

### III

## THE EPIC CYCLE OF THE CRUSADES

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**T**he Epic Cycle of the Crusades” is the name commonly given to two different cycles, composed in different centuries but related in subject matter, and both written in Old French dodecasyllabic verse. The first was apparently begun toward the end of the twelfth century by a versifier named Graindor of Douai, who rewrote and amalgamated three previously independent poems, *La Chanson d’Antioche*, *Les Chétifs* (the Captives), and *La Conquête de Jérusalem*, which dealt with the First Crusade. Graindor’s compilation was later prefaced with an account of the fictitious youthful exploits of Godfrey of Bouillon and the story of his mythical grandfather, the swan-knight; at a later date (the middle of the thirteenth century) a sequel was added which carried the narrative from the end of the First Crusade down to the emergence of Saladin. The second cycle, composed, or at least begun, during the 1350’s, comprises three separate poems, *Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godefroid de Bouillon*, *Baudouin de Sebourg*, and *Le Bâtard de Bouillon*.

The construction of an epic cycle over the years by different authors, usually belonging to different generations, but sometimes known to each other, conforms to a paradigm of which the best-known examples

Editions: Cycle I: *La Chanson du Chevalier au Cygne et de Godefroid de Bouillon*, ed. Célestin Hippeau (2 vols., Paris, 1874–1877); *La Chanson d’Antioche*, ed. Paulin Paris (2 vols., Paris, 1848); *La Conquête de Jérusalem*, ed. Hippeau (Paris, 1868). Cycle II: *Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godefroi de Bouillon*, ed. Frédéric de Reiffenberg and Adolphe Borgnet (4 vols., Brussels, 1844–1859); *Baudouin de Sebourg*, ed. L. Napoléon Boca (2 vols., Valenciennes, 1841); *Le Bâtard de Bouillon*, ed. Robert Cook (Geneva and Paris, 1972); *Saladin: Suite et fin du deuxième cycle de la croisade*, ed. Larry S. Crist (Geneva and Paris, 1972).

General studies: Henri Pigeonneau, *Le Cycle de la croisade et la famille de Bouillon* (Saint-Cloud, 1877); Anouar Hatem, *Les Poèmes épiques des croisades* (Paris, 1932); Suzanne Duparc-Quioc, *Le Cycle de la croisade* (Paris, 1955) (reviewed in *Le Moyen-Âge* by Claude Cahen and Robert Bossuat, LXIII, 311–328, LXIV, 139–147); Cook and Crist, *Le Deuxième cycle de la croisade: Deux études sur son développement* (Geneva, 1972).

are the cycles of Charlemagne, William of Orange, and Doon of Mayence. At the center of a soon-proliferating cycle stands a martial figure whose prowess in many a combat has charmed a public never weary of hearing tales about prestigious heroes who fight and slay innumerable foes. At the beginning of the fourteenth century this avid interest was crystalized in the literary and iconographic cult of the "nine worthies" (three Jews: Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus; three pagans: Hector, Alexander, and Caesar; three Christians: Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon). The epic hero is not allowed to remain in splendid isolation; he may be the brightest star within his family constellation, but the deeds of his father, grandfather, brothers, sons, nephews, and grandsons are likewise memorable and so must be praised in epic song. Just as Charlemagne's father Pepin and his nephew Roland are the protagonists of various *chansons de geste*, just so Godfrey of Bouillon's ancestors, brother, cousin, and their descendants were celebrated in epics built around their persons and deeds, real or imaginary.

Superhuman strength and supernatural happenings endow the epic hero with a radiance that marks him as a man above other men, one of God's elect. When his fury is aroused he can with one mighty blow of his sword cleave an opponent and his steed in two, that is to say into four parts, two human and two equine. Miracles accompany him on his way, heavenly warriors battle at his side, his prayers stay the sun in its course so that the enemy may be pursued and annihilated, and archangels bear his soul to paradise, while devils precipitate slain Saracens into the nethermost regions of hell. How much of all this a medieval audience believed is somewhat beside the point. People of those days were certainly pleased with such tales, and being entertained were not unduly skeptical. Also, one of the fondest beliefs of the nobility was being catered to: blood will tell. Ancestors of a knight must of necessity have been brave and strong, qualities due to be possessed also by his relatives and descendants. Worth noticing is the explanation seemingly given in all seriousness for Eustace of Boulogne's failure to measure up to the worldly success of his brothers Godfrey and Baldwin: when he was an infant, during his mother's absence one day he had been suckled by a woman of low standing.

The ascription of a supernatural origin to Godfrey's family may perhaps be accounted for by many a nobleman's desire that his lineage should not be traced back to the common people. It is worth remembering that the Lusignans, who ruled over Cyprus and Jerusalem, claimed to be descended from the fairy Melusine. The legend of the

Trojan origin of the Franks encouraged French and English feudal families to half believe that their forefathers, in the distant past, had come from the mysterious east.<sup>1</sup>

When compared with William of Tyre's *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum* and its Old French sequels, the two epic cycles of the crusades have scant historical value, though they do not lack cultural significance. For three centuries, from the twelfth through the fourteenth, they fascinated the French-speaking and French-reading population of central and northern France, thus helping to nourish a lively interest in the Frankish east and in the crusades. A history of the crusades, therefore, should pay some attention to them.

To facilitate access to the first epic cycle I have deemed it advisable to give, for each of its three parts, a résumé of its contents, followed in each case by a few comments. The division into *chants* (cantos) of *Antioche* and *Jérusalem* is, of course, the invention of modern French editors, but as a means of reference it is a serviceable one.

## A. *The First Cycle: Godfrey of Bouillon*

### SECTION 1: THE SWAN-CHILDREN<sup>2</sup>

King Orient rebukes his wife for saying that the birth of twins is proof of their mother's unfaithfulness to her husband, claiming that such a belief tends to limit God's power to act as he sees fit.<sup>3</sup> Soon afterward queen Beatrice gives birth to septuplets: six boys and a girl, each one wearing a silver necklace. Matabrune, the queen-mother, who hates her daughter-in-law, replaces the septuplets with a litter of seven pups and has Beatrice cast into prison by the outraged king. The seven infants are abandoned on the bank of a river, where they are found by a hermit who takes care of them. Ten years later the children are discovered by one of Matabrune's servants, who steals six of the neck-

1. A French chronicler of the Fourth Crusade records that, when Peter of Bracieux, a Picard baron, was asked what right westerners had to eastern lands, he replied: "Don't you know that these lands belonged to our ancestors, the Trojans?" See Robert of Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris, 1924), cap. cvii.

2. Hippeau, vol. I, pp. 1-107.

3. Another version of the swan-children (*La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, ed. Henry A. Todd [Baltimore, 1889]) calls the king Lothaire, his wife Elioxe.

laces. The children to whom they belong are transformed into swans; for several years they are fed by Elias, the seventh child, who has retained his human shape. Meanwhile Matabrune has one of the necklaces melted down by a silversmith. Young Elias succeeds in saving the life of his mother Beatrice, condemned after fifteen years' imprisonment to the stake. The swan-children, except the one whose necklace has been melted down, resume their human appearance and are christened Orient, Orion, Zacharias, John, and Rosette. Elias, whose father has abdicated in his favor, besieges Matabrune in her castle of Malbruiant. She is finally captured and burned at the stake. At the injunction of an angel Elias sets forth in a boat drawn by his brother the swan, after receiving from his mother the gift of a magic horn. On his way he slays Agolant, the dead Matabrune's brother. He enters the Rhine and reaches Nijmegen.

#### SECTION 2: THE SWAN-KNIGHT<sup>4</sup>

Duke Rainier of Saxony is laying claim before emperor Otto to the lands of the widowed duchess of Bouillon, who still lacks a champion willing to defend her rights and those of her young daughter Beatrice. The swan-knight proffers his services and succeeds in slaying Rainier, whose hostages are put to death. The Saxons seek revenge by sacking the castle of Florent, a nephew of the emperor. The swan-knight marries Beatrice, but cautions her never to ask him who he is nor whence he came, otherwise she will lose him forever. The vengeful Saxons kill Gelien, another nephew of the emperor, but the swan-knight rescues his wife from their hands. To them is born a girl, Ida, the future mother of duke Godfrey, count Eustace, and king Baldwin. The Saxons, still unappeased, besiege Bouillon but are finally routed by the emperor, whom the swan-knight has called to his aid. On the seventh anniversary of her wedding Beatrice can no longer restrain her curiosity. The swan-knight takes sorrowful leave of his wife and daughter and departs in a swan-drawn boat which has suddenly come for him. As a farewell token, he entrusts his horn to Beatrice, recommending that she take good care of it. This she fails to do. One day at the hour of noon the ducal hall bursts into flames and, amid the general confusion, a swan is seen flying away with the neglected horn. Increasing in beauty every day, Ida reaches the age of fourteen.

4. Hippeau, vol. I, pp. 107-259.

SECTION 3: GODFREY OF BOUILLON<sup>5</sup>

Emperor Otto holds court at Cambrai. A newcomer, young count Eustace of Boulogne, waits upon him at table with such pleasing grace that Otto grants him a boon. Eustace asks for the hand of Ida of Bouillon, whose mother Beatrice does not oppose the match and retires to a nunnery. Within two and a half years Ida gives birth to three sons, Eustace, Godfrey, and Baldwin. She insists on suckling all three, for fear that another woman's milk might prove injurious to them. One day during Ida's absence one of the babies is given the breast by a nurse. On discovering this, the frantic mother shakes the infant till he regurgitates the debasing fluid, but alas!, in later days Eustace was never to equal his two brothers. At seventeen years of age Godfrey, having received knighthood at the hands of his father, is sent to the court of emperor Otto. He champions the rights of the orphaned daughter of a castellan against her cousin, whom he slays in judicial combat. Godfrey becomes duke of Bouillon.

The scene suddenly shifts to Mecca, where a great concourse of Saracen potentates and dignitaries is assembled. The spirits of the rejoicing Moslems are dampened when Calabre, mother of Corbaran (Kerbogha), prophesies that dire things are in store for the paynim world. She names Godfrey and his brothers as the leaders of an army that will conquer Syria and Palestine. Her nephew Cornumarant, son of Corbadas and lord of Jerusalem, decides to travel to France and discover for himself whether this Godfrey is the formidable adversary his soothsaying aunt proclaims him to be. He crosses the sea disguised as a palmer, with two razor-sharp knives hidden beneath his cloak. The abbot of Saint Trond recognizes Cornumarant, whom he has seen on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and warns Godfrey that he is in danger of being assassinated. Godfrey sends for all his friends and retainers. Cornumarant is greatly impressed by their number. He is told that within five years Godfrey will have conquered the Holy Land. Cornumarant replies that he will ready his kingdom to meet the Christian onslaught.

Comments: It is usually assumed that the three sections of part one came into being as separate poems and were later soldered together by a *remanieur* named Renaud. The legendary tales they embody were already known to William of Tyre, since in his *Historia* (IX, 6) he refers to the swan-knight and to countess Ida's prophecy that her three

5. Hippeau, vol. II, pp. 1-189.

sons would grow up to become a duke (Godfrey), a king (Baldwin), and a count (Eustace). It should be noted here that through some curious transference the legend of the swan-knight became detached from the Godfrey epic cycle to fasten on the central figure of an entirely different cycle, that of Garin "le Lorrain", Wagner's Lohengrin (= Loherenc Garin).<sup>6</sup>

## B. *The First Cycle: The First Crusade*

### SECTION 1: THE TAKING OF ANTIOCH<sup>7</sup>

I: Graindor of Douai will tell how the Christian host conquered Jerusalem. The liberation of the Holy Land was prophesied by Jesus on the cross. Peter the Hermit was praying at the tomb of the Redeemer in Jerusalem when God appeared to him, commanding him to return to the lands of Christendom and announce that the time had come to free his city. Sixty thousand men assemble at Peter's behest, among them Harpin of Bourges, Richard of Caumont, John of Alis, Baldwin of Beauvais, and his brother Ernoul. Peter and his followers begin the siege of Nicaea. Soliman (Kilij-Arslan), the lord of that city, has just received reinforcements, led by Corbaran (Kerbogha), from the sultan of Persia. The Christians are defeated on the slopes of Mount Civetot, the above-named knights being taken prisoner along with Fulcher of Meulan, Richard of Pavia, the bishop of Forez, and the abbot of Fécamp. Peter, who has escaped capture, betakes himself to Rome and then to France. The pope preaches a general crusade at Clermont in Auvergne. II: Godfrey of Bouillon takes command of the Christian host. Bohemond and Tancred join up with him at Constantinople. The crusaders have difficulties with the Greek emperor, which are smoothed away by Estatin the Noseless (Taticius) and Guy the seneschal. Soliman's army is defeated and Nicaea surrenders to Estatin. III: The crusaders resume their forward march. Bohemond and his men, who had outdistanced the main army, suffer a setback. Tancred and Baldwin quarrel about the possession of Tarsus. Tancred enters Mamistra and

6. See Robert Jaffray, *The Two Knights of the Swan, Lohengrin and Helyas: a Study of the Legend*, with special reference to its two most important developments (New York and London, 1910).

7. *La Chanson d'Antioche*, ed. Paulin Paris.

Choros (Corycus?). Baldwin accepts an invitation from the Old Man of the Mountain to go to Rohais (Edessa) and marry his daughter. Godfrey forces his way into Artais (Artāḥ). Thanks to Enguerrand of Saint Pol, the crusaders are able to seize two towers guarding the bridge over the river Far (Orontes). Emir Garsion (Yaghi-Siyan) prepares to defend Antioch.

IV: The crusaders encircle the city. Gontier of Aire gains possession of emir Fabur's steed. After several skirmishes, the besiegers erect a wooden tower. Dead Turks are dug up in a cemetery and decapitated, and their heads are catapulted into the city. The crusaders suffer from a shortage of food. Again the Turks attempt a sortie, again they are repulsed. At the height of the fray Godfrey cleaves one of his opponents in twain. Raimbaut Creton slaughters some two hundred Saracens who had sought refuge under the bridge over the Far. V: The Tafurs or ruffraff of the army roast the bodies of the fallen Turks and eat the human flesh. When negotiations for a truce break down, the enraged Garsion orders Reginald Porquet, a recently captured Christian knight, to be hamstrung. Sansadoine (Shams-ad-Daulah), son of Garsion, is sent with a request for help to the sultan of Persia. Hardly has he arrived at the Persian court when Soliman of Nicaea shows up with a few battered stragglers. Corbaran takes command of the forces which will march to the rescue of Antioch. He is accompanied by Brohadas, one of the sultan's sons. Corbaran refuses to pay any heed to the warnings of his mother Calabre. VI: On his way to Antioch, Corbaran is unsuccessful in his attempt to storm Rohais. Meanwhile the crusaders repulse a sortie of the besieged during which the young son of emir Dacian (Firūz) falls into their hands. They send him back to his anxious father, who promises them his support. At this point count Stephen of Blois, having learned of Corbaran's approach, withdraws for greater security to Alexandretta. Emir Dacian informs Bohemond that he will admit the Christians into Antioch. Bohemond demands of the other leaders that they yield their share of the city to him, but Raymond of Saint Gilles refuses to forgo his rights. Dacian slays his wife, who had become suspicious of his doings, and then lowers a rope ladder fastened to a merlon. Thirty-five knights scale the walls before the ladder collapses, but they are able to open one of the gates and let the rest of the army in. Antioch, with the exception of the citadel, is taken after two days of street fighting.

VII: Corbaran and his troops arrive in view of Antioch. He writes confidently to caliph Caifas and to the sultan of Persia, but again his mother Calabre informs him that he cannot hope to prevail against the soldiers of Christ. The Franks, whose turn it is to be besieged, are

tormented by the lack of food. Count Stephen of Blois advises the Greek emperor not to help the beleaguered crusaders. Peter the Provençal (Peter Bartholomew) reveals that Saint Andrew has twice appeared to him in his sleep and has designated to him the exact place where is hidden the spear with which Jesus was struck on the cross. Amid general rejoicing the Holy Lance is unearthed. A fire destroys part of Antioch. Corbaran turns down an offer to decide the issue by means of champions chosen by both sides. Emir Amidelis, who has spied on the Christians, reports back to Corbaran. VIII: The bishop of Le Puy cannot find a knight willing to carry the Holy Lance into battle: Robert of Flanders, Robert of Normandy, Godfrey of Bouillon, Tancred, Bohemond, and Hugh of Vermandois decline each in his turn an honor which would keep them from the front ranks. Raymond of Saint Gilles consents to stay inside the city to prevent Garsion from breaking out of the citadel. As the Christian leaders ride out of Antioch emir Amidelis names each one to Corbaran. The battle begins. Among the first to fall are Reginald of Tor and Odo of Beauvais. The crusaders lay about them with lance, pike, and sword. Corbaran is knocked off his horse by Robert of Normandy and Brohadas is slain by Godfrey. The poet indulges in a lengthy enumeration of Christian and Moslem warriors, adducing as his authority Richard the Pilgrim. The Red Lion (Turkish: Kizil Arslan), Soliman, and Sansadoine succumb under the blows of Robert of Normandy, Godfrey, and Hugh of Vermandois. Several saints are seen fighting on the Christian side. The paynims are routed, but only after Godfrey has had a narrow escape. The defenders of the citadel surrender.

## SECTION 2: CORBARAN'S CAPTIVES<sup>8</sup>

After his defeat at Antioch Corbaran flees to Sarmasane (Kerman-shah), where he returns to the bereaved sultan of Persia the body of his son Brohadas. Accused of treachery, Corbaran agrees to be put to death if any Christian chosen by him cannot defeat any two Saracens selected by the sultan, thus failing to prove his contention that the Christians are better fighters than the Moslems. On the advice of his mother Calabre he calls upon the Christian knights he has held prisoner since the battle of Civetot. Richard of Caumont consents, in exchange for his freedom and that of his companions, to do battle with Goliath of Nicaea and Sorgalé of Mecca. He slays both. Goli-

8. *Les Chétifs*, in Hippeau, vol. II, pp. 193-276.



ath's son and Sorgalé's nephew attempt with their followers to murder Corbaran and Richard of Caumont, but they are defeated by Richard and his companions. Corbaran and his newly found friends are crossing the land of king Abraham when a dragon pounces on Ernoul of Beauvais and proceeds to devour him. His brother Baldwin finally pushes his sword through the heart of the monster. Corbaran is filled with admiration and can hardly restrain himself from becoming a Christian. His nephew, son of queen Florie, is carried off by a wolf. Harpin of Bourges, another of the Christian knights once held captive by Corbaran, gives chase, only to see a huge ape wrest the child from the wolf and clamber with it into a tree. Before he at last rescues the boy, Harpin has to beat off four lions. Then he is unable to prevent five highwaymen from kidnapping the young prince, but Corbaran, who has finally arrived on the scene, manages to obtain the release of his nephew. With Corbaran's approval, the Christian knights ride toward Jerusalem. On the way they join up with the other crusaders.

### SECTION 3: THE TAKING OF JERUSALEM<sup>9</sup>

I: Godfrey of Bouillon, several other leaders, and ten thousand knights leave the main part of the army at La Mahomerie and ride close to the holy city. While they are foraging in the valley of Jehoshaphat, they are attacked by Cornumarant and fifty thousand Saracens. At this critical juncture they are joined by Richard of Caumont, Harpin of Bourges, and the other knights formerly held captive by Corbaran. A call is sent out for help, but the Turks are driven back into Jerusalem before the arrival of the rest of the crusaders. That night Tancred and Bohemond raid Caesarea and on their way back are attacked by the emir of Ascalon. Fortunately for them several saints enter the fray on their behalf. The following day the whole army resumes its advance and reaches the top of La Montjoie, a hill from which the holy city is plainly visible. II: Godfrey and the other leaders agree on the various sectors they will occupy facing Jerusalem. King Corbadas, watching the besiegers from a high tower, is dismayed when he sees Godfrey transfix three kites with a single arrow. That night Cornumarant sallies forth with ten thousand men, but Harpin of Bourges and his companions drive them back into the city. Exhorted by the king of the Tafurs and the bishop of Marturana, the crusaders prepare a general assault.

9. *La Conquête de Jérusalem*, ed. Hippeau.

III. The king of the Tafurs is wounded, Pagan of Beauvais and Gontier of Aire are slain, and a rain of Greek fire forces the besiegers to retreat. Bohemond surprises an enemy column on its way to Acre. The Saracens send out carrier pigeons asking for assistance. These are intercepted by the Christians, who modify the terms of the messages. IV: A general assault is again attempted, but hostilities are soon suspended to allow for an exchange of prisoners. Cornumarant sets out to get help from the sultan of Persia. Baldwin of Edessa follows in hot pursuit, but is surrounded by Saracens and driven to take refuge in a marsh. His armor proves insufficient protection against the leeches, and to add to his discomfort, the Turks set fire to the dry reeds. Cornumarant receives a promise of aid from the sultan of Persia. V: The besiegers are told when and how to assault Jerusalem. They attack between the Gates of St. Stephen and David, but are unsuccessful on the first day. On the following day, a Friday, Thomas of Marle has himself hoisted up to the battlements on the spears of thirty of his men and manages to open one of the gates. The crusaders pour into the city. Corbaran surrenders the Tower of David. Godfrey is chosen as ruler of the new kingdom but refuses to wear a crown. Most of the Christian lords are about to return to their native lands when they receive news that Cornumarant is advancing on Jerusalem at the head of a huge army. VI: Corbadas and his son meet in Barbais. While foraging in the valley of Jehoshaphat, Cornumarant is taken prisoner. Raymond of Saint Gilles falls into the hands of the Turks. Corbadas tells the sultan of Persia that his son is held captive within Jerusalem. Cornumarant is exchanged for Raymond. Before he is freed he is made to witness a parade of the Christian garrison in which Godfrey has the same men file by over and over again. The sultan's army approaches Jerusalem.

VII: On the caliph's advice, the Saracens display their treasures. Eager for booty, Peter the Hermit and his followers rush forth. He is taken prisoner. Threatened with death, Peter agrees to become a Moslem. The sultan sends an envoy to Godfrey ordering him to surrender Jerusalem and abjure the Christian faith. Wishing to impress the messenger, Godfrey repeats his previous stratagem of having the same men file by several times. To cap this show of strength, he cleaves a Turk in two. After failing to take the city by storm, the paynims withdraw to Ramla. While praying in the Temple Godfrey is reassured by several signs that God's help will be forthcoming. Hugh of Vermandois and the other chieftains arrive in Jerusalem. The crusaders ride forth in the direction of Ramla. As their battalions draw near, Peter the Hermit names the leaders to the sultan: Godfrey, Robert of Normandy,

Hugh of Vermandois, Bohemond, Tancred, Rotrou of Perche, Stephen of Albermarle (Blois?), and the "king" of the Tafurs. VIII: The sultan of Persia exhorts his thirteen remaining sons to avenge the death of their brother Brohadas. The poet lists the many and sundry peoples comprising the sultan's army. The battle starts with Godfrey slaying Sinagon, the sultan's eldest son. There follows a series of jousts. Bohemond kills king Corbadas, and Lucabel, the king's brother, is slain by Tancred. Baldwin of Edessa lays low Cornumarant. Saint George and Saint Maurice are seen fighting the infidels. Peter the Hermit regains his freedom and promptly dispatches Sanguin, another of the sultan's sons. The paynims are routed. The bishop of Marturana's prayer is answered when the sun is stopped in its course and the light of day prolonged. During the pursuit, Baldwin of Edessa and Raimbaut Creton are cut off from the other knights, but are finally rescued. The sultan enters a boat at Acre and sails away to safety. Enguerrand of Saint Pol is solemnly buried. Funeral honors are also bestowed on Cornumarant, the brave enemy whose heart, when cut out from his body, fills a helmet.

Comments: Part two of Cycle I is apparently the work of a versifier named Graindor of Douai, who amalgamated the compositions of three earlier poets, no one of which survives in its original form. The first of these, written by a certain Richard le Pèlerin (Richard the Pilgrim), who may have taken part in the First Crusade, told of the taking of Antioch (*La Chanson d'Antioche*); the second (*Les Chétifs*), which in its present form contains a statement that it was composed at the request of Raymond of Antioch, narrated the fictitious adventures of six followers of Peter the Hermit who through their boldness and resourcefulness supposedly won the friendship of their captor Corbaran (Kerbogha); while the third related the siege and storming of Jerusalem (*La Conquête de Jérusalem*). In *laisse* 1 of section 1 Graindor of Douai names himself and implies that his song has for subject the First Crusade in its entirety:

Sirs, pray be still and end your chatter,  
 If you wish to hear a noble song.  
 Never has a jongleur recited a better one;  
 It tells of the holy city, so worthy of reverence,  
 In which God allowed his body to be wounded and harmed,  
 To be struck with a lance and nailed to the cross:  
 Jerusalem it is called by its right name.  
 Those newly fledged jongleurs who sing this song  
 Leave out its opening part,

But Graindor of Douai has no mind to do likewise,  
He who has rewritten all its verses.  
Now you will hear of Jerusalem  
And of those who went to adore the Sepulcher,  
How they assembled their armies,  
In France, in Berry, in neighboring Auvergne,  
Apulia, Calabria, down to Barletta on the sea,  
Far-away Wales; there they gathered their forces,  
And in many lands I know not by name;  
Of such a pilgrimage you never heard tell.  
For God they suffered many hardships;  
Thirst, heat, and cold, lack of food and sleep;  
Our Lord could not help but reward them  
And call their souls to him on high.

The beginning of Graindor's long narrative (about twenty thousand lines), with its emphasis on the six followers of Peter the Hermit taken prisoner by Kerbogha, is evidently borrowed from *Les Chétifs*; what follows is mostly based on Richard le Pèlerin's *Chanson d'Antioche*; the lifting of the siege of Antioch brought about by the battle the crusaders won on June 28, 1098, is followed by a very lengthy segment drawn from *Les Chétifs*; when the final section, which deals with the siege of Jerusalem, is reached, there is no clear indication as to the moment Graindor ceases using the *Chétifs* and starts to paraphrase the *Conquête de Jérusalem*. Although Graindor wrote in rhymed alexandrines, it is entirely possible that one or more of his predecessors composed in a different meter and was satisfied with assonance. Any historian of the First Crusade interested in assessing the factual value of Graindor's work should always remember that his "Song of Jerusalem" represents an extensive *remaniement* of three poems which have not survived in their original form, undertaken in order to fuse their contents and thereby create the impression of a unified narrative. He should also bear in mind that Graindor's compilation has not been published as transcribed in the manuscripts, but was arbitrarily carved up in three different editions (1848, 1868, 1877) by two different editors (Paulin Paris, Célestin Hippeau).

Richard le Pèlerin must have written his *Chanson d'Antioche* not long after the First Crusade, if he is to be identified, as seems very likely, with the author of a song of Antioch who is taken to task by the chronicler Lambert of Ardres for not having included in his poem any mention of Arnold of Guines (d. 1138), presumably because that worthy had turned down the poet's request for a pair of shoes. The contents of Richard's poem can be reconstructed, at least in summary fashion, by comparing Graindor's *rifacimento* with the other accounts

which derive from Richard: the Latin one by Albert of Aachen, the extant fragment from Gregory Bechada's Provençal *Canso d'Antiocha*, and the Spanish *Gran conquista de Ultramar*. Such a comparison shows that Graindor does not seem to have made any radical changes in Richard's narrative except in cantos VI and VII of his *Antioche*, for which Robert the Monk is the main source.<sup>10</sup>

The *Chétifs* may have been composed in Syria. According to a statement which appears in Graindor's revised version of the poem (Hippeau, II, 213), its author wrote at the request of Raymond, prince of Antioch (d. 1149), and was rewarded with a canonry at Saint Peter's in that city. Anouar Hatem claims that since the *Chétifs* manifests such intimate knowledge of Syria, its land, and its people, only a native of that country or a long-time resident could possibly be its author. Roger Goossens, though somewhat skeptical of all the local color which Hatem professes to find in the *Chétifs*, has nevertheless strengthened the case for a "Syrian" origin of the poem by pointing out that the themes, situations, and inspiration (struggles with wild animals, service of a Christian under a Saracen, desire to reconcile hostile peoples living side by side, and so forth) resemble similar material found in *Digenes Akritas* and other Byzantine epics. Urban T. Holmes and Claude Cahen, who also find themselves in general agreement with Hatem, believe that the adventures ascribed to Harpin of Bourges and his companions might well reflect the experiences of Bohemond I of Antioch and his cousin Richard of the Principate while they were prisoners of the Saracens.<sup>11</sup>

*La Conquête de Jérusalem* is the title that Hippeau chose for section 3 of Graindor of Douai's account of the First Crusade when he decided to publish it independently from the other two sections. Section 3, as is the case for the other two sections of part two, represents a revised version of older material, which at one time probably constituted an independent poem, though it may also have started as a sequel tacked on to Richard le Pèlerin's *Antioche*. The unrevised *Jérusalem*, still recognizable in the *Gran conquista de Ultramar*, was his-

10. See Duparc-Quioç, "La Composition de la *Chanson d'Antioche*," *Romania*, LXXXIII (1962), 1-29, 210-243; on p. 234 she cites Lambert's *Chronicon Ghisnense et Ardense (918-1203)*, ed. Denis C. de Godefroy Ménilglaise (Paris, 1855), p. 311. She believes that the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* borrowed his epic embellishments from Richard le Pèlerin. See also Lewis A. M. Sumberg, *La Chanson d'Antioche: Étude historique et littéraire* (Paris, 1968).

11. Cf. Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, X, 23 (ed. Marjorie Chibnall, V [Oxford, 1975], 350-353); Roger Goossens's review of Hatem's book in *Byzantion*, VIII (1933), 706-728; Urban T. Holmes and William M. McLeod, "Source Problems of the Chétifs," *Romanic Review*, XXVIII (1937), 99-108; and Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (IFD, BO, I; Paris, 1940), pp. 568-576.

torically more accurate than its *rifacimento*, which suffers from the injection of incidents and episodes similar to those found in *Antioche* and presumably borrowed from Richard le Pèlerin (or even possibly by Graindor from his own version of *Antioche*). Anouar Hatem has attempted to prove that the older *Jérusalem* was, like the original *Chétifs*, written in the Latin Orient, but Suzanne Duparc-Quioc's counterclaim that it was composed in northern France is based on more impressive evidence.<sup>12</sup>

### C. *The First Cycle: The Kings of Jerusalem*

Raymond of Saint Gilles, Bohemond, Tancred, Harpin of Bourges, John of Alis, the king of the Tafurs, the bishop of Forez, and the abbot of Fécamp promise Godfrey that they will stay with him in the Holy Land. Corbaran receives baptism at the hands of the bishop of Marturana, and his sister Florie (also called Matroine) becomes the wife of Godfrey. Meanwhile the siege of Acre has begun. Tancred obtains possession of Caesarea. He jousts with the emir Dodekin (Tughtigin). The resistance of Acre ends when the besiegers start catapulting beehives onto the battlements. Godfrey angers Heraclius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, by asking for relics to send his mother, countess Ida. The irate prelate does not hesitate to poison the king. Heraclius conspires with Tancred to place Bohemond on the throne, but cannot prevent Baldwin of Edessa from taking his brother's place. Heraclius dies in prison and is succeeded by Henry, archbishop of Tyre. Death also claims John of Alis and Harpin of Bourges. Baldwin is taken prisoner. In order to guarantee the payment of his ransom to the sultan of Persia, he surrenders his younger daughter Beatrice (Yvette) as a hostage. When later she returns home, she reveals that she has been ravished by Blugadas, king of Aleppo, and becomes a sister of charity at the hospital at Acre. The elder daughter, Ida, had married Amalric of Auxerre, who succeeds Baldwin on the latter's death. Amalric is king of Jerusalem for only three years. His posthumous son Baldwin inherits the crown. The widowed Ida marries Baldwin of Sebourc (Le Bourg), a cousin of Hugh of Vermandois. With his own hand Baldwin of Sebourc kills the infamous Blugadas. At this point of the narrative Saladin makes his appearance. Son of king Eufarin of Alexandria,

12. Duparc-Quioc, *Le Cycle*, pp. 1-76, 275-390.

he becomes master of all Egypt through the assassination of his overlord the Amulaine. At first, he makes little headway against young king Baldwin, who is ably assisted by three powerful lords, Baldwin of Falkenberg, count of Ramla, his brother Balian, count of Tripoli, and Reginald of Châtillon, castellan of Kerak. Unfortunately the young king is stricken with leprosy and cannot prevent Reginald from violating a truce both sides had promised to respect. Saladin besieges Kerak. King Baldwin manages to raise the siege and renew the truce. Soon afterward he dies without having named a successor.<sup>13</sup>

In the closing lines of part two of Cycle I reference is made to another poem in which the taking of Acre will be recounted, as well as the founding of the military orders. Part three does contain an account of the siege and capture of Acre, but nothing is said of the first appearance of either the Knights Templar or the Knights Hospitaller. As may be gathered from the summary given above, part three of Cycle I presents a very fanciful, yet not entirely unhistorical, recital of what took place in the Holy Land between the battle of Ascalon and the death of Baldwin IV. Godfrey of Bouillon's marriage to the fictitious Florie and the conversion of her supposed brother Corbaran are, of course, examples of unbridled fantasy. The drastic pruning down of the family tree of the kings of Jerusalem is worth noting: Godfrey's two immediate successors, his brother Baldwin I and his cousin Baldwin II, are telescoped into just one Baldwin; Baldwin II's son-in-law Fulk of Anjou and the latter's two sons, Baldwin III and Amalric, are replaced by the still more composite Amalric of Auxerre. Despite his disappearance from the roster of kings, Baldwin of Le Bourg is reborn as Baldwin of Sebourg, who will become the second husband of Ida, the supposed widow of Amalric of Auxerre. Baldwin II's eldest daughter, Melisend, and his youngest, Yvette, are now named Ida and Beatrice. Although it is historically true that Yvette was as a small child for a time a hostage in the hands of the Saracens, it is unlikely that she was sexually molested by them during her captivity, but it is indeed a fact that she later became a nun, abbess of Bethany. One may safely assume that patriarch Heraclius, who in the 1180's had for mistress the notorious Pasque de Riveti (*Madame la Patriarchesse*) and was rumored to have instigated the poisoning of William of Tyre, was the prototype of the nonhistorical patriarch Heraclius stated to have

13. For a detailed summary and analysis of part three of Cycle I see Émile Roy, "Les Poèmes français relatifs à la première croisade: le poème de 1356 et ses sources," *Romania*, LV (1929), 411-468.

been the contemporary and poisoner of Godfrey of Bouillon. Finally, young king Baldwin IV's leprosy and Reginald of Kerak's misdeeds correspond to the historical accounts.

### *D. The First Cycle: An Evaluation*

Cycle I, as a whole, is difficult to assess. Quite apart from the fact that it runs to well over thirty thousand lines, it suffers from having been edited piecemeal and in incomplete form. The editor of the *Chétifs* did not attempt to give the complete text of that poem, and part three (*The Kings of Jerusalem*) lies buried in the manuscripts; it is a very late addition to Cycle I. It is different in spirit from the first two parts, which do evince a certain amount of structural unity. Whereas part three is essentially a rhymed chronicle, however distorted its chronology and presentation of facts, parts one and two are epic in character; they celebrate the heroic deeds of one man, be he the swan-knight or his grandson Godfrey of Bouillon. It should also be noted that part one leads straight into part two. The prophecies foreshadowing the exploits of Godfrey and his brothers during the First Crusade are echoed in part two by reminders of the deeds of their supposed ancestor, the swan-knight. Cornumarant, the alleged leader of the Saracens during the siege of Jerusalem by the Christians, has already appeared as Godfrey's chief antagonist in part one. In addition, there is hardly any change of ethos between the two parts, at least from a medieval point of view. In part one first the swan-knight, then his grandson Godfrey, fight to protect damsels and ladies in distress; they are the staunch champions of rightful causes, and miraculous occurrences accompany their progress through life. The same struggle in behalf of a cause which enlists divine assistance is found in part two, only here it is Christ to whom Godfrey and his companions seek to restore his inheritance. Yet it must be admitted that part two cannot compare with the *Chanson de Roland* when it comes to capturing the religious fervor and the indomitable spirit which animated the crusaders in their struggle with the Moslem world.



## E. *The Second Cycle*

Cycle II, as already stated, belongs to the middle of the fourteenth century and comprises three different poems: *Le Chevalier au Cygne et Godefroid de Bouillon* (a title I shall shorten to *Godefroi de Bouillon*), *Baudouin de Sebourc*, and the *Bâtard de Bouillon*. As will be seen by the following comments, these three poems, without ceasing to be epics, are visibly influenced by other types of literature such as the Arthurian romance and the fabliau.

The author of *Godefroi de Bouillon* (35,180 alexandrines) has completely recast and rephrased parts one and two of Cycle I. He almost never preserves a line of one of the older epics (e.g., GB 16091 = *Jérusalem* 842, GB 16112 = 784). His account of the swan-knight and the early exploits or *enfances* of Godfrey is considerably shorter than that of his Cycle I predecessors, but, when Cornumarant appears on the scene, the *Godefroi* poet must have felt that the story as he understood it — a romance located in the Orient — had at last begun, for from then on he becomes prolix, prone to additions and embroiderings instead of his former relatively restrained self. His fancy is especially unimpeded when he describes (vv. 13832–15963) Godfrey's courting of the Saracen princess Florie, which he imagines as taking place at the very time the crusaders are advancing on Jerusalem! The climactic episode of the poem, the poisoning of Godfrey by patriarch Heraclius (vv. 27512–28537), is narrated with a certain amount of dramatic skill. Tancred is made to appear as the accomplice, however reluctant, of the murderer, and we are told that the day will come when Godfrey's mother, countess Ida of Boulogne, will exact a terrible revenge for the death of her son. On a number of occasions the *Godefroi* poet has borrowed details from William of Tyre, or more probably from the Old French translation of William's Latin text.<sup>14</sup>

*Baudouin de Sebourc* (about 23,000 alexandrines) is concerned with the *enfances* of the third ruler of the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem, Baldwin II. The fourth son of Rose, the swan-knight's sister, Baldwin is brought up by the castellan of Sebourc in complete ignorance of his illustrious parentage. He becomes a much-traveled knight-errant, shuttling back and forth between the west and the east with surprising alacrity, the hero of many a preposterous adventure. At long last he learns that he is related to Godfrey of Bouillon and Baldwin and is in the line of succession to the throne of Jerusalem. He then settles down to what history expects of him by accepting the lordship of Edessa

14. Duparc-Quioc lists some thirty such borrowings, *Le Cycle*, pp. 110–115.

from his cousin Baldwin I. When *Baudouin de Sebourg* ends, Cycle II has not progressed chronologically beyond the point which marks the close of *Godefroi de Bouillon*: Baldwin I is still planning to attack the five Saracen rulers of Mecca, brothers who go by the names of Esclamart, Hector, Marbrun, Sardoine, and Taillefer.<sup>15</sup>

The *Bâtard de Bouillon* (6,546 alexandrines) opens with Baldwin I's campaign against the five kings of Mecca, his excursion to the shores of the Red Sea, and a sojourn of five years in the land of Féerie, where his hosts are king Arthur and Morgan le Fay. After Baldwin's return to Jerusalem the narrative focuses on still another Baldwin, who happens to be the illegitimate son of the king and the Saracen princess Sinamonde. The Bastard of Bouillon is the "hero" of a series of episodes which at best might be termed unfortunate. Still in his teens, he quarrels with a cousin and bashes in his skull with a chessboard; not long afterward he stabs to death his half-brother Ourry; he then proceeds to marry a Saracen girl against her wishes; when she becomes unfaithful, he allows her to be burned at the stake, and so on. The narrative shifts back to Baldwin I, only to recount his death. Tancred is dispatched to Boulogne to offer the crown to Eustace, the brother of the deceased monarch. Apprised of his arrival, countess Ida has Tancred summarily hanged. The poem closes with the ominous statement that the violent deaths of Godfrey and Tancred will so divide their respective partisans that eventually they will be unable to stem the onrushing tide of Saladin's armies. Did the Second Cycle end at this point, or did it, like the First Cycle, reach the end of the twelfth century? If we agree with those scholars who have recently given their close attention to Cycle II, we must assume that the fifteenth-century romance *Saladin* represents a prosification of a lost fourteenth-century poem which continued and completed the narrative undertaken in the *Bâtard de Bouillon*.<sup>16</sup>

15. See Edmond René Labande, *Étude sur Baudouin de Sebourg, chanson de geste: Légende poétique de Baudouin II du Bourg, roi de Jérusalem* (Paris, 1940).

16. See Cook and Crist, *Le Deuxième cycle*.