varied personae are fuelled by his consumption of animals and humans, and his emotional capacity to do battle and conduct psychological warfare are based on the idea that his humors drive his actions.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the supposition that the matter of the universe consists of four elements (earth, air, water, fire) and that these elements are transformed, by way of the liver, into the four humors that circulate in bodies (black bile, phlegm, blood, yellow bile), humoral theory provided an explanation for emotional shifts (melancholic, phlegmatic, sanguine, and choleric). This theory was propagated by Galen (d. A.D. 200), whose contributions, although they stem from Greek antiquity, remained largely unchallenged until the early modern period. Though his works fell into obscurity with the decline of the Western Roman Empire, Galen's writings regained popularity in Europe in the twelfth century thanks to the translations of his works that passed into the hands of Arab conquerors through the Eastern Roman Empire.

Medieval recipes for food preparation contain references to Galenic humoral theories, acknowledging how various ingredients change the properties of a dish and thus also affect the

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<sup>6</sup> See Gail Kern Paster's chapter "Melancholy Cats, Lugged Bears, and Other Passionate Animals: Reading Shakespeare's Psychological Materialism across the Species Barrier," in *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004) for further information on animals and humors. Katherine Park's "The Organic Soul" (*The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*. Ed. Charles B. Schmitt. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. 464-484) also gives a sense of medieval/early modern perceptions of Aristotle's notion of "koine" in the "three souls" (vegetative, sensitive, and intellective). For more information on medieval perceptions of animals, please refer to Joyce E. Salisbury's *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) and Karl Steel's *How to Make a Human: Animals & Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Scholars, have of course, focused with gusto on the moments of cannibalism inherent in the tale, but they have also turned to the moment in which Richard consumes a lion's heart in order to determine the poem's mixing of the literal and metaphorical. Other food taboos committed in the narrative have most recently been discussed by Nicola McDonald, who points out that a number of food taboos, aside from the cannibalism episode, populate the text. She points specifically at two moments in the narrative where it is evident that food is prevalent and reflects the medieval acknowledgment that "hunger kills" (McDonald 132). When Richard first arrives in Germany, he cannot find any "fowl" at Cologne, and finds out that Modard has schemed to forbid sale of food to the crusaders (ll. 1477- 1492). Richard responds by telling his men to do the best they can, with what McDonald calls "low status food", i.e. fruits, nuts, wax, tallow, and grease (McDonald 132). Similar problems face the crusaders in Acre, when the cruelty of winter depletes their resources, and inflates the prices of food, so that Richard's men finally end up slaughtering and eating their horses (ll. 2837-76). McDonald points out that "the traditionally taboo flesh is rationed and everything is consumed: guts, head and blood (McDonald 132; ll. 2837-76). McDonald also points to the narrator's rationalizations of the crusader's motivation to commit this taboo by almost apologetically pointing out that the crusaders "my3te hawe non other thyng" to eat (McDonald 132-133, l. 2875). Alan Ambrisco, as I will mention later as well, proposes the argument about psychological warfare (504).

complexion of the person consuming the meal. Terence Scully, in his review of medieval recipes of various cultures, examines the word “temperare” and its cognates in various languages (Scully, 3). The term usually signifies “tempering” a dish by adding another ingredient of a different humoral property or moisture level (e.g. sauces, herbs, or spices) (Scully, 3-4). Rather than changing the flavor, or the texture of a dish, these added ingredients were thought to change the humoral properties of the dish (Scully, 6).<sup>8</sup>

Galen’s *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (*De alimentorum facultatibus*) is most likely the source for this idea.<sup>9</sup> His treatise is a summary of the different effects of certain types of foods, listing their moisture or dryness levels and their humoral properties. In the Galenic model, the key to establishing health through diet is to create a balance of sorts.<sup>10</sup> Galen’s precepts on diet were known and circulated in medieval England, as can be seen in the example of the *Dietary* (also known as *The Governans of Man* or Lydgate’s *Dietary*, since it is commonly attributed to Lydgate), which appears in Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61, among other manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> This text was heralded as a fifteenth-century “best seller” because it is extant in no less than fifty-seven manuscripts.<sup>12</sup> *The Dietary*, giving detailed advice on diet and health, preaches, above all, the value of maintaining a measure of temperance:

If so be that lechys do thee fayll,  
Make this thi governans if that it may be:  
Temperat dyet and temperate traveyle,  
Not malas for non adversyté,  
Meke in trubull, glad in poverté,

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<sup>8</sup> Scully reminds us that “[f]or the late-medieval period we have rather to think primarily in terms of the properties of each of the dish’s ingredients and, when combined, of the temperament or total complexion of the finished dish itself. Of prime importance among the qualities that constituted the nature of any substance were the humors that determined the temperament of that substance” (6). Medieval cooks were thus thought to be very knowledgeable of contemporary medical doctrines in order to please their employer and their employer’s personal physician (Scully 19).

<sup>9</sup> Galen’s work *On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (*De alimentorum facultatibus*) introduces us to lively debates about food and digestion that stem from antiquity, and in which Galen joins, arguing that “[m]any of the finest physicians have written about the properties of foods, taking the subject very seriously since it is about the most valuable of any in medicine” (29). Some of these physicians had apparently argued from theory, while others argued from experience, and Galen mentions that, “if in their writings about food they were in agreement about everything [...] there would now be no need for [him] to take the trouble to write again about the same things in addition to so many such men” (29).

<sup>10</sup> Galen works more by example than by grand theorems, but while discussing foods of “average mixture” he argues: For if a human body were precisely average in mixture, it would be maintained in its existing condition by food that is average in mixture. But if it were either warmer or colder, or drier or moister, one would do harm by giving this body food and drink that is average in mixture. For every such body needs to be altered in the opposite direction to the same extent that it has departed from the precisely average condition; and this will occur with foods that are the opposite of the existing ill-mixture. In each opposing situation the opposites stand the same distance from the mean. As, for example, if the body departed by three measures from the well-mixed and average condition to a warmer one, it would be necessary for the food also to shift by the same amount from the well-mixed condition to the colder state. And if the body moved to a moister state to the extent of four measures, the food should by the same degree be drier than what is well proportioned. (35)

<sup>11</sup> See the TEAMS introduction to *The Dietary*, also available on: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/sgas31int.htm>. Claire Sponsler’s article “Eating Lessons: Lydgate’s ‘Dietary’ and Consumer Conduct.” (In *Medieval Conduct*, eds. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L.A. Clark. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) also provides an introduction to the cultural implications of this work.

<sup>12</sup> The text was printed by the three major early English printers: Caxton, de Worde, and Pynson (Shuffelton, “Introduction”). Wynkyn de Worde was, as mentioned, also the same printer who produced a version of *Richard Cœur de Lyon*.

Riche with lytell, content with suffyciens,  
 Mery withouten grugyng to thy degré.  
 If fysyke lake, make this thy governans. (ll. 9-16)

To temper one's diet and strive for balance in one's life is the key to living well; of course, the words "temperat(e)" echo as well the slew of medieval recipes that use the word, usually in verb form, to demand a balance within the dish, which in turn will affect the body of the person who imbibes the food served.

Questions about how the human body incorporated food were of major interest not just to advisors on diet and health, but to medieval theologians as well. The question that plagued these scholars, was whether "humans assimilate" food into the core of their human nature or whether "food pass[es] through the body without being assimilated" (Reynolds 1). What helped late medieval theologians to develop an answer was the theory of radical moisture (*humidum radicale*), which aided the merging of philosophical and theological debates regarding what constitutes "fixed and essential components of the body" (Reynolds 105). Radical moisture essentially constitutes the core of human nature.<sup>13</sup> Discussions about radical moisture usually involved debates about whether digestion or fever could affect radical moisture at all. Fever and digestion (or assimilation) were both seen as processes that had stages or degrees (usually four). The highest degree of fever (called hectic fever) was said to become "habitual and incurable, like a second nature" (Reynolds 106). Since the idea of radical moisture complements the Galenic principles that outline different types of moisture in the body, nutrition was seen to have an effect on these moistures, and there were thus debates about whether food intake could affect the core of human nature.<sup>14</sup>

Given the medical and theological concerns linked to food and its humoral properties, it is perhaps no coincidence, then, that Richard's first instance of cannibalism in the tale stems from the need for a cure for an illness while at Acre and takes on national as well as religious overtones. The narrative breaks from descriptions of violence committed on the battlefield to mention Richard's deathly illness:

Kyng Rychard was syke þoo,  
 Al Crystyndom to mekyl woo!  
 He my3te hym nou3t of hys bed stere,  
 þou3 his pauyloune hadde be on ffere. (ll. 3027-3030).

The matter of Richard's illness is thus presented as an issue of importance for Christendom, not just for England. In this armed encounter between Christians and Saracens, Richard's absence on the battlefield is a matter of pan-Christian as well as national concern. When the text offers a diagnosis for the illness Richard suffers, it does so by blaming the malady on Richard's being in foreign lands, where the diet is so different from that of home:

Why Kyng Richard so syke lay,  
 The resoun j 3ow telle may:  
 Ffor þe trauaylle off þe see,

<sup>13</sup> This idea is linked to Galenic principles of the humors, which were passed on to European medieval thinkers especially through Avicenna's *Canon* (Reynolds 106).

<sup>14</sup> Reynolds expands by informing us that "the highest degree of fever [...] is called "hectic" (*hectica febris*, or more commonly, *ethica febris*). [...] The term came from the Greek *hektikos*, meaning "habitual". At this stage, fever has become habitual and incurable, like a second nature [...]" (Reynolds 106).

And strong eyr off þat cuntree,  
 And vnkynde cold and hete,  
 And mete and drynk that is nou3t sete  
 To hys body, that he there ffonde,  
 As he dede here in Yngelonde. (ll. 3041-3048)

While neither Christian nor Saracen “leches” are able to cure Richard (ll. 3049-3056), the prayers of his retinue for his healing are soon answered by heavenly sources (ll. 3060-3066).

In terms of Richard’s symptoms, the narrative informs us that Richard’s illness affected his appetite more than anything else:

To mete hadde he no sauour,  
 To wyn, ne watyr, ne no lycour;  
 But afftyr pork he was alongyd. (ll. 3069-3071)

His longing for pork amid a people who do not incorporate pork into their diet, is, of course a moment of cultural aggression. Even Galen, however, remarks on the health benefits of pork:

Pork is the most nutritious of all foods, and athletes provide a very visible test of this. For when, after identical exercises, they take the same amount of a different food on one day, straightway on the following day they appear not only weaker but also obviously less well fed. You can make the same test of the statement in the case of youths being worked hard in the wrestling school, and in people carrying out any forceful and energetic activity whatsoever, like that of ditch-diggers. (Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, 115)

Pork, according to Galen, is thus the best source of nutrition for those who engage in severe physical activity – perhaps he would even have recommended it to a crusading knight actively engaged in combat. Because no pork is to be found in the ‘hostile’ and ‘pagan’ lands of *Richard Cœur de Lyon*, where Saracens shun pork for religious reasons, an old man in the king’s retinue suggests that pork be replaced with the flesh of a Saracen prisoner in the following way:

Takes a Sarezyn 3onge and ffat;  
 Jn haste þat þe þeff be slayn,  
 Openyd, and hys hyde off flayn,  
 And sodden fful hastily,  
 Wiþ powdyr and wiþ spysory,  
 And with saffron off good colour,  
 When þe kyng feles þeroff sauour,  
 Out off agu 3yff he be went,  
 He schal haue þertoo good talent.  
 Whenne he has a good tast,  
 And eeten weel a good repast,  
 And soupyd off þe broweys a sope,  
 Slept afftyr, and swet a drope;  
 þorw3 Goddes my3t, and my counsayl,  
 Sone he schal be ffresch and hayl. (ll. 3088-3102)

This substitution of Saracen flesh for pork has been the subject of much scholarly analysis. While horrifying to modern sensibilities, the human-flesh-for-pork substitution was based on similarities

between human flesh and pork discussed in ancient and medical sources in ways that suggest that the exchange was not uncommon. Galen remarks on how similar human flesh is to pork and voices a warning for travelers ordering meals at shady inns:

One can observe the similarity of the flesh of pigs to that of man from the fact that, as regards both taste and smell, some people who have eaten it have had no suspicion that human flesh had been eaten as pork. For from time to time this has been found to have occurred with rascally innkeepers and others. (Galen, *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, 115)

Galen's assumption that human flesh can be readily substituted in the kitchen for pork is echoed by the sense in *Richard Cœur de Lyon* that the knight is simply offering practical cooking advice. As McDonald notes "the old knight's command [...] precisely mimics not only the lexis and syntax of conventional medieval recipes, but their imperative mood and abbreviated style" (McDonald 135). In McDonald's view, the foreign "food" is subjected to English cooking rules in order to "normalize" it (McDonald 135). The old man's cooking instructions reflect, she argues, other medieval recipes that expressed cannibalistic fantasies, such as a fourteenth-century recipe for "Turk's Head" which involved crafting a meat dish that was made to look like the head of a Turk rather than actually cooking a live or dead Saracen (McDonald 124). While McDonald focuses on the way this recipe speaks to the "alimentary logic" that pervades the tale, the "recipe" issued by the old man in Richard's retinue also has medical significance, since it was supposed to restore Richard's health, after, as the old man says, Richard sleeps and sweats (ll. 3100-3102). This is also exactly what happens to Richard. The narrative recounts the first unintentional cannibalism Richard commits in the following way:

Beffore Kyng Rychard karf a kny3te,  
He eete ffastere þan he karue my3te.  
The kyng eet þe fflesch, and gnew þe bones,  
And drank wel afftyr, for þe nones:  
And whenne he hadde eeten ijnaw3,  
Hys ffolk hem tournyd away and low3.  
He lay styлле, and drow3 in hys arme;  
Hys chaumbyrlayn hym wrappyd warme.  
He lay, and slepte, and swette a stounde,  
And become hool and sounde. (ll. 3109-3118)

Of course, the narrative offers us a crude image of Richard eating so fast that his meat carver cannot keep up with him; the monarch even barbarically gnaws bones to satisfy his appetite. We see, however, that the result of the old man's cooking instructions was not simply to satisfy hunger and prepare a tasty meal, but to restore Richard to health. Richard's eating cure is, then, an incident not just of cannibalism but of medicinal cannibalism.

While it is well documented that the historical Richard did indeed suffer from an illness during the Crusades, there are no historical records to indicate that the cannibalism that cures the fictional Richard is grounded in historical occurrences as well (Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 91).<sup>15</sup> Medicinal cannibalism was a concept that was not unheard of, however, especially during early modern times. Louise Christine Noble's work on the subject reveals that there was an entire

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<sup>15</sup> See John Gillingham's entry 'Richard I (1157–1199),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009) and Jonathan Riley-Smith, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of The Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), for more introductory details on the historical King Richard.

pharmaceutical market for producing, distributing, and consuming “as medicine the flesh and excretions of the human corpse,” a product which was also referred to as “mummy” or *mumia* (from the Arabic *mumiya*) and which was usually “sourced from both imported mummified corpses and recently prepared local corpses” (Noble 1-2). Noble emphasizes that this form of “medicine” believed that young and swiftly deceased bodies were best for producing *mumia* (Noble 3).<sup>16</sup>

The theory that underlies this concept stems, to some extent, from the writings of Galen and Paracelsus. Noble mentions that Galen reluctantly “admits the curative effect on epilepsy and arthritis of an elixir of burned human bones” (Noble 18).<sup>17</sup> In general, Galen was usually against using human matter to produce healing, but Noble emphasizes Galen’s “inconsistencies” concerning the subject, noting that “Galen vehemently renounced the drinking of ‘sweat and urine and a woman’s menstrual blood,’ and the internal and external uses of feces as ‘outrageous and disgusting,’ but on the other hand he recommended the therapeutic use of excrement” (Noble 19).<sup>18</sup> While Galen’s writings are ambivalent regarding the practice of using human flesh, blood, and bones to induce healing, others were more clearly in favor. Paracelsus (1493-1571), for example, who is often considered an early Renaissance alchemist, was an advocate for the “medicinal power of mummy, human blood, fat, marrow, dung, and cranium in the treatment of many ailments (Noble 18).<sup>19</sup>

Although evidence of theories of the curative properties of cannibalism is found most frequently in the early modern period, such notions might not have been completely unknown in medieval times. Noble points out that “[o]ne of the first known Arabian advocates of mummy was Avicenna (980-1037) who promoted “mumia” as a “subtle and resolute” remedy” and Avicenna’s writings were read and circulated in the West during the late middle ages (Noble 19). It was believed that mummy was especially effective as a remedy in such cases as: “abscesses and eruptions, fractures, concussions, paralysis, hemicrania, epilepsy, vertigo, spitting of blood from the lungs, affections of the throat, coughs, palpitation of the heart, debility of the stomach, nausea, disorders of the liver and spleen, internal ulcers, also in cases of poisons” (Noble 19). The concept of eating human flesh to heal one’s own illnesses was apparently not a completely unheard of concept, given that it was entertained by medical writers whose works were studied in the late Middle ages.

Richard’s “cure” consists of medicinal cannibalism through the consumption of human flesh, which provokes a humoral transformation that is predicated upon eating (especially) Saracen flesh. As the text tells us, Richard’s subsequent sleep and his sweating, leave him hale and well in the morning. It is during the night that Richard’s humoral balance is influenced by his ingestions of Saracen flesh. This process harkens back to the idea of how the radical moisture might be

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<sup>16</sup> Noble adds: “The most highly prized mummy was that from a fresh corpse, preferably a youth who had died a sudden and violent death, because of the widespread belief that a swift death captured the body’s healing life force, while a slow death depleted it. The belief that the body’s life force is captured and preserved in death gives mummy an uncanny temporal status that registers the past in the present and reinforces the multitemporality of corpse matter; in fact, mummy only functions medicinally in the present because it is embedded with the trace of a past existence” (Noble 3).

<sup>17</sup> Noble is here citing Owsei Temkin’s *The Falling Sickness*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971, p. 22)

<sup>18</sup> Noble refers to Heinrich Von Staden’s discussion of Hippocratic dirt therapy, “Women and Dirt,” *Helios* 19.1-2 (1992): 7-30, esp. 8-9.

<sup>19</sup> Noble points to P.M. Rattansi, “Paracelsus and the Puritan Revolution,” *Ambix* 11 (1963): 24-32, esp. p. 24, for more information on Paracelsus.

affected by fever, as well as by the digestion of “medicine” that is administered. While we might not be able to diagnose Richard’s fever according to the four stages of fevers that medieval medical writers categorized, and while we might not be able to diagnose which part of his four-part digestive system dissolves and profits from the ingestions of Saracen flesh, we do see evidence of a humoral shift that affects Richard’s constitution, because he sweats.

Sweat was taken as evidence of a humoral purging. Galenic sources present “sweating as an excretion of thin, ‘serous’ humours” that was “closely related to urine” because “both sweat and urine ultimately originated from the same matter, both contained a certain amount of bile and both were, in their natural state, of a moderately pale colour” (Stolberg 504-505). Several reports had also led to the conclusion that there is a close connection between sweat and blood, because cases of extreme anxiety could produce bloody sweat (Stolberg 508).<sup>20</sup> The process of sweating was also likened in many ways to the process of digestion.<sup>21</sup> Like excretion, the end stage of digestion, sweating was a way to purify the blood by getting rid of waste and superfluities (Stolberg 505).<sup>22</sup> Sweat was therefore seen as the body’s most elaborate way of purging ill humors to preserve and force a balance in a human’s constitution.

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<sup>20</sup> Stolberg mentions: “Spectacularly, as Aristotle had already observed, sweat could also be bloody.” (Stolberg 509) He cites examples stemming from reports about cases in which people were said to sweat blood, such as in Basel in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, where a 12-year old boy sweats blood; accounts contained in the Gospel of Luke (Chapter 22, verse 44) where Jesus Christ sweats blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, were also reason to believe that sweating blood was a sign of severe distress (Stolberg 509). Contemporary medicine recognizes the phenomenon of sweating blood as hematidrosis and that of crying blood as hemolacria. See current medical scholarship, including Praveen, B.K. and Johny Vincent. “Hematidrosis and Hemolacria: A Case Report” *Indian Journal of Pediatrics* 79.1 (January 2012): 109-111.

<sup>21</sup> Renbourn explains the following regarding the similarities between the process of sweating and digesting: “According to Galenic teachings, the stools were derived from the first or gastric, and the urine from the second or hepatic concoction (digestion); but tears and sweat come from the most elaborate of all – the third and final concoction. Galen was not clear as to how sweat came out of the skin. Sometimes he put forward the obvious and common sense view that it came through the skin pores as small drops of liquid. On other occasions he followed the idea of Aristotle and insisted that sweat arose from the invisible transpiration or insensible perspiration [...] through the condensing effect of cold air. This is the probable origin of the ‘dew’ theory of sweat formation. Arguments on this dual origin of sweat were to continue to almost the end of the nineteenth century. The Greeks also believed that fluids could get into the body as easy as sweat passed out, and this may have been the explanation of the use of nutrient baths of milk or soup when food could not be swallowed” (Renbourn, “The History of Sweat,” 206).

In another article, Renbourn gives a clearer idea of how sweat is tied to Galen’s idea of the pneuma: “Galen, elaborating on Empedocles, taught that air or pneuma [...] was drawn from the lungs into the left ventricle, and through the skin pores into the whole body, by the simultaneous diastole of the heart and skin blood vessels. The main functions of breathing were, he said, to cool the vital flame innate in the heart and to produce in the liver, left ventricle and the brain, the natural, vital and animal spirits necessary for growth, movement and feelings respectively. It was during the formation of the vital spirits that smoky or fuliginous and other excrementious vapours were produced; and it was throughout systole that the fuliginous and other excrementious vapours were expelled into the lungs and through the innumerable skin pores. According to Asclepiades and Galen, the aim of vigorous massage was to purge these pores and thus, to cause the body to be ‘well breathed through’. Galen also advised, for this purpose, the use of wine and anointing the skin with green aniseed oil” (Renbourn, E.T. “The Natural History of Insensible Perspiration: A Forgotten Doctrine of Health and Disease.” *Medical History* 4 (1960): 136).

<sup>22</sup> Stolberg also mentions that “[l]ike other bodily evacuations, from faeces, urine and menstrual blood to tears and nasal discharge, sweating and insensible transpiration cleansed the body of superfluities and of potentially harmful, dangerous, polluting matter” (Stolberg 511) Some sources mention a widespread belief that waste which was accumulated between flesh and skin was emitted through sweat (Stolberg 513). Suppressing it thus caused the waste to wander elsewhere and infect other parts of the body (Stolberg 514). Stolberg also recounts that “[l]ike menstruation or haemorrhoidal bleeding, sweating was, at times, excessive. When the body lost too much ‘serum’ in this manner, patients became exsiccated, and their blood and the other humours thickened” (Stolberg 517).

The process of purging also casts Richard in a liminal moment. Scholars have wrestled with the problem of Richard's identity (whether he can be classified as hybrid monster/human; chivalric knight/brute; Christian King/Devil incarnate): this moment of healing linked to humoral purging shows us that Richard's "spatiotemporal continuity," to use Carolyn Walker Bynum's phrase, has changed.<sup>23</sup> His identity, based on these humoral shifts, becomes the kind of aqueous medieval identity machine that Cohen has said was "as susceptible to the celestial pull as is the tempestuous sea" (Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* xvi). Richard's identity, in this romance, is not stable, but fluctuates along with his humoral core.

This waxing and waning of renewed strength through humoral fluctuations is seen as soon as Richard readies himself to join the battle the next morning. He fights with renewed zest, but at the end of the day, Richard feels significantly weaker and, fearing the return of the illness, asks the cook for the head of the swine he ate the previous day:

"þe hed off þat ylke swyn  
þat j off eet," --- the cook he bad, --  
"Ffor feble j am, and feynt, and mad.  
Off myn euyl now j am ffere;  
Serue me therwith at my soper!" (ll. 3198-3203)

Richard's reaction – "What deuyl is þis?" (l. 3214-3215) – as has been discussed by many scholars, is not one of displeasure, but one of wonder.<sup>24</sup> In his amazement, he soliloquizes on the positive elements of Saracen flesh:

What, is Sarezyns flesch þus good?  
And neuere erst j nou3t wyste?  
By Goddys deþ and hys vpryste,  
Schole we neuere dye for defawte,  
Whyl we may in any assawte  
Slee Sarezyns, the flesch mowe take,  
Seþen, and roste hem, and doo hem bake,  
Gnawen here fflesch to the bones.  
Now j haue it prouyd ones,  
Ffor hungry ar j be woo,  
J and my ffolk schole eete moo!" (ll. 3216-3226)

As did the speech of the old man recommending how to cook the Saracen, Richard's words mimic the style of medieval recipes, suggesting the many ways Saracen flesh can be roasted or baked, on how gnawing their bones can be delectable. The speech also contains a humoral element, in noting the crusaders' constant need for food to refuel their choleric and bellicose natures; having discovered this new food source, they will no longer fear food shortages that occasionally occur during war.

This moment in the narrative crucially suggests that Richard now understands how his remedy came about and that the ingestion of Saracen flesh was responsible for his being healed

<sup>23</sup> According to Bynum in *Metamorphosis and Identity*, the word "identity" encompasses: individuality or personality; identity position (or "group affiliation": race, biological sex, or socially shaped statuses, like class, language group, religion); and finally, spatiotemporal continuity (163).

<sup>24</sup> Geraldine Heng's work focuses especially on the moment in which Richard laughs "as he were wood" (Heng, "The Romance of England", 142).

and for his renewed vigor on the battlefield. While Richard's initial consumption of human flesh was committed passively as a bed-ridden patient, without any knowledge regarding how this savory 'pork dish' was procured, the confrontation with the source of his medicine turns Richard into a retroactive accomplice in the already-committed act of cannibalism. The dawning knowledge of his involvement in this food taboo (and the health benefits that have resulted from it) transform him, at the same time, into the active perpetrator of another food taboo when he begins to plot his next instance of cannibalism. This second act of consuming Saracen flesh is less a form of remedy but a way to stage and present Richard as a cruel host who makes a habit of dining on Saracens in public.

When it is committed a second time, publicly and intentionally, during a banquet whose purpose is potential peace negotiations as well as the release of Saracen prisoners of war that the English are keeping hostage, cannibalism also becomes a source of psychological warfare, as Alan Ambrisco has pointed out (504).<sup>25</sup> In preparation for the feast, Richard orders his men to take the most renowned Saracens from the richest families to behead (ll. 3412) and to write their names on scrolls of parchments to be attached to the heads (ll. 3418-3420). His instructions for the manner of food preparation for the feast resemble, once more, those of medieval recipes:

And bere þe hedes to þe kechyn,  
 And in a cawdroun þou hem caste,  
 And bydde the cook seþe hem ffaste;  
 And loke that he the her off strypppe,  
 Off hed, off berd, and eke off lyppe. (ll. 3420-3424)

He goes so far as to give detailed commands about how to serve the heads of the Saracen warriors:

Loke þat 3e nou3t fforgete  
 To serue hem herewiþ in this manere:  
 Lay euery hed on a platerre,  
 Bryng it hoot forth al in þyn hand,  
 Vpward hys vys, þe teep grennand;  
 And loke þey be nobynge rowe!  
 Hys name faste aboue hys browe,  
 What he hy3te, and off what kyn born(e).  
 And hoot hed bryng me befor;  
 As j were weel apayed wiþal,  
 Ete þeroff ry3t faste j schal,  
 As it were a tendyr chyke,  
 To se hou þe opere wyl lyke. (ll. 3425-3438)

Richard plans on taking voyeuristic pleasure in viewing his enemies' reactions while he feasts on one of their kind. Indeed, when the feast is in full gear, we receive a detailed description of the banquet that has been laid out according to Richard's desires, while it is also pointed out that on the table "Salt was set on, but no bred/Ne watyr, ny wyn, whyt ne red" (ll. 3447-3448). The tables

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<sup>25</sup> Ambrisco argues that "[e]ngaging in psychological warfare, he interprets the Saracens' concerned state as attributable to a pragmatic fear for their lives, not as a moral judgment on the barbarity of the custom itself. In doing so he is able to maintain the pretense that this cannibalistic custom – for him – is nothing out of the ordinary (Ambrisco 504).

contain only salt, but no beverages, nothing, that is, that might distract guests from the heads of the slain Saracen prisoners of war that are evidently to be eaten with only a dash of salt.

Richard's cruelty is again evidenced, when he follows through with his plan of wanting to be watched by his enemies as he consumes their kinsmen in an act of intimidation. The narrative details the grand and pompous display of Richard's second act of cannibalism in the following way:

þe kny3t þat scholde þe kyng serue  
 Wiþ a scharp knyff þe hed gan kerue.  
 Kyng Richard eet wiþ herte good,  
 The Sarezynes wenden he hadde be wood.  
 Euery man sat styll, and pokyd oþir,  
 þey sayden: "þis is þe deuelys broþir,  
 þat sles oure men and þus hem eetes!"  
 Kyng Richard þoo nou3t forgetes;  
 Abouten hym gan loke ful 3erne,  
 Wiþ wrap semblaunt, and eyen sterne. (ll. 3480-3488)

Others whisper about his devilish behavior, yet Richard continues his meal and looks about him defiantly, with wrathful and stern glances.<sup>26</sup> His offensive behavior does not stop there. When he points out that his company is not eating, though he bade them to be "glad" (l. 3490), he has the Saracen heads removed and bids for other meat that might be more to their taste. A selection of other foods is produced, including: "bred, [...] / Venysoun, cranes, and good rost, / pyment, clarre, and drynkes lyþe" (ll. 3504-3506). When his company still does not partake of the offered food and refuses to cheer up, he passive-aggressively urges them to be more at ease:

Ffrendes, beþ nou3t squoymous,  
 þis is þe maner off myn hous,  
 To be seruyd ferst, God it woot,  
 Wiþ Sarezynys hedes al hoot:  
 But 3oure maner j ne knewe!  
 As j am kyng, Cristen, and trewe,  
 3e schole be þeroff sertayn  
 In saff cundyt to wende agayn;  
 For j ne wolde, ffor no þyng,  
 þat wurd off me in the world scholde spryng  
 I were so euyl off maneres  
 For to mysdoo messangeres. (ll. 3509-3520)

Richard's speech pretends that it is the custom of his house to be served with such cannibalistic fare, and yet, he assures them that he would not do the same with visiting messengers but would allow them safe conduct. Ambrisco has pointed out that this speech has an especially subtle way of legitimizing cannibalism for the English while intimidating one's opponent (504). Richard's speech intimidates the Saracen emissaries through its normalization of cannibalism. The scare tactic is indeed effective, as these messengers then retell the tale of their woes to the Sultan, emphasizing Richard's barbarism (esp. ll. 3607 ff.).

<sup>26</sup> The *Middle English Dictionary* defines "3erne" as eager, keen; solicitous; also, zealous; enthusiastic, hearty, also as swift, virulent (?) and persistent (?) or characterized with willfulness, defiant (*MED*, s.v. yerne, adj.).

While Richard's public performance of cannibalism is an effective means of intimidation, it also serves to show that his cannibalism is intentionally repetitive, his plan being to eat humans multiple times to satiate hunger, as well as the English desire for Saracen flesh that is more "noryschaunt" and tastier than other delicacies such as "Partryck, plouer, heroun, [...] swan,/ cow [...] oxe, scheep [or] swyn" (ll. 3550-3551). Richard's first consumption of Saracen flesh displays the healing properties of this new food source, while Richard's second, and more public consumption of Saracen flesh serves to intimidate his opponents and to announce to the English that consuming their enemies' flesh will nourish their bodies and turn them into better warriors in these foreign lands.

The acts of cannibalism he commits show Richard's transformation into one such warrior who is now better suited to fighting in an exotic climate. Humoral psychology asserts that each human's humoral complexion is seldom completely stable, and that the humors are constantly in flux. Richard's choleric humors are heightened through the ingestion of Saracen flesh, but require refueling in order to maintain an increased level of aggression. But what is it about Saracen flesh that particularly affects the humoral make-up of the fictional Richard?

Several medieval sources suggest that the humoral complexion of humans "varied according to conditions of life and external circumstances;" in other words, humors were affected by age, sex, and by origin of geographical region (Siraisi 102).<sup>27</sup> In terms of the relationship between humors and geographical region, medieval sources offered two opposing explanatory frameworks. One set of sources posited that hot climates produced hot temperaments, and cold climates cold temperaments. Scythians, for example, who were said to inhabit cold climates, were thus often said to be "colder and moister in complexion than Ethiopians, who lived under the hot sun" (Siraisi 102). This humoral difference (between Scythians and Ethiopians) is discussed in several sources, including in Galen's *On Complexions* and in Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (a work on astrology) (Siraisi 103).<sup>28</sup> Other sources, however, posited an inverse relationship between geographical location and the humors it produced. These sources suggest that, although "[a] causal connection was therefore traced between place and radical complexion [...], this is the result of a process not of assimilation, but of reaction" (Tooley 72). Cold climates might thus "produce men of hot temperaments, and hot climates, cold temperaments" (Tooley 72).<sup>29</sup> What follows, according to this theory, is that the northerner is 'hot-tempered' and a brave combatant, whereas the southerner is 'thin-blooded', as well as 'timid', 'vengeful', and 'cruel' (Tooley 74-75).

Such theories of climatology usually favored the writer's or encyclopedist's own culture, and where writers or encyclopedists located foreign people geographically played a part in determining which peoples were categorized as 'brave' fighters and which peoples were 'timid' and 'cowardly' based on their humoral complexions.<sup>30</sup> Another important consideration is what Suzanne Conklin Akbari has noted regarding the evolution of medieval geographical notions, which usually assumed a tripartite structure (according to the three known continents: Asia, Europe, and Africa) or a quadripartite structure (according to the cardinal directions: *oriens*,

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<sup>27</sup> Of course, plenty of medieval sources, including Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* or Sir John of Mandeville's *Travels*, speculate about foreign climes and the potentially monstrous races that inhabit them (Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 196-197).

<sup>28</sup> Siraisi points to Richard J. Durling's edition of *Burgundio of Pisa's Translation of Galen's Peri Kraseon "De complexionibus"* (Galenus latinus I, Berlin & New York: De Gruyter, 1976/2011) for source material of this theory.

<sup>29</sup> Tooley's scholarship refers here to works by Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Albertus Magnus, or Vincent of Beauvais. Refer to her article "Bodin and the Mediaeval Theory of Climate" for further information.

<sup>30</sup> This tendency is also echoed in Suzanne Conklin Akbari's article "From Due East to True North: Orientalism and Orientation" (24).

*occidens*, *septentrio*, and *meridies*) in maps or in geographical writing (“From Due East to True North”, 21).<sup>31</sup> The dichotomy between Orient and Occident, which is often referred to in postcolonial theory, is, according to Akbari, a later development and is “the product of the late-medieval reorientation of the extremes of hot south and cold north, aligning them respectively with the Orient and the Occident” (“From Due East to True North”, 31). Our understanding of the “West” can thus be called an “invention of the fourteenth century” (“From Due East to True North”, 31).

Because *Richard Cœur de Lyon* was created and/or adapted during this time of “reorientation” in the late middle ages, it is not surprising that the poem echoes the Orient-Occident dichotomy of the fourteenth century and beyond, even if it also at times suggests similarities between the inhabitants of the two regions. In general, Saracens in the poem are represented as worthy opponents of the English, though they show traces of cunningness. Their climate, too, features “unkynde cold and hete” rather than just heat, but it is emphasized through Richard’s illness that this foreign climate is better suited to Saracens than to Englishmen (l. 3044). Following this line of thinking into the realms of medicinal cannibalism, the narrative suggests the following connection between humors and climate: because Saracens are better suited to their own climate, eating their flesh would help Englishmen adapt to the foreign climate as well, thus blurring the boundaries between self and other, as Cohen argues happens “when pagan and Christian subjectivities seem close enough almost to touch” (Cohen, *MIM*, 205).<sup>32</sup>

The difference between Richard and the Saracens in *Richard Cœur de Lyon* is often collapsed; especially in combat, both Richard and Saladin are often compared to the ‘devil’ and Saladin is cast as a worthy opponent to the Christian King (ll. 3165 ff). In the banquet scene, the Saracens even seem more Occidental than the Christians, when they are cast in a pitiful light because they are being mocked by Richard’s mad and cruel behavior. It is the Saracen emissaries who capture our empathy during this feast, because they grieve for the loss of their kinsmen (“þe teres ran out off here eyen” in l. 3466) and fear for their own lives (“To be slayn fful sore þey dredde” in l. 3469). The Saracens, frightened and moved to tears by the cruelty of being served the heads of their kinsmen during the feast, are even said to “chaunge here hewe”<sup>33</sup> because they fear Richard’s stern glances (l. 3470).<sup>34</sup> As Richard suffers from his mysterious illness, ingesting

<sup>31</sup> Akbari elaborates that *oriens* was “usually located at the top of the map [and] designates the place where the sun rises; *occidens*, where it sets; *septentrio*, the location of the North Star; and *meridies*, the area closest to the equator” (“From Due East to True North”, 21).

<sup>32</sup> Cohen also examines the *racialized* body of the medieval Other in *Medieval Identity Machines*, noting as well that humoral-climatological factors played a part in descriptions of racial differences (Cohen, *MIM*, 191-192). While the term race itself is problematic (but might have been described in medieval sources in terms of “gens, *natio*, ‘blood’, ‘stock, etc) (Cohen, *MIM*, 191), these differences are still given in literary (and other) descriptions of ethnic Others, and while a difference is not always but often biological, it still is “inextricable from religion, location, class, language, bodily appearance and comportment, anatomy, physiology, and other medical/scientific discourse of somatic functioning” (Cohen, *MIM*, 192). He furthermore speculates that literary depictions of racial otherness produce an equal amount of “desire and disgust” (Cohen, *MIM*, 200). When boundaries between self and other are blurred because they “seem close enough almost to touch, violence erupts to redraw the faltering self/other boundary [...]” (Cohen, *MIM*, 205).

<sup>33</sup> This moment reminds us of another late medieval Middle English text, namely *The King of Tars*, which offers an interesting depiction of a Saracen who changes his “hew” or “color” through baptism.

<sup>34</sup> While these reactions (crying and grieving) are evidence of an excess of melancholic humor (and this is also emphasized when Richard mockingly orders one messenger after the banquet to tell Saladin to abate his “malyncoly” – l. 3530-3531), Saracens are, in general, depicted as more hot blooded because they live in a hotter climate. Though it must be noted, that Tooley’s research suggests that, according to the sources on climatology she consults, “[i]t was generally agreed that the peculiarities of the cold dry temperament, the melancholic, were to be observed in the dark

humored flesh that is suited to the climate gives him mastery over the climate and enables him to do battle with the native opponents, while also blurring the lines even further between an English king and his foreign opponents.

A humoral reading of this romance allows us to see the wavering characterization of Richard as a parallel to the ebb and flow of the humors: Richard's identity, like his humoral complexion, remains in flux throughout the course of the narrative. His eating of human flesh can be read as a form of medicinal cannibalism that is based on the understanding that a body suffering from any kind of fever profits from the ingestion (and subsequent digestion) of the 'appropriate' kind of medicine; the intake of Saracen flesh, which is itself humored, allows Richard to steel himself against the hostile climate in which he fights. By eating their flesh, he takes on their attributes, as the boundaries between self and Other thus become blurred through cannibalism at the most elemental level of bodily humors. A reading of *Richard Cœur de Lyon* through the lens of medieval humoral theory thus helps explain more fully the significance of the cannibalism in this romance and the ways in which Saracens and Christian identities are formed against, and within, each other. Eating the enemy is a way to become the enemy, with consequences that extend far beyond the battlefield.

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and puny inhabitants of the extreme south" (Tooley 73). Here again, we must consider that the fourteenth century's "reorientation" in terms of geographic notions of Orient and Occident may be responsible for the poem's struggle to categorize the Saracen's temperament and Richard's temperament.

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