Crusade Texts in Translation

THE SWAN KNIGHT TEXTS OF THE OLD FRENCH CRUSADE CYCLE

Translated by Carol Sweetenham

The Swan Knight Texts of the Old French Crusade Cycle

The Swan Knight texts provide an imaginary tale of the ancestry of Godfrey of Bouillon, first ruler of Jerusalem in the kingdom of Outremer. They form the opening section of the Old French Crusade Cycle, leading up to the fictionalised account of the crusade in the *Chanson d'Antioche*, *Chanson des Chétifs* and *Chanson de Jérusalem*. They comprise six stories: two versions of the childhood of Godfrey's fictional ancestor, the Swan Knight, in the *Elioxe* and the *Béatrix*; his battles with the Saxons and marriage to Béatris in the *Chevalier au Cygne*; his death in the *Fin d'Elias*; the childhood of Godfrey and introduction of his counterpart Cornumarant in the *Enfances Godefroi*; and the *Retour de Cornumarant*, linking the story of the Swan Knight to the central trilogy of the Cycle.

This is the first translation of all six texts into English. The introduction covers the sources, manuscripts, context and later developments of the text culminating in Wagner's *Lohengrin*. There is a full list of characters and places as well as brief notes on and summaries of the texts.

The translations are designed to make the beginning of the Cycle accessible to modern readers with an interest in the history and literature of the crusades and/or in folklore. They open up a vast medieval panorama populated by fairy brides and evil grandmothers, children turned into swans and back into humans, knights defending maidens and lecherous squires doing the opposite, scheming abbots and Saracen princes, taking place in an imaginary universe stretching from London to Mecca by way of Boulogne and Bouillon.

Carol Sweetenham holds research fellowships at the University of Warwick and at Royal Holloway College, University of London. She has published widely on crusading literature with a particular focus on Latin, Old French and Occitan sources, and produced a number of translations including the *Chanson d'Antioche* with Susan Edgington. She is currently working with Linda Paterson and Simon Parsons on an edition and translation of the *Siège d'Antioche*.

Crusade Texts in Translation

The crusading movement, which originated in the 11th century and lasted beyond the 16th, bequeathed to its future historians a legacy of sources which are unrivalled in their range and variety. These sources document in fascinating detail the motivations and viewpoints, military efforts and spiritual lives, of the participants in the crusades. They also narrate the internal histories of the states and societies which crusaders established or supported in the many regions where they fought. Some of these sources have been translated in the past but the vast majority have been available only in their original language. The goal of this series is to provide a wide-ranging corpus of texts, most of them translated for the first time, which will illuminate the history of the crusades and the crusader-states from every angle, including that of their principal adversaries, the Muslim powers of the Middle East.

Titles in the series include

The Road to Antioch and Jerusalem
The Crusader Pilgrimage of the Monte Cassino Chronicle
Francesca Petrizzo

The Latin Continuation of William of Tyre
Edited and translated by James H. Kane and Keagan J. Brewer

Byzantine Sources for the Crusades, 1095-1204
Edited and translated by Jonathan Harris and Georgios Chatzelis

The Book de Raymond of Aguilers
Historia Francorum qui Ceperunt Iherusalem
James Currie

The Swan Knight Texts of the Old French Crusade Cycle
Translated by Carol Sweetenham

The Swan Knight Texts of the Old French Crusade Cycle

Translated by Carol Sweetenham

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2026
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-367-13645-1 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-041-09611-5 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-02772-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429027727

Typeset in Times New Roman
by codeMantra

Contents

Preface

These translations have been a long time in the making, held up by Covid. I am very grateful to my editor at Routledge Michael Greenwood for his patience with the delay occasioned by two years with no library access, exacerbated by problems at the British Library.

This work would have been impossible without the monumental achievement of the Alabama edition of the Old French Crusade Cycle. Scholars of the crusades owe a major debt of gratitude to Professor Emanuel J. Mickel, Professor Jan Nelson and the other editors of the texts in the Cycle. I am very grateful to the University of Alabama Press for their permission to translate these editions.

Linda Paterson bears no responsibility for anything in this work, but her friendship and academic challenge have been invaluable. I am very grateful to Peter Edbury for reading the manuscript, which is much the better for his suggestions. I have benefited from discussions with Marianne Ailes, Andrew Buck, Susan Edgington, Simon John, Giovanni Palumbo, Simon Parsons, Jonathan Phillips and many others in the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, the Medieval Chronicles Society, the Société Rencesvals and the Crusades Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. My thanks to Janet Foot for pointing me towards parallels in the *Mabinogion*. All failings and mistakes in the work are of course mine.

I am grateful to the librarians at the Bodleian Library and the Taylor Institute in Oxford for their unfailing helpfulness. As ever I could not have managed to complete this work without my husband Philip Sweetenham, who menaced my computer into good behaviour and offered bracing comments on the biological impossibility of human-swan hybrids.

This translation is designed to be used alongside the translations of the *Chanson d'Antioche* (jointly with Susan Edgington), the *Chanson des Chétifs* and *Chanson de Jérusalem* already published in the Crusade Texts in Translation series. I have sought to avoid repeating analysis and references from those volumes. I have used the same principles of translation for these texts and have therefore not restated them here.

I first came across the story of the swan children in Andrew Lang's *Yellow Fairy Book* as a child, and it has intrigued me ever since. This book would not have happened without Sawbridgeworth Library and Mrs Miller, a librarian who was never too busy to recommend books to children who wanted to read.

Part 1
Introduction

The Swan Knight texts of the Old French Crusade Cycle

Introduction

Setting the scene

The Old French Crusade Cycle is a set of *chansons de geste* which present a fictionalised version of the events of the crusades, with a heavy emphasis on the First Crusade. The central texts of the Cycle – the *Chanson d'Antioche*, *Chanson des Chétifs* and *Chanson de Jérusalem* – focus on the events of the First Crusade. The six texts which precede them provide a fictionalised prehistory centring around Godfrey of Bouillon and his legendary ancestor, the Swan Knight. The origins of Godfrey's fictional ancestors are recounted in two alternative versions of the *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, *Elioxe* and *Béatrix*. The *Chevalier au Cygne* describes how the Swan Knight, Godfrey's grandfather, wins Bouillon and a wife but loses them both when his wife asks him his identity. The *Fin d'Elias* ties off these plot strands and introduces the Saracen counterpart to Godfrey, Cornumarant. The *Enfances Godefroi* describes the marriage of Ida and Eustace II of Boulogne, Godfrey's parents, Godfrey's accession to Bouillon and his meeting with Cornumarant. The *Retour de Cornumarant* describes Cornumarant's return to the sultan of Persia and acts as a link to the events of the *Antioche* and *Jérusalem*. For convenience I refer to these texts as the Swan Knight texts and use the French names by which they are familiar.[1]

The aim of the entire Crusade Cycle is to demonstrate how God's divine plan has played out, culminating in the taking of Jerusalem, and hence how Godfrey is the central agent of that divine plan. A significant journey of imagination was required to transform a duke who had played an active but hardly leading role on crusade and became the first ruler of Jerusalem largely because the other leaders all had other plans into a quasi-legendary figure with a status equivalent to Arthur and Charlemagne. As such, Godfrey's fame is symbiotic with the Crusade Cycle. The epic format of a cycle of *chansons de geste* was ideally suited for creating a new epic hero. Conversely though that hero needed enough audience recognition to be credible as epic hero.

Demonstrating Godfrey's genealogy was essential to the creation of his heroic avatar. If he was to become the hero ordained by God from the beginning to conquer and rule Jerusalem, his lineage needed to be in keeping with his destiny. To some extent this reflected the demands of any epic cycle: heroes needed prequels and sequels, and *chanson de geste* heroes such as Guillaume were provided with texts about their origins known as "enfances" and about their descendants. But it

DOI: 10.4324/9780429027727-2

also reflected more fundamental concerns. Was a purely human ancestry sufficient for a quasi-legendary hero? And how should that genealogy reflect a legend which included a swan amongst Godfrey's ancestors? The swan ancestor was simultaneously an asset and a problem which the Cycle explored through multiple texts.

Swans carried multiple symbolisms in the Middle Ages.[2] They were often depicted in bestiaries. The swan might symbolise hypocrisy through the contrast of its white feathers and black flesh; stripping its feathers for the table and leaving the black flesh was a reminder of the transitoriness of worldly pomp. Bishop Hugh of Lincoln was closely associated with the swan of Stow, depicted on his badge: it was his companion for 15 years and is depicted in almost human terms, screeching loudly to greet his return or ward people off.[3] The swan's dying song was famous and symbolised joy in death.[4] The physical swan was a symbol of courtliness, served up in its feathers at banquets.[5] Whilst none of this created an obvious symbolism for the first king of Jerusalem, and the symbolic implications are not spelt out in the texts, it brought with it an evocation of courtliness, of purity and ultimately acceptance of mortality.

This introduction explores the way in which the Cycle texts responded to this challenge and how they were a catalyst in elevating Godfrey to his later quasi-legendary status:

- Chapter 1 summarises the career of the historical Godfrey and explores the development of his later fame.
- Chapter 2 looks at potential source material for the texts.
- Chapter 3 examines the manuscripts of the Swan Knight texts of the Cycle as a basis for understanding its development.
- Chapter 4 discusses early allusions to and developments of the texts.
- Chapter 5 examines the place of the Swan Knight texts in the Cycle and examines questions of authorship and authorial intention.
- Chapter 6 looks at later developments and reflections of the texts.

Chapter 1: The historical Godfrey and his later fame

The castle of La Manta in Saluzzo in northern Italy preserves a complete set of late Gothic frescoes of the Nine Worthies. Godfrey of Bouillon is portrayed alongside Alexander, Julius Caesar, King David, Charlemagne and other heroes, the only (relatively) contemporary figure to be included. It was a remarkable journey to legendary status: "with his departure on the First Crusade, Godfrey of Bouillon emerged from the relative obscurity that had characterised his career in Lotharingia".[6] This chapter summarises the ancestry of Godfrey, his actions on crusade and the steps in his rise to fame.

Godfrey's ancestry

Godfrey could trace his ancestry back to the early tenth century.[7] His great-great-grandfather was Godfrey the captive, who had two sons: Godfrey the Courageous and Gozelo I. The latter was the father of several children, the eldest being Godfrey the Bearded and Gozelo II.

Godfrey the Bearded was initially duke of Upper and Lower Lotharingia until the emperor Henry III gave Upper Lotharingia to his brother Gozelo II.[8] This was the starting point of a series of revolts against the emperor. His first wife was Doda, who was the mother of Godfrey the Hunchback and of Ida. She died, probably in childbirth; his second wife was Beatrice, widow of Boniface III, margrave of Tuscany and daughter of Frederick II of Upper Lotharingia. Beatrice's connection to Upper Lotharingia sparked a further dispute with Henry III, who captured Godfrey and Beatrice in 1055. Henry III's death in 1056 marked a change in approach: Godfrey was to become a staunch supporter of the emperor Henry IV. He died in 1069.

Godfrey's son Godfrey the Hunchback continued his support for the emperor.[9] He was closely associated with Henry IV in putting down the Saxon rebellions of 1073–1075, sparked by discontent about perceived increasing royal influence in Saxony. He fought at the battle of Homburg in 1075 and was a key figure in persuading the Saxons to come to terms later in that year. He married his stepsister Matilda, daughter of Beatrice by her first marriage.

Godfrey's daughter Ida married Eustace II, count of Boulogne (also known as Eustace aux Grenons, "Eustache the moustache"), in 1057. The county of Boulogne could trace its origin back to the tenth century and had a history of alliances with Lotharingia against French and Flemish power.[10] Eustace II became count in 1046 on the death of his father, Eustace I.[11] He married his first wife, Goda, in 1036: she was the daughter of Aethelred II of England and sister to Edward the Confessor. She died in 1048, possibly leaving a child or children with claims to the English crown. Eustace visited Edward the Confessor in 1051, though they parted on strained terms. He subsequently played a leading role in the Norman Conquest, though not without supplying his son as a hostage to William: he is a prominent figure on the Bayeux Tapestry. In 1067, however he attacked Dover unsuccessfully, possibly dissatisfied with the lands he had been allocated in England. By the 1070s he was reconciled with William, and the Domesday book shows him with extensive holdings, largely in Essex. Ida was a prominent and pious figure.[12] She founded three abbeys in northern France and was in contact with Osmund, bishop of Astorga; with Hugh of Cluny, who sent monks to one of her abbeys; and with Anselm of Bec, archbishop of Canterbury.

Ida and Eustace had three children: Eustace, Godfrey and Baldwin. The eldest, Eustace III of Boulogne, was born in 1058.[13] He inherited the countship from Eustace II on his death in 1087. He inherited Eustace's lands in England and in 1088 participated in the unsuccessful uprising by Robert of Normandy against William Rufus. He subsequently accompanied Godfrey and Baldwin on the First Crusade, where his role was rather overshadowed by theirs.[14] He returned to the west and died in c. 1125. Godfrey's younger brother Baldwin split off from the main crusading force to seek territories in Anatolia, founding the principality of Edessa; he was to become the second ruler of Jerusalem after Godfrey's death in 1100.[15]

Godfrey's role in the First Crusade

Godfrey was born in c.1060 and rose to prominence on the First Crusade. He was from the outset one of the leaders of the crusade, though he is not picked out in

the sources as playing a particularly prominent role before the final stages. He is mentioned by the early account of the crusade, the *Gesta Francorum,* as helping to secure victory at Dorylaeum.[16] He is credited in a range of sources with a notable feat of arms at the Bridge Gate at Antioch, cutting a Saracen in half (which provokes the reflection both that this was not as common as *chansons de geste* like to suggest, and that it cast Godfrey as epic hero).[17] He led out one of the squadrons at the battle of Antioch and is mentioned both alongside Robert of Normandy and Robert of Flanders.[18] He was involved in skirmishes in the summer of 1098.[19]

However it was in the stalemate of summer and autumn 1098 after the defence of Antioch that he rose to real prominence. With Bohemond in Antioch, Tancred and Baldwin in Anatolia, Stephen of Blois and Hugh of Vermandois gone, and Robert of Flanders and Robert of Normandy committed to a return to Europe, Godfrey and Raymond IV of St-Gilles were, in effect, the only remaining leaders of stature.[20] Godfrey demonstrated a mixture of piety, pragmatism and populism in leading the remaining crusaders on to Jerusalem.[21] Eyewitness sources agree that he took a key role in the capture of Jerusalem and was the first leader to enter the city.[22] The circumstances under which he was chosen as the first ruler of Jerusalem and the exact title he took remain less than clear; what is clear is that he was the ruler and that he was "the only real choice to hold the leadership of Jerusalem".[23] He was however to die within a year.

Godfrey's elevation to legendary status

Godfrey's role may be lightly sketched in the *Gesta Francorum*, Raymond of Aguilers and Fulcher of Chartres, but he is the leading figure in Albert of Aachen's *Historia Ierosolimitana*.[24] Whilst Albert did not himself go on the crusade, he gathered testimony from large numbers of people who had gone, and his work is accordingly full of valuable information, much not found elsewhere.[25] He tells us that he had wanted to go on the crusade but been unable to; we can therefore date his work to the first decades of the twelfth century.[26] He shows a detailed knowledge of events in and around Aachen, which was in Lower Lotharingia. He records far more about Godfrey's role on crusade than other accounts: he describes, for example how Godfrey took out an enemy archer at Nicaea, makes him the hero of the hour at Dorylaeum and downplays the role of Bohemond at the battle of Antioch to magnify Godfrey.[27] He also records a number of anecdotes about Godfrey. He recounts how Godfrey saved a crusader from a bear attacking a pilgrim and was himself seriously injured in the process; he describes the episode of the bisected Saracen in detail; he emphasises Godfrey's piety at the taking of Jerusalem; and he records three visions which point to divine approval of Godfrey as future ruler of Jerusalem.[28] This suggests that, at least in Lotharingia, accounts of Godfrey's heroism on crusade and emerging legends were current from the early years of the twelfth century.

Godfrey's reputation as crusade hero and the first ruler of Jerusalem continued through the twelfth century. Robert the Monk for example inserts praise for him into the account of the *Gesta*, provides a Tarantinoesque account of the bisected Saracen and emphasises Godfrey's role in taking Jerusalem and his piety.[29] Guibert

suggests that songs were already being sung about his supposed feat of bisecting a Turk: "ut testimonio veraci probabile id de ipso preclari facinoris cantitetur".[30] William of Tyre had access to a range of sources, including the *Gesta*, Raymond, Fulcher and the first six books of Albert, as well as oral tradition; he records significant amounts of information about Godfrey, including the story of the bisected Turk.[31] Equally however, despite his status as the first ruler of Jerusalem, Godfrey is not portrayed during the twelfth century as the leading figure.[32] He was cited alongside other heroes of the First Crusade by Pope Eugenius III in *Quantum Praedecessores*.[33] He is alluded to on equal terms with other leaders, for example in the letter from Brian fitzCount to Henry of Blois in 1143.[34] His memory is evoked by Ambroise in his account of the Third Crusade, but only in passing.[35] He continued to be evoked alongside other heroes of the First Crusade well into the thirteenth century: he is, for example cited alongside Bohemond and Tancred by Rutebeuf in his *Nouvelle Complainte d'Outremer*.[36]

This move to legendary status took on a new impetus when Godfrey was chosen as one of the Nine Worthies alongside Charlemagne and Arthur; he was the most recent of the nine heroes who were given this status. They appear for the first time in the *Voeux du Paon* of Jacques de Longuyon, written in 1310–1312.[37] This takes the form of an interpolation in the *Roman d'Alexandre*, with the nine chosen to stand in counterpoint to Porrus: three heroes from Antiquity, three from the Old Testament and three more contemporary heroes: Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey. The stanza describing Godfrey refers to his defeats of Soliman and Corbaran and wrongly styles him the first king of Jerusalem. It also refers to "le jour que on occist le filz au roy soudant".[38] This almost certainly refers to the plotline in the Cycle where the sultan's son Brohadas is killed and suggests that Longuyon must have known some form of the Cycle. Longuyon was from Lorraine, and his dedicatee was Thiébaut, bishop of Bar-sur-Aube: arguably, his choice of Godfrey perpetuated the exploits of a local hero.[39] The first carved representation is also in the Lotharingian area, in the 1330 Saalbau of the Cologne Rathaus.

Thereafter, Godfrey was firmly installed as semi-mythical hero. He finds his apotheosis as one of the inhabitants of Dante's Paradise, albeit alongside Robert Guiscard and heroes from the *chanson de geste*.[40]

Conclusion

Godfrey's contemporary reputation certainly grew as a result of his participation in the crusade, although in the early years afterwards, Bohemond attracted more attention.[41] Godfrey's election as the ruler of Jerusalem seems to have been because he was by that stage (with the possible exception of Raymond of St-Gilles) the only realistic and available candidate rather than an outstanding choice, something reflected in the variety of narratives around how he was chosen. It is clear from Albert and Robert that stories about his heroism were circulating early in the twelfth century; and from William that they were still current in the 1170s. The loss of Jerusalem in 1187 brought a new topicality to the first ruler and conqueror of the city: the success of 1099 was invoked as an example to follow in regaining it.[42]

This coincided with a desperate desire to claim ancestors who had been on the First Crusade: Thomas of Marle, notorious villain of the early twelfth century, acquired a new fictional persona in which he was the leading conqueror of Jerusalem; and Arnulf of Guines was famously/apocryphally furious with a *jongleur* who omitted the exploits of his crusading ancestor.[43] Godfrey was the obvious candidate for fictional glory. How far this acted as a catalyst for the creation of the Swan Knight texts and how far those texts helped to build his semi-legendary reputation is impossible to disentangle. But it is clear that by the middle of the thirteenth century, Godfrey was already embarked upon a fictional journey which took him from a somewhat obscure duke of Lower Lotharingia to a figure on a par with Charlemagne, Arthur, Julius Caesar and Alexander.

Chapter 2: The sources of the Swan Knight texts

Medieval authors were experts in *inventio*: the art of finding and bringing together different materials and characters to create a new work in a constant process of adaptation.[44] In the *chanson de geste* legendary material and historical reminiscence came together with a set of literary conventions to create works which drew on a wide range of source material and were considered to represent a form of historical truth, albeit highly coloured and told in terms of genre convention. This chapter explores the various strands of source material which the author(s) of the Swan Knight texts knitted into a story spanning four generations. It looks at:

- The historical background to the texts
- The geographical background
- Hagiography
- Folklore and fairytale motifs
- The earliest versions of the story: the *Dolopathos* and *Roman des sept sages*
- Oral tradition
- Genre conventions

The historical background to the texts

Godfrey's own appearance in the texts is confined to the *Enfances Godefroi* and *Retour de Cornumarant*. Other than generalised references to his participation in the crusade, the events recounted are entirely fictional. The *Enfances* describes the events of Godfrey's early childhood foretelling his future greatness. There is then a long passage where he fights Guy on behalf of Yvon's daughter and receives the fief of Bouillon; this gives the appearance of being modelled on the Swan Knight's fight with Renier in the *Chevalier au Cygne*. The remainder of the *Enfances* and all of the *Retour* is taken up with creating the plotline opposing Godfrey to his fictional opposite number, Cornumarant the Saracen heir to the crown of Jerusalem. There is also reference to his feat of shooting down three birds with one arrow, which is found in the *Jérusalem* (and is still featured on the arms of Lorraine).[45]

The description of Godfrey's parents, Ida and Eustace, bears a slightly closer link with reality. Ida was indeed a pious figure who founded monasteries.[46] The episode in which Eustace III is sent to England, whilst entirely fictional, distantly reflects the involvement both Eustace II and Eustace III had in English affairs.[47]

The need to insert a swan into a well-known family tree was awkward. Godfrey's paternal grandfather was Godfrey the Bearded, not a mysterious swan knight. The *Chevalier au Cygne* deals with this by making Godfrey the Bearded his maternal grandfather instead; Godfrey the Hunchback becomes the twin brother of the duchess of Bouillon, thus becoming Godfrey's great-uncle rather than his uncle.

Some other names are also recognisable. Beatrice was the name of Godfrey the Bearded's second wife, Beatrice of Tuscany. Boniface, the king of England in the *Enfances*, echoes the name of Beatrice's first husband, Boniface the margrave of Tuscany. And the dead first husband of the duchess of Bouillon, Joscelin of Mouzon, sounds like the family name Gozelo. The name of Elioxe's husband Lothair is that of the original founder of Lotharingia.

Renier the duke of Saxony is a composite figure reflecting a long history of revolt and counter-revolt in Lotharingia.[48] Lotharingia was allotted to Lothair in 843, but by the early tenth century, had passed under the control of the Holy Roman Empire on whose borders it lay. The name Lothair and the repeated appearances of the emperor Otto set the story firmly in this context. The son of Regnier Long-Col or of Hainault, Gislebert, revolted against Otto I. He was defeated at the battle of Andernach and drowned in the Rhine.[49] In 1012, Henry II made Godfrey, count of Verdun, the duke of Lower Lorraine. However the duchy was subsequently split between his sons Godfrey the Bearded and Gozelon II, leading to further dissension. Godfrey the Hunchback supported the emperor Henry IV against the Saxons in 1073–1075. More generally Saxons were a constant enemy of Charlemagne: "le Saxon devint bien vite le symbole de l'ennemi acharné de l'empire de Charlemagne et… fut pour le nord de l'Europe ce que le musulman fut pour le sud".[50] Jean Bodel's *Chanson des Saisnes*, written in Arras in the late twelfth century, described the conflict in detail.[51] Much of the *Chevalier au Cygne* is taken up with fighting against the Saxons. Renier makes this portrayal of the Saxons as inveterate enemy of Christendom explicit at the end of the fight, calling on the devil to help him and threatening to become a Saracen; he is also described as burning down the abbey of St-Trond, an infallible mark of villainy.[52]

Gerard of Duras, brother of count Otto of Duras, was the Abbot of St-Trond in the middle of the twelfth century.[53] He is attested in a number of charters dated between1145 and 1156 and his memory is invoked in a later charter dated 1192.[54] His career as abbot is described in the *Gestorum Abbatum Trudoniensium Continuatio Tertia*.[55] It is not clear why St-Trond should be picked out in particular and why Gerard should take such a prominent role. Whilst St-Trond was a large and influential Lotharingian abbey, it is near neither Bouillon nor Boulogne. Gerard is a key character in the *Fin d'Elias*, which claims to have been discovered and put into rhyme by a monk at St-Trond.[56] In the absence of any convincing evidence, we might surmise rather lamely that the *Fin d'Elias* (as argued in Chapter 5 below) is a relatively late addition to the Swan Knight texts, that St-Trond was a prominent

abbey and that Gerard's abbacy was at the period when legends seem to have started to cohere around Godfrey's ancestry.

The Swan Knight texts do not therefore set out to present actual history. But key figures from the Bouillon-Boulogne family and region are recognisable, and the shadow of past events and characters can be recognised.

The geography of the texts

Lotharingia extends through the basins of the Rhine, the Meuse and the Moselle; it covers modern-day Belgium and Luxembourg, north-eastern France, the Rhineland and the southern Netherlands. It was split into Lower Lotharingia to the north and Upper Lotharingia to the south, extending as far down as Metz and Verdun. As such, it was a liminal region, lying on the boundary of the Holy Roman Empire and France; it was a cultural crossroads. Godfrey himself is likely to have spoken both Romance and Germanic languages.[57]

Whilst the Swan Knight texts present us with a panoramic sweep of locations from Jerusalem to England via an enchanted forest and the mythical island of Illefort (Lille?), much of the action is set in Lotharingia. The key location is Bouillon: the fief is won by the Swan Knight and defended against the Saxons; he lives there with his wife and daughter and ultimately departs from there to return to Illefort; it is subsequently the fief of Eustace II and then of Godfrey. In a rather unlikely plot twist, the Swan Knight, Elias, builds a carbon copy of it in his home country of Galatia. The story ranges across Lotharingia: Godfrey is born in Mainz; Eustace II does homage to the emperor at Aachen; the emperor holds court at Cambrai; the characters are constantly on the move past Binche and Tournai, Metz and Arras, Cologne and Coblenz.

Much of the action of *Chevalier au Cygne* and *Fin d'Elias* takes place at Nijmegen; there are frequent references to the Ottonian palace whose remains can still be seen high above the river Waal. This is unique to the Cycle. Classens has argued that the text was commissioned by Henry I, count of Brabant 1190–1235.[58] Henry looked back to his Lotharingian ancestry; he held Nijmegen between 1202 and 1204; he was married to Mathilde of Boulogne; and he was, until 1227, protector of St-Trond. Godfrey was only loosely linked to Brabant. But Mathilde was the great-granddaughter of Eustace III; her older sister was Ida, and her first son was christened Godfrey in 1210.

The *Enfances* by contrast jumps in dizzying fashion right across Europe and into Outremer. The first part is set largely in and around Boulogne. Eustace and Ida have their wedding feast there; Eustace III and Godfrey are conceived there; and Rainaume's attack from Montreuil forms a key plotline. The text shows a very detailed knowledge of the area around Boulogne: Eustace's sheep farm is at Longvillier, about 30 km south; the route of Rainaume's march from Montreuil to Neufchâtel can be followed village by village; and Eustace summons the counts of Guines and Rue to his wedding. The focus then shifts to England for the adventures of Eustace and back to Nijmegen for Godfrey's fight with Guy before jumping abruptly to Mecca; Cornumarant then engages in an odyssey across Europe which

culminates in his arrival at Bouillon. The focus in the *Retour* is largely on the fantasy land of the Saracens, with Cornumarant travelling to Jerusalem and fighting in a judicial ordeal in Sarmasane.

It would thus be fair to say that pretty much each of the texts has a different geographical focus. The *Naissance* texts are set in a mythical land loosely identified as Galatia (Béatrice) or beyond Hungary (Elioxe). The *Chevalier au Cygne* and the *Fin d'Elias* are set in Lotharingia, including a rather puzzling copy of Bouillon built in Galatia. The *Enfances Godefroi* jumps from a realistic portrayal of the area around Boulogne to England and Nijmegen, then to Mecca and back through Europe, with the focus shifting to Bouillon once Cornumarant arrives. The *Retour* is set firmly in the mythical Saracen land of Sarmasane.

Hagiography: the Beatae Idae Vita

The *Beatae Idae Vita* is a hagiography of Ida.[59] It is largely devoted to her good works after her husband's death and her posthumous miracles, "repleta superna gratia et divina pietate".[60] However the opening chapter gives brief details of her early life. She is the child of Godfrey and Doda. Even as a small girl "litteris imbuta est…magis ac magis ad amorem suspirabat coelestis patriae".[61] She dreams that the sun descends to her lap: "hoc autem magnum quid futurum ostendebat somnium, quoniam ex ea procederent, qui ad tempus possiderent regnum et imperium".[62] Eustace, count of Boulogne, is described in glowing terms: "longe lateque fama nominatissimus".[63] He hears of Ida's fame and sends messengers to seek her hand. As foretold in the dream, she has three children: Eustace, "vero patris imitans nobilitatem"; Godfrey, who "primus fuit in Jerusalem praedestinatus"; and Baldwin, "natu posterior, sed non minus in acta potentiaque potentior".[64] It is specifically noted that "illis in cunabilis jacentibus, non sinebat alieni sed propriis lac dari uberibus, timens ut pravis contaminarentur moribus".[65]

The *Vita* can probably be dated to the 1130s. It does not seem to have enjoyed wide circulation: it survives in only one manuscript and Ida did not appear early on the calendar of saints.[66] Ida's life and marriage are recounted in a short summary, with the majority of the *Vita* being devoted to recounting her piety and her miracles. This is after all the main purpose of a *vita*. But the emphasis on Ida in the first chapter as the mother of future kings of Jerusalem, argues both an emerging focus on genealogy and the destiny of Godfrey and Baldwin as future kings of Jerusalem reinforcing her claim to sanctity. The boundaries of history, hagiography and literature were blurred.[67] The *Vita* does not serve as a literal source for the Swan Knight texts but reflects a shared foundation of stories and tradition and a perception of Ida as a saintly figure.

The folkloric and fantasy roots of the narrative

It is hard to pin down what a folktale is. At one end of the spectrum, Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm paint a romantic picture of preserving stories told in the field and by the hearth by peasants in the German countryside. At the other end is the view that there is no such thing as a folktale: "Volksmärchen sind Feenmärchen, im Geschmack des

neunzehnten Jahrhunderts abgewandelt".[68] Nineteenth-century peasants after all had some access to chapbooks and *images d'Epinal*. It is equally hard to trace the process by which fairy tales make their way into medieval literature: by definition we are dealing with oral and popular sources which went unrecorded.[69]

A number of themes familiar from folklore and fairytale are found in the first two parts of the Cycle: the *Naissance* and the *Chevalier au Cygne*. The *Elioxe* in particular brings together several themes: the fairy partner, the transformation of children into swans, the wrongly persecuted wife and the evil grandmother who tries to kill the children. The *Béatrix* does not have the first motif of the fairy wife; this is replaced in the *Chevalier au Cygne* by the motif of a supernatural partner who has some kind of animal and/or supernatural ancestry and must leave if ever questioned.[70] The remaining Swan Knight texts have no discernible folklore elements.

The fairy partner

The theme recurs elsewhere in medieval literature, for example in the anonymous lai of *Graelant,* whose eponymous hero follows a white hart to a fountain, finds a fairy bathing there, steals her clothes so she cannot escape and rapes her, then rather belatedly declares his love.[71] For the Swan Knight texts this theme is linked to genealogy as it is for another text: the *Mélusine* of Jean d'Arras, written at the end of the fourteenth century.[72] Like Elioxe, and indeed like her own mother, Melusine meets her future husband at a fountain in the forest: she promises him riches and status if he marries her on the condition that he never asks her what she does on a Saturday. The inevitable happens, and she turns into a serpent and flies shrieking out of the window for good. Both texts are about the foundation of a family. However the two approach the genealogy very differently. There is no doubt in the Swan Knight texts that Elias is a saintly character, acting in entire accordance with the divine plan leading up to the taking of Jerusalem. Mélusine by contrast is a more ambiguous figure.[73] In no case however does the union last, whether between Elioxe and Lothair, the Swan Knight and Béatris or Mélusine and Raymondin.[74]

The supernatural partner and the question which must not be asked

The theme of the doomed union between a mortal and a supernatural being is quite literally as old as civilisation, going all the way back to the *Epic of Gilgamesh,* where Gilgamesh spurns Ishtar's advances. It formed a dominant theme of Greek mythology and Roman literature; it was recounted as the tale of Cupid and Psyche in the *Golden Ass* of Lucius Apuleius, a Roman novel of the second century in which the narrator is transformed into an ass.[75] Psyche is visited by Cupid but must never see him; fearful that he may be a dragon, she transgresses and does so. After many vicissitudes there is a happy ending when the couple are married. Whilst Apuleius' work was not known until the later Middle Ages, the themes of a mortal married to a being in animal form and of the question which must not be asked or the deed which must not be done are familiar from folklore. In Marie de France's *Bisclavret* for example a noblewoman is married to a werewolf who is trapped in wolf form when she steals his clothes.[76]

The transformation of children into swans

The theme of the swan ancestry is a subset of the wider story of swan children which recurs repeatedly in folklore.[77] The brothers Grimm record a version under the name "Die sechs Schwäne".[78] A king is lost in the forest; a witch agrees to show him the way out on condition he marries her daughter. He does so unwillingly. He already has seven children by his previous wife; despite his efforts their stepmother discovers them and makes enchanted shirts which she throws over them, transforming the six boys into swans although the girl escapes. She discovers them in a robbers' den: they are able to spend only quarter of an hour as humans. The condition for them to return to human form is for their sister to make each of them a shirt out of starflowers and not to speak for six years. She is discovered by the king of the realm who marries her. However his mother is not content: each time the sister has a child, her mother-in-law takes it away and smears her with blood, accusing her of cannibalism; she is unable to speak to defend herself. After the third time, the king has no option other than to condemn his wife to be burned alive on the day she completes the shirts. As she climbs onto the pyre, the six swans come down and take the shirts: one is missing the left sleeve, and that brother retains a swan's wing. She is now able to explain her story to the king, and the mother-in-law is burnt alive in her place. All, naturally, live happily ever after. In "Die Sieben Raben" the brothers are ravens rather than swans. "Die zwolf Brüder" similarly has humans turned into ravens and the theme of the wife slandered and condemned to death because of her mother-in-law, then saved at the last moment.[79] Ferdinand Lot recounts a similar story in Irish folktale, the Children of Lir.[80]

The versions of the story in the *Naissance* show significant differences. In the *Elioxe* version the evil stepmother is absent, replaced by a fairy mother; the children are born with chains and it is the removal of the chains, which transforms them into swans; and the condemnation of the wife to death is absent, as she is already dead. In the *Béatrix* version the heroism of the sister is changed into the heroism of the Swan Knight, who saves both his brothers and his mother: "il y va d'essais successifs de soumettre le conte à une interprétation religieuse, édifiante et exemplaire".[81]

The motif of transformation into swans has a counterweight in the *Béatrix* of puppies exchanged for children. A similar story is found in the first branch of the *Mabinogion*. Rhiannon gives birth to a son, who goes missing overnight: her waiting women kill some puppies and smear Rhiannon's face with the blood so that they can blame her; she is punished for seven years until her son is restored and she is exonerated.[82]

Family relations

The theme of the wrongly persecuted wife is widely familiar, perhaps most famously in the story of Patient Griselda. Abandonment of children is also a common theme, familiar for example from Hansel and Gretel and the *Lai du Fresne* of Marie de France.[83] Less familiar is that of the evil grandmother.[84] All however have folklore parallels.

The fountain and the forest

Lothair's meeting with Elioxe is in a forest by a fountain, a classic topos not only of literature but of folklore. Forests are a liminal space, "lieux de l'extrême marge où l'homme peut s'aventurer", where social boundaries and expectations become fluid, places for outlawry and crime but also of refuge. Forest and fairytale are virtually synonymous.[85] Forests are also routinely used for abandoning unwanted children when family relations break down.

The Swan Knight texts are built on these folkloric motifs, though they constitute the foundations of the story rather than dominating its content.[86] The *Béatrix* and the *Chevalier* both contain the motif of swan-children, and the *Chevalier* that of the question which must not be asked; both motifs are brought to an end in the *Fin*, with the transformation of Esmeret back into a human and the reconciliation of Elias and the duchess of Bouillon. These motifs are essential to the Cycle but not particularly emphasised: the *Béatrix* focuses largely on the plottings of Matabrune and her eventual defeat by Elias, and it is only at the end of the *Chevalier* that the fateful question is asked. The text closest to a traditional fairytale is the *Elioxe*, which is centred around the character of the fairy partner and takes place in a land vaguely situated beyond Hungary; even here there is some unease, with the text going out of its way to claim that it is a true story unlike the "fable d'Artu u ço fu faerie".[87] For a parallel dynastic legend we might look to Mélusine. Le Goff points to the emergence of the Mélusine legend around 1200 at much the same point as the legends around the Swan Knight start to take shape, "l'émergence écrite et savante d'un phénomène populaire et oral dont les origines sont difficiles à repérer" and argues that the tale evolves in line with social and cultural imperatives: "les transformations, non plus de la structure mais du contenu…sont les réponses du conte aux solicitations de l'histoire".[88]

The earliest versions of the Elioxe story: the Dolopathos *and* Roman des sept sages

The earliest full written version of the Swan Knight narrative is in the complex of texts known as the Seven Sages of Rome. This was a hugely popular narrative whose origins are obscure but likely to go back to Arabic folktales; the earliest versions in Western Europe are from the second half of the twelfth century in French.[89] The work was immensely popular, influencing for example Boccaccio and John Gower. The basic premise is that Lucimien the son of Dolopathos, king of Sicily under Augustus, is falsely accused of seduction by his stepmother: because he has been struck mute with grief on the death of his mother he is unable to defend himself. Luckily a succession of seven sages of Rome turn up, each telling a story about the untrustworthiness of female testimony. Eventually Virgil comes to the rescue: the stepmother is burned, Lucimien becomes king and eventually converts to Christianity, going to live in Jerusalem.

Most versions of the *Dolopathos* do not include the story of the swan amongst the seven tales. However two versions do. The first of these is a Latin version by the Cistercian monk Johannis de Alta Silva (Haute-Seille) in the bishopric

of Nancy, dedicated to bishop Bertrand of Metz (1179–1212) which survives in six manuscripts.[90] This includes the tale of CIGNI (the swan) as the seventh and culminating tale.[91] The second is an Old French translation of this work in some 13,000 octosyllabics by Herbert.[92] The editor suggests that Herbert was a Picard and the copyist of the oldest manuscript Lorrain; the work would date from around 1220.[93] The story of the swan is again the seventh and follows the Latin closely.[94]

The narrative tells of a young man who goes hunting and is led by a white stag to a fountain where he finds a fairy bathing. He seizes her golden chain. The two marry and conceive seven children, six boys and one girl. The mother-in-law hides her dislike and is the only one present at the birth, where each child has a golden chain. She exchanges the babies for puppies and gives them to a sergeant to kill: unable to bring himself to do so, he abandons them and they are looked after by a hermit for seven years. Meanwhile, the husband is appalled: he has the puppies drowned and buries his wife up to her chest for seven years (rather like Winnie in Beckett's *Happy Days*), in the middle of the court where courtiers dry their hands on her hair. He then goes hunting, finds the children and tells his mother, unaware of who they are. She realises the sergeant did not obey her orders and tells him to get the chains from the children on pain of death: he gets those of the boys whilst they are swimming but not that of the girl, who is guarding the chains. A goldsmith is unable to melt them down to make a cup, succeeding only in breaking one link of one chain. The swans and their sister now come to their father's castle, where people comment on the resemblance of the girl to the fairy wife. Eventually the father summons the girl and hears the story. The sergeant chases her with drawn sword but her father rescues her, and he confesses all. The chains are brought, and five boys transformed back; the sixth must stay as a swan. The fairy is now unburied, and the mother-in-law buried in her place. The Latin version refers to the knight being drawn in a boat by a swan.[95] The later Old French version explicitly links the Swan Knight to the duchy of Bouillon and to the swan drawing the boat; this is "escris en ystore./Li ystore est et vraie et digne".[96]

A number of observations can be made on these texts. The first is that the only two versions which have the swan tale are both from NE France and date to the late twelfth/early thirteenth century. Both refer to the story of the Swan Knight and the boat in terms which make it clear it was well known: the Latin version refers in passing to oral sources and the French version to a written source.[97] The link to Godfrey's ancestry is not explicit in the Latin; it is made explicitly in the early thirteenth-century Old French version. More generally, there are parallels between the basic story of the *Dolopathos* and the story of the Swan Knight: the evil mother figure who lies to/about her son/son-in-law and ends up being burned is a parallel to Matabrune. It is specified that Lucimien ends his days in Jerusalem. The story is closer to the *Elioxe* than the *Béatrix* version. We cannot assert which version drew on which. We can, however assert that there was a well-defined and familiar version of the *Elioxe* story which appears both in the Cycle and in the *Sept Sages* around the turn of the twelfth century, and that by the early thirteenth century this had become explicitly linked to Godfrey.

Oral tradition and early versions of the stories

By definition oral traditions are hard to evidence. We do however have some scattered evidence of material circulating about Godfrey during the twelfth century.

Guibert of Nogent, writing early in the twelfth century, refers to the story of Godfrey bisecting a Turk being widely sung, "cantitetur".[98] William of Tyre, writing in the 1170s, comments that stories are circulating about Godfrey: "usque in presens in ore hominum pro celebri vertuuntur historia".[99] He retails the story about Eustace, Godfrey and Baldwin beneath Ida's cloak, then goes on to describe the war against Radulfus, king of the Saxons.[100] In the same context, he dismisses the story of the swan linked to Godfrey as not worthy of belief: "praeterimus denique cygni fabulam unde vulgo dicitur sementivam eis [Godfrey and his brothers] fuisse originem eo quod a vero videatur deficere talis assertio".[101] Some traditions were more credible than others.

Guy of Bazoches, a canon from Châlons-sur-Marne in Champagne, published a collection of his letters in the late twelfth century. Letter 23 describes his grandfather Baldwin II of Henegau as the grandson of the swan knight: "Hic Balduin erat ille nepos satulis [corrected to fatalis] militis ejus/Per vada cui Rheni dux fuit albus olor; /Huic celebris via Jherusalem duce cum Godefrido/Multo Partorum sanguine parta fuit".[102] Blöte dates this to 1170 and suggests that Guy subsequently corrected the letter, realising that he had confused two Baldwins.[103]

In 1187–1188 the Cistercian Geoffrey of Auxerre wrote a treatise on the Apocalypse.[104] The fifteenth section comments on the verse in Revelation 2: 20, "fornicari et edere de idelothytis", which refers to Jezebel luring servants into fornication and eating food sacrificed to idols. He tells a story about a demon disguised as a woman seducing a man, commenting that a child cannot be born from such a union. He then goes on to tell the story of the Swan Knight "quod ab olim audivimus, plurimis affirmantibus". The Swan Knight is brought by a swan to Nijmegen; he marries, becomes an outstanding ruler and fathers a number of children from whom "usque hodie numerosa progenies perseverat et crescit". There is no mention of battle or question and no explicit link to Godfrey. Gastaldelli suggests that Geoffrey may have heard the story when travelling with St Bernard to preach the Second Crusade, although this is not supported by evidence.

Helinand of Froidmont, who produced a universal chronicle in around 1200 in northern France, also knew the story. Helinand's work itself does not survive: however parts are alluded to in the thirteenth-century *Speculum Naturale* of Vincent of Beauvais and in the fifteenth-century *Chronik* by the state secretary of Cleves, Gert van der Schuren. In Gert's version, Derick, lord of Cleves, dies, leaving his daughter Béatrix in difficulties. She is rescued by a knight called Elias in a boat pulled by a swan with a golden chain who has a sword, a horn, a ring and a shield with the arms of Cleves. They produce three sons, Derick of Cleves, Goedart and Coenrait. The inevitable happens after 21 years and Elias leaves.[105] The version in the *Speculum* shows some verbal parallels with Geoffrey: the Swan Knight comes to Nijmegen brought by a swan with a silver chain, marries and has children, then leaves again: there is no mention of battle or question.[106] The context is

also similar: the story is set amongst *exempla* of demons taking human form and liaisons between demons and humans.

The earliest references, therefore, to the swan motif are in the 1170s and 1180s. Guy of Bazoches and William of Tyre both link the story of the swan knight to Godfrey: the former however corrects his reference and the latter expresses (significant) scepticism. William's "vulgo dicitur" and Geoffrey of Auxerre's "audivimus, plurimis affirmantibus" suggest that the story may have been circulating orally at this stage; and if we accept Gastaldelli's (unevidenced) suggestion that Geoffrey heard it in the 1140s that would suggest it had been current for some time. The Latin *Dolopathos* also comments at one point "ut dictum est", suggesting oral sources.[107] Geoffrey summarises the *Chevalier au Cygne* section of the story, and the short reference in Guy of Bazoches points in the same direction. William's references suggest that he knew something of the material later to be reflected in the *Chevalier* and the *Enfances*. Insofar as we can draw any conclusions on the basis of little evidence, this suggests that Godfrey was already the subject of songs early in the twelfth century; that legends about a swan knight were circulating from the middle of the twelfth century; that at least sometimes they were linked to Godfrey; that there was a measure of scepticism about such claims; and that in at least some sources there is a link to stories about liaisons between demons and humans, suggesting some unease.

Genre conventions

Large swathes of the Swan Knight texts are taken up with material familiar from the conventions of the *chansons de geste*.[108] Each text with the exception of the *Fin d'Elias* contains extensive battle sequences full of the archetypal single combat: Lothair and Gordes in the *Elioxe*, Malquaré and Elias in the *Béatrix*, the Swan Knight and Renier in the *Chevalier*, Eustace's battle with Rainaume and Godfrey's with Guy in the *Enfances*, and the long-drawn out fights amongst the Saracens in the *Retour*. We also find descriptions of feasts such as the wedding feast and the celebrations for Eustace's knighting in the *Enfances*. The descriptions of Saracens similarly reflect familiar conventions of Saracen luxury in the court at Sarmasane, the bombast and anger of the Sultan of Persia, reliance on divinations and the familiar suggestion that Saracens should take more wives to produce more future Saracen warriors.[109]

Conclusion

It is clear from Albert of Aachen and Guibert of Nogent that stories were circulating about Godfrey's deeds on crusade from very early on, the first decade or so of the twelfth century. It is also clear from Albert that Godfrey's role as ruler of Jerusalem had been seen as divinely ordained from very early on. We know from William of Tyre that stories were still circulating in the 1170s; it is likely though far from proven that Geoffrey of Auxerre heard them at a similar time. We do not know at what point these stories coalesced into the texts we know have or when they were first written down.

Genealogy became increasingly important from the tenth century onwards, when land could be handed down rather than assigned by the monarch.[110] The preserved genealogy of the counts of Bouillon tracing their origins back to Troy shows that this certainly mattered to the house of Bouillon-Ardenne.[111] For a house with a member who had been chosen by divine right as ruler of Jerusalem, this mattered all the more: the ruler of Jerusalem needed an impeccable pedigree. The *Vita* of Ida supplied this: Ida was not only notably pious but also credited with miracles which showed her sanctity. Whilst family relationships and concerns were not directly reflected in the texts, there are clear echoes in names and events. It is clear from William that the story about Godfrey's destiny being foretold by his mother was already circulating in the 1170s.

We know from William that the link to the story of the swan knight had been made by the 1170s. The details of the story as told both in the *Naissance* texts and in the *Dolopathos* are all familiar from folklore. What remains unclear is how the story became linked to Godfrey. We might surmise that an outstanding genealogy required a superhuman ancestor as well as links back to Troy.[112] In the absence of clear evidence, if the Plantagenets could trace their lineage back to a fairy who refused to take the Eucharist and flew out of the window, a swan protected by God who becomes a Christian knight in the fullest sense of the term was perhaps not such a bad option.[113]

Chapter 3: The manuscript tradition

The modern reader, presented with a series of texts each bearing a title, might be forgiven for assuming a degree of consistency in the manuscript tradition which does not in fact exist. It is fair to say that no two manuscripts give an identical version. This in itself tells us a certain amount about how the texts evolved and what mattered to contemporary audiences.

The Swan Knight texts are preserved in nine manuscripts and a number of fragments. The summary description which follows draws heavily on and updates the detailed studies by Duparc-Quioc, Myers and Mickel.[114] I have generally referred to manuscripts by shelfmark to avoid confusion between the different nomenclatures assigned by Duparc-Quioc and by the Cycle editors.

Early versions

We have three manuscripts reflecting what looks like an early stage of the formation of the Swan Knight texts: fragments in Montreal and Damascus, and Berne 627.

Probably the oldest manuscript is a fragment preserved in Montreal, McGill 145.[115] It comprises two folios of the *Béatrix* which correspond to lines 2452–2547 and 2971–3074 of the Alabama edition. It is in single column with 32 lines per page, and small format, measuring approximately 200 mm by 130–140 mm. Its editor Hasenohr suggests a Champenois origin and dates it to between 1210 and 1225.[116] This shows that the *Béatrix* was well known at the start of the thirteenth century and not necessarily later than the *Elioxe*.

A similar manuscript witness comes from an unlikely source: Damascus. The Great Mosque at Damascus had a small dome known as the "coupole du trésor" or *Qubbat-al-khazma* which was used to store various documents, rather like the better known Cairo *geniza*. This included a fragment of the *Enfances Godefroi*.[117] The fragment is now accessible only in the form of photographs held in the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften; its actual whereabouts are unknown.[118] It consists of two folios, the second in very poor condition; the text is single column with 30 lines. The format is as far as can be estimated around 160–180 mm by 110–130 mm. The text corresponds to lines 681–740 of the *Enfances Godefroi* on the first folio; lines 1931–1939 and fragments of laisse 72 can be identified on the second folio. Depending on which version of the *Enfances* was being used, this means that either lines 740–1910 or 240 lines are missing; equally it could have represented a completely different variant. It is likely to have originated from NE France; it is very unlikely to have been produced in Damascus itself.[119] The content shows that at the very least a full or near-full text of the *Enfances Godefroi* written down at the turn of the twelfth century was available in Outremer. This in turn tells us that the text had taken on its current form around the end of the twelfth century, that a manuscript containing at least part of the Cycle made its way to Outremer at some point, and that the text was therefore well known enough to make its way there.

A third and similar though more complete manuscript witness is represented by Berne 627 (S in Myers).[120] This was copied by a single scribe in northern France in the mid-thirteenth century. It contains only two texts from the Cycle: the *Chevalier au Cygne* and the *Enfances Godefroi*. The size of the manuscript suggests that it contained only these, and did not form part of a larger collection. It is slightly larger than the two fragments, measuring 185 by 120 mm; like them, however it is single column, with 25 or 26 lines on each page. Myers suggests that it may be a *jongleur* manuscript intended for performance.

Whilst not containing the Swan Knight texts, the fragment of the *Chanson d'Antioche* discovered in Laon in 1931 shows similar features. It is written in single columns of 32 lines measuring 163 by 100 mm and datable to the middle or third quarter of the thirteenth century.[121]

Giannini has argued that the survival of such fragments alongside others such as the *Fierabras* fragment from the Qubbat al-khazna is evidence that *chansons de geste* continued to be copied in what became a deliberately archaic format in the thirteenth century, and that texts might circulate as independent *libelli* as well as being gathered into larger collections.[122] What these manuscripts and fragments show us is that versions of the *Béatrix*, the *Enfances Godefroi* and the *Chevalier au Cygne* existed in a form which could be written down and circulated at the turn of the twelfth century; that they were recognised as independent texts; that they were close to our existing texts; and that one at least made its way to Outremer, although we do not know when or how.

The flourishing of the Cycle in thirteenth-century NE France

The Swan Knight texts are found as a group in a cluster of manuscripts which can all be dated to the middle/end of the thirteenth century and were produced in NE

France. All these contain the collection of texts known as the Old French Crusade Cycle, though with different combinations of texts. All contain the central trilogy of the *Antioche*, *Chétifs* and *Jérusalem*. All contain some blend of the Swan Knight texts. One contains a set of continuations which go up to the events just before Hattin; a further one contains only the *Chrétienté Corbaran* from the continuations.

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 12558 (A in both Duparc-Quioc and Myers) is commonly seen as the oldest version of the Cycle, and was used as the base manuscript for the editions of the *Chanson d'Antioche* by Duparc-Quioc and Guidot for that reason. It is the only manuscript to contain the full text of the *Elioxe* rather than the *Béatrix*. It contains in addition the *Chevalier au Cygne* and the *Enfances Godefroi*; the *Fin d'Elias* and *Retour de Cornumarant* are absent. It is written in two columns and measures 330 by 240 mm. It is from the third quarter of the thirteenth century, produced in NE France or Luxembourg, and contains several miniatures. It is attested as belonging to the library of Philip the Good of Burgundy, with the title of *Le Chevalier au Cygne.* Myers speculates that it may have belonged to the Pot family, advisers to the dukes of Burgundy; the magnificent tomb of Philippe Pot can still be seen in the Louvre.[123] Mickel uses it for his edition of the *Elioxe* as the only complete version; Nelson uses it as the basis for his edition of the *Chevalier au Cygne*.

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 795 (B in Duparc-Quioc; C in Myers) contains the *Béatrix* version and the full set of Swan Knight texts. It is written in two columns and measures 320 by 240 mm. It is Picard, written by three scribes working towards the end of the thirteenth century.

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 1621 (C in Duparc-Quioc; D in Myers) was copied in NE France in the middle of the thirteenth century and recorded as belonging to Claude Fauchet. It is written in two columns and measures 285 by 210 mm. It also contains the *Béatrix*, although a missing quire means that the text starts at line 1487. Four of the Swan Knight texts are included: the *Fin d'Elias* is missing. The texts are followed by the prose *Chronique de Turpin*. Mickel uses this manuscript for his editions of the *Enfances* and the *Retour*.

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 786 (D in Duparc-Quioc; B in Myers) contains the same full set of Swan Knight texts as BN fr 795. It dates from the third quarter of the thirteenth century and was copied in Tournai. It also contains the *Roman d'Alexandre;* this now precedes the Cycle but the quire numbers suggest that the Cycle was originally intended as the first text. It is written in two columns and measures 310 by 230 mm. It contains 45 miniatures of which 17 depict scenes from the Swan Knight cycle. Nelson uses this manuscript for his editions of the *Béatrix* and the *Fin d'Elias*.

Berne Burgerbibliothek 320 (E in Duparc-Quioc; F in Myers) dates from the second half of the thirteenth century and was written in NE France. It is in two columns and measures 255 by 180 mm. It has been rebound rather haphazardly and this makes it hard to assess the survival of the texts. Myers believes it began with the *Béatrix*. It retains three folios of the *Chevalier au Cygne*; the *Fin d'Elias* is missing its beginning; the *Enfances Godefroi* is preserved. It does not contain the *Retour de Cornumarant*.

Bibliothèque de l'Arsénal 3139 (F in Duparc-Quioc; G in Myers) contains a mixed version of the *Elioxe* and *Béatrix* and all the Swan Knight texts. It is written in two columns and measures 300 by 220 mm. It is in Picard/Walloon dialect and, unusually, carries a precise dating to 1268.

Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 12569 (G in Duparc-Quioc; E in Myers) is perhaps the most extensive manuscript of the Cycle, containing the *Béatrix* version, all Swan Knight texts, and a full set of continuations breaking off just before the loss of Outremer. It is in two columns and measures 320 by 240 mm. It was copied in Picardy in the second half of the thirteenth century. It is much annotated and shows signs of having been read frequently.

The Turin manuscript, **Turin LIII 25** (T in both Duparc-Quioc and Myers) was badly burnt in the Turin library fire of 1904. What has been deciphered to date suggests that it was copied in northeastern France towards the end of the thirteenth century. It contains the *Béatrix* version and a full set of Swan Knight texts. Myers suggests that it may have come to Turin when Mary, daughter of Philip the Bold of Burgundy, married Amadeus VIII of Savoy in 1403.

The *Enfances Godefroi* is found in two further fragments. One was published by Mone in 1835 and identified by Gaston Paris.[124] The preserved section covers the trip to England, which is ascribed to Godfrey rather than Eustace. The other fragment was edited by Alfred Jeanroy.[125] This comprises two fragments in two–column format, in Picard dialect and datable to the second half of the thirteenth century. It preserves the episode about the nursemaid and the cloak, describing Godfrey as three and half years old and therefore by implication the eldest; it also preserves part of the England episode but attributed to Godfrey rather than Eustace. Fragments of the *Béatrix* are preserved in a late thirteenth century fragment in a manuscript in Cambridge University Library, Add. 2682.[126] A further later thirteenth-century fragment preserved in the Bodleian preserves sections of the *Elioxe*/*Béatrix* closely related to Arsénal 3139.[127]

Fourteenth-century compilation and prosification

British Museum Additional 36615 (L in Duparc-Quioc; I in Myers; the Ashburnham manuscript) is an extensive fourteenth-century compilation in several hands, possibly from South Normandy. It weighs in at a hefty 62,500 lines, much of it post-Jerusalem continuations. It is in two columns and measures 260 by 185 mm. It contains the mixed version of *Elioxe/Béatrix* and all Swan Knight texts in a hand dated by Duparc-Quioc to the first part of the fourteenth century; a later hand takes events up to Saladin. Part of the *Béatrix* and the *Chevalier au Cygne* are missing through damage.

A further Picard manuscript from the end of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century, **Bibliothèque Nationale fonds français 781**, preserves an abbreviated prose version of the Cycle drawing on the *Béatrix* version and omitting the *Fin d'Elias*. It also contains the chronicle of Ernoul and the *Ordene de Chevalerie,* in which Saladin seeks to be knighted by Hue de Tabarie. The three texts between them give an account of Outremer from the origins of Godfrey up to the near-acceptance of

Saladin as Christian knight; clearly, the Swan Knight texts of the Cycle remained well known and accepted as part of the narrative of crusade, and this is implied in the prologue: "si porrés entendre et savoir comment li Chevaliers le Chisne vint en avant et le grant lignie qui de lui issi par cui sainte chrestientés fu mout essauchie et eslevee".[128] Equally, the comments in the prologue display a certain exasperation with the extreme length of the Swan Knight poems: "l'ai commenchié sans rime pour l'estore avoir plus abregiet et si me sanle que le rime est mout plaisans et mout bele mais mout est longue".[129]

By this stage therefore the Cycle texts were seen as part of a wider story of the crusades, whether by the addition of continuations or being set alongside other texts describing the crusades, continuing the story as far as Saladin. And in line with other texts, they were rewritten in prose.[130]

Fifteenth-century manuscripts: dynastic connections

In the fifteenth century, John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, presented Margaret of Anjou with a large and elaborate manuscript on the occasion of her marriage to Henry VI in 1445: this is the Talbot manuscript, **British Museum Royal 15 E VI**, likely to have been copied in Rouen. It contains a large selection of material, including *chansons de geste* such as the *Chanson d'Aspremont*, the romance of *Gui de Warewic*, the *Chroniques de Normandie* and the Statutes of the Order of the Garter.[131] From the Swan Knight cycle, it contains versions of the *Béatrix*, the *Chevalier au Cygne* and the *Enfances Godefroi* plus two fragments of the *Jérusalem*.[132]

A manuscript preserved in Copenhagen, **Royal Library of Copenhagen, fonds Thott MS 416**, preserves a prose version of the *Béatrix*, the *Chevalier au Cygne*, the *Fin d'Elias* and the beginning of the *Enfances Godefroi*.[133] We do not have the original: this is a sixteenth-century copy preserved on paper (which in itself tells us that the text was still of interest). We know from fo 2 vo that the author was Berthault de Villebresmes, who was in the service of Marie de Clèves, the widow of Charles d'Orléans; the text is likely to have been written between 1465 and 1473. Whilst this version is largely similar to the Swan Knight texts of the Cycle there are some differences: Hondré is called Oultre, the Swan Knight has to be away from the swan for seven years, and four fairies help Béatrix give birth, asking that her daughter Ida be named after the chief fairy.[134]

The Burgundian connections of two manuscripts already mentioned are also worth remembering: BN fr 12558 belonged to Philip the Good, and the Turin manuscript may have come to Savoy with Mary of Burgundy.

Latin version

The Bodleian Library has a fifteenth-century manuscript from St Albans which preserves a full Latin version of the *Béatrix* alongside amongst other texts the lapidary of Thomas of Cantimpré and pseudo-Aristotle.[135] This is close to other versions of the *Béatrix* but identical to none. Elias is called Enyas.[136]

The miniatures accompanying the Swan Knight texts

Five of the cycle manuscripts of the thirteenth century contain miniatures, underlining the status of the texts and the wealth of the commissioners.[137]

BN fr 12558 contains three full pages of miniatures and a further 14. For the Swan Knight texts there is a full page of miniatures illustrating the *Elioxe*, and a miniature begins the text with a depiction of Lothaire putting collars round the swans' necks. There are three other miniatures: the Swan Knight being pulled by the swan in his boat to Nijmegen, the rescue of the magic horn from the burning castle of Bouillon, and Calabra's divinations.

BN fr 786 contains 45 miniatures, of which 15 depict scenes specifically from the Swan Knight texts: the fight with Malquaré, Matabrune being burned, the wedding of the Swan Knight and the duchess of Bouillon, the fight with Garin de Roce Ague and Segars de Monbrin, Mirabeau, the letter to Otho, the rescue of the horn from the burning palace, the swan's transformation, the departure of the Swan Knight with Ida and Béatris, the scene with the milk, Godfrey being dubbed, his combat with Guy, Cornumarant with Gerard, Cornumarant's combat with Thierry, and the fight at the Sultan's palace. These are interspersed roughly every 4 folios, possibly marking a division into instalment rather than text.[138]

BN fr 795 contains miniatures only in the sections copied by scribe C. There are fifteen in all, of which only one depicts a scene from the Swan Knight cycle: Béatrix and Orians looking down from their hall and seeing a woman holding twins.

BN fr 12569 contains one miniature at the beginning, Béatrix and Orians looking at the woman holding twins. The other miniatures illustrate other texts in the Cycle. There are no formal divisions, suggesting that the text may have been intended for continuous reading in a way akin to a chronicle rather than a *chanson de geste*.[139]

Arsénal 3139 contains 18 miniatures. Eight of these relate to the Swan Knight cycle: Orians asleep by the fountain (this is in the *Elioxe* although the king there is Lothaire), the attempted murder of the seven children, the combat of Elias and Malquaré, the journey of Elias to Nijmegen, the marriage of Elias and Béatris, a missing miniature about the Swan Knight rescuing his wife from the Saxons, her question about his name and the final meeting of Béatris, Ida and Elias.

B Mus Add 36615 originally had frontispiece miniatures.

The **Talbot manuscript** contains a double miniature (fo 273 ro) showing the Swan Knight in his boat and the birth of the seven children; this marks the start of the text.

BN 781, whilst not strictly speaking the Swan Knight cycle, contains a miniature of Matabrune with the seven puppies.

It is hard to argue from this spread of scenes that any one scene was taken as emblematic of the Cycle. The Talbot manuscript, unsurprisingly for such a large compilation, chose two of the most iconic: the boat and the birth of the seven children. Other scenes illustrated more than once are the rescue of the horn, Béatrix and Orians seeing the woman with twins and the combat with Malquaré. Equally it is clear that the events of the Swan Knight cycle were widely known and recognised at least by the commissioners and users of the manuscripts.

The extent to which compilers saw the various texts of the group as having a separate identity also varies. BN 786 and BN 12569 do not use miniatures as a marker; by contrast BN 12568 marks the start of the *Elioxe*, the *Antioche* and the *Jérusalem* with a full page of miniatures for each. The format of BN 786 and BN 12569 may suggest that these manuscripts at least were designed for continuous reading.

Conclusion

The early fragments and Berne 627 suggest that the *Béatrix*, the *Chevalier* and the *Enfances* were written down and circulating at the start of the thirteenth century, possibly as separate *libelli*. The fragments show a close correspondence with the full texts which survive, suggesting that these texts at least existed in something approximating their existing form early in the thirteenth century. It is clear also that the *Béatrix* and the *Elioxe* existed concurrently. The *Chevalier* and the *Enfances* are found in all versions of the Cycle manuscripts, suggesting that they were seen as integral to the story. The *Fin* and *Retour* by contrast are usually found together and are missing from BN 12558, and the Talbot compilation; additionally, the *Fin* is missing from BN 1621 and the prose BN 781 and the *Retour* from Berne 320, suggesting that they were less integral to the basic story.

The majority of Cycle manuscripts can be localised to north-eastern France and the borders of Lotharingia in the middle of the thirteenth century; they are as a rule large format and double column with miniatures, suggesting that they were composed for a wealthy audience. BN 12569 at least shows signs of heavy use, indicating that it was much read.[140] As Spiegel has argued, this may well reflect a desire to establish autonomy and identity drawing on the example of a local hero at a time when crusading still looked like a realistic prospect.[141] The texts seem to have been little copied, however from the last quarter of the thirteenth century, suggesting a weakening of any potential exemplary function.[142] They also seem to have been little copied outside this area.

The Cycle texts continued to be known and copied as a cycle up to the fifteenth century. In line with other texts, they were turned into prose in BN 781. They were seen as prestigious enough to include in the Talbot manuscript. They were accompanied variously by the *Roman d'Alexandre* and by other crusading texts such as the *Ordene de Chevalerie*, and were drawn on as part of constructing genealogy. This suggests that they were seen as a recognised part of crusade tradition across a range of contexts.

Chapter 4: Early references to the material in the Swan Knight texts

From around the end of the twelfth century, we start to find references to and retellings of the Swan Knight narrative as told in the Cycle. The large majority of these originate in northeastern France. This chapter examines that complex of references to build a picture of the emergence of the stories attached to the Swan Knight and Godfrey in the form of the Cycle texts.

References to episodes in the Cycle texts

The Icelandic *Karlamagnussaga* is a compilation of *chansons de geste* translated into Old Norse. The first branch describes a swan knight called Gerard who is brought by swan to the court of Charlemagne at Nijmegen.[143] He cannot speak and has a note tied round his neck with his name. He nevertheless offers his service to Charlemagne and quickly becomes a valued adviser, eventually marrying Charlemagne's sister Adelisa and being put in charge of Saxony. Whilst this is a short passage, the references to Saxony which bookend it are striking: the previous chapter is devoted to Charlemagne battling the Saxons, and the following chapter describes Charlemagne establishing his rule there: this is reminiscent of the battle against Renier of Saxony in the *Chevalier*. There is also a comment that the swan disappeared quickly after bringing the knight, which is reminiscent of the swan's departure in the *Chevalier*.[144] The knight's inability to speak echoes the bewilderment of the swans transformed back to humans in the *Béatrix*.[145] None of this is hard evidence, but is suggestive of some knowledge of the *Chevalier*. If we accept Aebischer's dating of 1200 for this branch, that would make this an early reference.

There is an allusion in the early thirteenth-century chronicle of the Abbey of Brogne near Namur.[146] Manasses of Hierges left his property to the abbey when he went to Outremer in 1141.[147] The chronicle refers to the "principes Saxonicus" challenging the duchess of Bouillon and the Swan Knight fighting on her behalf and subsequently marrying her daughter, thus becoming the ancestor of Godfrey, Baldwin and Eustace. The chronicle invents a sister for the three who is allegedly Manasses' mother, hence supplying a genealogy for Manasses as nephew of Godfrey.[148] This again echoes the *Chevalier*.

A thirteenth-century genealogy of the counts of Flanders from Arras refers to Godfrey's ancestry.[149] It describes how count Eustache aux Grenons (Eustace II) returned from Rome via Bouillon, where he met the wife of the Swan Knight; he asked for and was given Ida's hand in marriage, subsequently siring Godfrey, Eustace and Baldwin. This echoes the events of the *Enfances*.

The *Red Book of the Exchequer*, a wide-ranging collection of sources collected for the Exchequer around 1230, summarises, amongst much other material, information from the monks of Faversham.[150] The abbey was founded by Stephen and Matilda, and Matilda was a niece of Godfrey. Under the heading "ex eodem libro de cigno" the summary describes "Godefridus cognamento Alakete" dying, leaving his wife and daughter. They are attacked by Renier and seek help from the Roman emperor. A swan with a golden chain round its neck comes to their rescue "divino nutu".[151] The Swan Knight marries the daughter and receives half the realm of Lotharingia; they have a daughter called Ida. When the Swan Knight is approaching death, his wife asks his origin: he is promptly carried away by the swan. "Eustachius as Gernuns" marries Ida, and they have twin sons, Godfrey and Baldwin. Their exploits at Jerusalem are described by Fulcher of Chartres. This sounds like a detailed reference to the Cycle, although Béatris's father is not called Godfrey in the *Béatrix,* and there is no suggestion in the *Chevalier* that the Swan Knight is near death when Béatris asks the question. The reference to Eustace and his sons echoes

the *Enfances*, although omitting Eustace III, who plays a large role in the text. The name "Alakete" is found nowhere else; it is tempting though unattested to wonder whether the word is related to "ala" (wing) and hence a reference to swan status.

Lambert of Ardres in his chronicle of the lords of Guines and Ardres, writing at the turn of the twelfth century in Picardy, talks similarly about the genealogical link between Godfrey and the Swan Knight: "Boloniensibus quorum auctor cicni non phantastici sed veri et divini ducatu celitus advectus, Boloniensibus generose propaginis et divine nobilitatis originem indidit".[152] The context is the lineage of Ralph of Guines, who combined human nobility through his Flemish ancestry with divine ancestry through his link to Boulogne. Lambert is the only author to link the swan to Boulogne rather than Bouillon, perhaps unsurprisingly for an author who lived some 40 km from Boulogne and whose purpose was to immortalise the deeds of the lords of Guines and Ardres.[153]

In the middle of the thirteenth century, Philippe Mouskés, who came from Tournai, makes an allusion in his *Chronique Rimée*.[154] He reflects the *Chevalier*'s account of the fight with Renier, the marriage with the daughter and the ancestry of Godfrey, though he seems to suggest that the Swan Knight himself turned back into a swan rather than being taken away by the swan.

The mid-thirteenth-century *chanson de geste Doon de Maience* describes the career of Doon de Mayence, father of 12 epic heroes and ancestor of Renaut de Montauban.[155] It takes place against a Lotharingian backdrop, and in the second half, Doon fights protracted wars in Saxony. The poem states that there are three *chanson de geste* cycles, of which one is the cycle of the Swan Knight.[156] It describes how "la dame de Vimaie [surely Nimaie] dont parole fu grans/le chevalier au cisne fu pour li combatans,/Quant il sa fille prist, dont il ot III enfans./Godefroi en sailli, qui puis fu roy puissans/là en Jerusalem contre les mescreans".[157] This again summarises the plotline of the *Chevalier* and the *Enfances*.

Links to Arthurian material

The Swan Knight is mentioned twice in the continuations of *Perceval*. Chrétien de Troyes did not finish his *Conte du Graal* recounting the adventures of Perceval in his search for the Holy Grail, and other authors enlarged and continued his work. The First Continuation, sometimes ascribed to Wauchier de Denain and dated to the end of the twelfth century, contains six branches describing the adventures of various knights of Arthur's court.[158] The final branch tells of the adventures of Guerrehet, Gawain's brother. In the closing scene, a boat drawn by a swan brings the dead knight Brangemuer to shore, accompanied by a maiden.[159] Whilst no explicit link is made to Godfrey, the image of the swan boat comes with clear implications.

In the Fourth Continuation ascribed to Gerbert de Montreuil and dating from the first part of the thirteenth century, there is an explicit connection between Godfrey and the Grail. Perceval hears a voice telling him how he will become the ancestor of Godfrey. In a somewhat complex genealogy, it is explained that his daughter will marry the Riche Roi. She will be saved by her son from being burned. One of her other children will be a swan. His older brother will marry a virgin who

will have a daughter who, in turn, will have three sons who will go on to conquer the Sepulchre and the True Cross. The storyline of the Swan Knight texts is clearly recognisable; and the mysterious origins of the Swan Knight's mother are explained through descent from Perceval.[160] In something of a mirror image, the Swan Knight's arrival at court as a completely ignorant youth has overtones of Perceval's arrival in King Arthur's court.

There is no evidence that Wolfram von Eschenbach knew the continuations when he produced his adaptation of Chrétien's *Perceval*, the *Parzival*, in the early thirteenth century.[161] He follows his source until book XIII; the remainder draws on his own invention and a range of source material. The genealogy set out by Wolfram is slightly less convoluted than that of Gerbert. Parzival marries Conduiramors after fighting to recover her domains for her. His son by Conduiramors is Lohengrin, the Swan Knight. At the end of the poem in book XVI Wolfram describes how the princess of Brabant refused all offers of marriage until Lohengrin arrived at Antwerp in the swan boat. He marries her on the condition that she should never ask his identity; he rules wisely and well, and they have children. Wolfram comments that people are still alive in Brabant who know the details. The inevitable happens: the swan boat returns, and Lohengrin returns to Munsalvaesche, leaving behind a sword, a horn and a ring.[162] Wolfram questions why the princess could not resist asking the forbidden question and draws a parallel with Erec, who forbade Enide to speak with rather more success.[163] He also explains why the question is forbidden: when Lohengrin's half-brother Fierefiz was baptised, an inscription appeared on the Grail saying that if ever a servant of the Temple became king of a foreign country, this condition should be imposed in memory of the long time which Anfortas had to wait for the question to be asked about the Grail.[164] The name Lohengrin may be a distortion of Garin le Loherain, hero of another epic cycle; Wolfram is similarly inventive with other names, turning for example Chrétien's Blancheflor into "Conduiramors" (literally bringer of love); as Cramer points out Garin's mother in *Hervis de Metz* is called Beatrice and Hervis her husband gains Brabant.[165]

Material culture

The misericords at Exeter Cathedral include a depiction of the Swan Knight being drawn in his boat by the swan. As a whole, the misericords date from between approximately 1230 and 1260; the Swan Knight misericord cannot be dated more accurately, though the great helm the knight is depicted wearing fits that dating. The other misericords contain a mixture of fantastic motifs with sirens and centaurs, portraits and foliage.[166]

Conclusion

From the turn of the twelfth century onwards, there is a cluster of allusions suggesting that the story of the Swan Knight and its link to Godfrey was already well known. The references in the *Karlamagnussaga*, the chronicle of Brogne, the

genealogy of the counts of Flanders, the references preserved in the Red Book of the Exchequer and Lambert's reference all suggest some level of knowledge of the *Chevalier* and the *Enfances* material. Perhaps the commonest theme, also seen at Exeter, is the swan boat which became emblematic of the story as a whole. There was clearly also knowledge of the fight with Renier, marriage to Béatris, Eustace's subsequent marriage to Ida and the ancestry of Godfrey and his brothers. How far this reflected a knowledge of the stories in the texts and how far the texts themselves is hard to determine; but we know from the manuscript evidence that written versions of the texts were already circulating in the very early thirteenth century.

What all these have in common is a desire to link Godfrey to the genealogy of the commissioners of the texts via the Swan Knight: respectively, Manasses of Hierges who was a donor to Brogne, the counts of Flanders, Godfrey's niece Matilda and Ralph of Guines. This suggests two things. Firstly, the material which was to make its way into the Swan Knight texts was already well known. Secondly, the desire to link Godfrey to the family tree was already in evidence. With the exception of Faversham, all these references come from NE France: Spiegel has argued that the start of the thirteenth century saw a focus on genealogy as a way of establishing a separate identity.[167] And the loss of Jerusalem brought a new focus on the successes of the First Crusade, with Godfrey repeatedly invoked as an example of exactly the kind of heroism to be emulated.[168] Herbert's translation of the story in the *Roman de Dolopathos* from around 1220 similarly spells out the link to Bouillon specifically.[169] Lambert of Ardres' insistence that the swan was not a phantasm (which could have been created by demons) but a genuine being sent by God, "cicni non phantastici sed veri et divini ducatu", betrays some unease about the Swan Knight, but there is no reflection of this in the slightly later references.[170] Indeed Philippe Mouskés seems to suggest that the Swan Knight turned into a swan.

We also start to see *mouvance* and adaptation. Gerbert de Montreuil and Wolfram von Eschenbach link Godfrey to the Grail Knights. The *Karlamagnussaga* links the Swan Knight to Charlemagne.

None of this can be taken as evidence that these allusions actually come from early written versions of the Swan Knight texts. What is clear is that the stories recounted in the *Elioxe* and *Béatrix*, the *Chevalier au Cygne* and the *Enfances Godefroi* were known from the last quarter of the twelfth century, and started to be written down around the turn of the century in various forms. This reflected an increasing desire to claim crusading ancestry at least in part as a reaction to the loss of Jerusalem in 1187.[171]

Chapter 5: The place of the Swan Knight texts in the Cycle and the development of the Cycle

The Old French Crusade Cycle is an extensive set of *chansons de geste* which narrate the events of the First Crusade in fictional form from the origins of the Swan

Knight up to, in some manuscripts, events in the run-up to Hattin. It falls broadly into three sections:

- The Swan Knight texts. These cover the genealogy of Godfrey, the first ruler of Jerusalem, tracing his origins back to the Swan Knight Elias. They comprise in their fullest form the texts in this volume: *La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, the *Chevalier au Cygne*, the *Fin d'Elias*, the *Enfances Godefroi* and the *Retour de Cornumarant*;
- The central trilogy: the *Chanson d'Antioche*, the *Chanson des Chétifs* and the *Chanson de Jérusalem*. These take the story of the crusade from the defeat of Peter the Hermit at Civetot to the conquest of Jerusalem and the battle of Ascalon;
- The continuations. These are found in only a few manuscripts of the Cycle. The *Chrétienté Corbaran* describes the conversion of Corbaran, heavily foreshadowed in the *Chétifs*. The *Prise d'Acre*, *Mort Godefroi* and *Chanson des rois Baudouin* take the story towards 1187. Their absence from most manuscripts supports Grillo's description of them as "an essentially unattractive generic backwater".[172]

With the exception of the early thirteenth-century manuscript tradition described above, the Swan Knight texts are always found in the context of the Old French Crusade Cycle. The original legend about the Swan Knight and his link to Godfrey was adapted with a clear end in view: to show the taking of Jerusalem and the foundation of Outremer as inspired by God, with the crusaders in general and Godfrey in particular a key agent of the divine plan. Alongside the *Eracles*, the Old French translation of William of Tyre, the Cycle provided a comprehensive vernacular overview of the events of the crusade accessible to a wide audience.[173] This chapter offers an interpretation of the place of the Swan Knight texts in the Cycle and of how the Cycle might have developed.[174]

The implications of using the chanson de geste *format*

To use the form of a *chanson de geste* was to make a conscious statement about the way in which the text should be received. The *chanson de geste* was an immediately recognisable genre. It was generally in alexandrine verse (some earlier texts including the *Chanson de Roland* are in decasyllabics.) It was split into laisses of varying lengths which could be assonanced or more often rhymed, something of a challenge with a laisse rhymed in the imperfect subjunctive *-asse* for example. Each line had the same melody. The text was heavily formulaic, meaning that often the second hemistich would be filled by a formula such as "por l'onor de Soissons" to maintain the rhyme scheme. The content was similarly formulaic: *chansons de geste* abound in descriptions of single combat; Saracens are depicted in stereotyped terms; women tend to be either beautiful maidens or evil crones, often with supernatural powers, with little in between. The genre maintained a pretence of orality

reflecting its probable origins, although in practice the dividing line between oral performance and reading was blurred. Audience, *jongleur* and author are complicit in the ostensible belief that they are sharing a true story, albeit one from long enough ago that nobody can contradict it; and the archaising form underlines that distancing. Equally, the audience are invited to recognise themselves in the scenes described reflecting contemporary customs and culture, and hence to place themselves on a continuum of epic heroism with those they are hearing about.[175]

Whilst early *chansons de geste* tend to be short and freestanding, they already exist as part of a much wider universe of poetic material: in Barthesian terms, individual *oeuvres* reflect an underlying *texte*. The early *Guillaume* for example exists within a much wider textual universe, the epic cycle of *Garin de Monglane*, where different works appear at different times in different contexts and may be linked up in different ways.[176] Rather like Hollywood films, those which were popular would spawn imitations, prequels and sequels. Heroes would be supplied with a backstory and childhood, and often a full ancestry.[177] Their offspring would go on to have further adventures. The only limit was the enthusiasm of the audience and the stamina of the performer. The creation of vast works which might run to 50,000 or 60,000 lines necessitated a great deal of signposting: events would be foretold a number of times and referred back to subsequently.

Whilst the stereotype of the *chanson de geste* is that it deals almost exclusively with a masculine world of battles and violence which was being superseded by romance towards the end of the twelfth century, this is far from the case. Most *chanson de geste* manuscripts date from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, showing that they were still being copied, read and performed.[178] *Chansons de geste* such as *Lion de Bourges* were still being written in the fourteenth century. And the variety of material went well beyond sword, slash and slaughter. Even relatively early *chansons de geste* such as *Renaut de Montauban* are more of an odyssey for the central character than a simple conflict with Saracens.[179] It becomes increasingly hard to see a clear distinction between epic and romance; it might be more accurate to say that the epic form is maintained but the content moves increasingly towards what Kibler calls a *chanson* or *roman d'aventures*.[180] Indeed, Dumézil's classic analysis suggests that the epic form is "en communication constante, dans les deux sens, avec les contes".[181] *Chansons de geste* show from the thirteenth century onwards an increasing incorporation of folkloric, Arthurian and fantasy material, which allows them to range over time and space: "l'interférence des matières peut être interprétée comme le moyen ideal de répondre au désir de s'évader à la fois dans le temps et dans l'espace… d'accéder à plusieurs chronotopes à la fois".[182] This is set against a recognisable and precise description of contemporary customs and culture: jousts, food and court ceremony are described in terms familiar to a contemporary audience, providing a bridge from the here and now to the fantasy events described and allowing the audience to exist simultaneously in their own world and a fantasy mirror image.

The Cycle in its extant versions and hence the Swan Knight texts need to be seen against this generic backdrop. Their form is incontrovertibly that of the *chanson de geste*: alexandrine rhymed laisses and abundant use of formulae (indeed it is

hard to see what else an author can do faced with all those hemistiches to be filled). The conventions are all present and correct. The texts contain literally thousands of lines of single combat. The Saracens, when they appear, are depicted entirely in line with the stereotypes: their names are familiar from other *chansons de geste*, Cornumarant violently tries to kill the abbot Gerard of St-Trond before collapsing into a woebegone heap of remorse. Ida is beautiful; Matabrune is an evil crone who dabbles in divination. The vast network of material is tied together with *annonces* of the future fame of Godfrey, and with *rappels* of the action so far. The audience is clear that the events before, during and after the crusade are epic achievements, and other epic heroes such as the inevitable Roland and Oliver as well as others such as Vivien and Bertrand, are invoked accordingly.[183] The horizon of expectation is without doubt that of the *chanson de geste* storyverse.

And yet there is a difference. The Cycle has traditionally been seen as unique amongst *chansons de geste* in describing (relatively) contemporary events and perhaps not therefore a set of *chansons de geste* at all. The subject matter of *chansons de geste* was argued to be events safely in the Carolinginan or Merovingian past, against which contemporary debates about power and legitimacy could be played out by proxy. Clearly, this did not apply to events almost within living memory, so how could the Cycle texts be real *chansons de geste*? And if they were not *chansons de geste*, what were they?[184] This requires some nuance. With the exception of the *Antioche*, which is based on material from Albert of Aachen and for its last third translates Robert the Monk's *Historia Iherosolimitana*, the Cycle is made up almost entirely of fantasy material.[185] The *Jérusalem* gives a highly fictionalised account of the fall of Jerusalem and battle of Ascalon in which Thomas of Marle is flung over the ramparts from the points of spears bed-of-nails style, and monsters come to the aid of the Saracens in the battle of Ascalon.[186] The *Chétifs* consists of three entirely fictional episodes designed to bring the captives of Civetot back to Jerusalem in time to share in the conquest, including a long battle with a dragon (and in one manuscript the dragon's mother for good measure) and an encounter with slinky Saracen beauties in a robbers' cave.[187] The Swan Knight texts as set out in earlier chapters owe far more to folkloric themes and fantasy than to the actual genealogy of Godfrey. The continuations see Corbaran, the fictional avatar of Kerbogha the atabeg of Mosul defeated at Antioch, become Christian. This material may be more recent than Charlemagne and Pepin, but by this stage it was at least a century old and, with the exception of the *Antioche*, fictional fantasy other than in the very broadest outline.

Godfrey's role in the central texts of the Cycle

The extant versions of the Cycle all contain at least some of the Swan Knight texts. In one sense it is hard to see this as anything other than classic cyclification: the hero of a cycle needs family and ancestors, and indigent jongleurs need income. Godfrey therefore needs to be the leading character of the events at Antioch and Jerusalem.

As set out in Chapter 1, whilst Godfrey's role on the First Crusade did not pass unnoticed, he did not emerge at the time as a leading character. Bohemond's

achievements as a military leader on the crusade and subsequent tour of European courts attracted attention, and stories were quick to grow up around the heroism of Robert of Normandy.[188] It was not until after the fall of Jerusalem in 1187 that Godfrey acquired a retrospective heroic status as the first ruler of Jerusalem; his fame grew during the thirteenth century.

This is what we see in the central trilogy of the Cycle. Whilst unsurprisingly Godfrey hardly appears in the *Chétifs* (which is about the crusaders taken captive after the defeat of Peter the Hermit at Civetot) we are reminded through of his heroism so far and the role he will go on to play.[189] In the *Antioche* he is often shown taking a leading role which magnifies what the sources tell us: thus he is in charge of negotiations at Constantinople and saves the day at Dorylaeum.[190] The poem duly recounts his famous bisection of a Turk.[191] In the sections translated from Robert, the text consistently adds references to Godfrey: the Saracens play chess for his head, he defeats Rouge Lion, kills Soliman and has a climactic encounter with Corbaran.[192]

It is striking just how omnipresent Godfrey becomes in the *Jérusalem*, with more than twice as many mentions as any other character, including the infamous Thomas of Marle, who swears fealty to him.[193] He is constantly shown giving orders and directing the action, for example organising the signal for the first attack on Jerusalem, ordering the deployment of siege engines, in the lead at the assault and personally cleansing the Holy Sepulchre.[194] There is a *reprise* of his famous exploit bisecting a Saracen; and his feat in shooting three birds with one arrow is recounted.[195] He declines initially to become ruler of Jerusalem but agrees to do so after all the nobles hold a vigil and his candle is miraculously lit. A dove brings him news of the forthcoming battle of Ascalon, and a candle flares into life in the Sepulchre.[196]Needless to say, little of this is in the contemporary sources. This prominence is justified by Godfrey's future role as the first ruler of Jerusalem. We also see his brothers Eustace and Baldwin playing prominent roles. Eustace, for example rescues Raymond of St-Gilles and later Peter the Hermit and is shown with Godfrey at Cornumarant's surrender.[197] Whilst sources do attest to Eustace's presence on crusade, he attracted little notice. More surprising is the large amount of time given to the exploits of Baldwin, who was not even at Jerusalem. He is repeatedly shown attacking Cornumarant, whom he eventually kills; he is prominent in the battles which ebb and flow; and, in a startlingly vivid passage, he is described as taking refuge in a reed bed, attacked by leeches which wriggle through his chain mail, then smoked out by the Saracens when they set the reed bed on fire.[198]

The compiler of the central trilogy therefore organises his earlier source material so that Godfrey is consistently shown both as leader and as the one miraculously recognised by God to be ruler of Jerusalem; and his feats are highlighted accordingly. This is particularly clear in the *Jérusalem*, where the heroism of Eustace and Baldwin is also highlighted even though the latter was not even there. Whatever the real Godfrey may have done, his fictional avatar is firmly portrayed as the leading character in the events of the crusade in a way which makes his coronation as ruler of Jerusalem inevitable.

The development of the Swan Knight texts

Once established as the central character of the Cycle, particularly in the *Jérusalem*, Godfrey needed a suitably epic pedigree. Conversely, we know that references to his ancestry were already circulating from the 1170s; it would have been odd not to add these to an epic cycle of which he was the hero.

The modern presentation of these stories as a set of consecutive narratives imposes a somewhat misleading coherence on a set of texts of which we can safely say that no two manuscripts contain the same version. To pick a way through this tangled complex of material, we can distinguish three strands:

- The narratives about the birth and origins of the Swan Knight (*La Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne* in two versions, *Béatrix* and *Elioxe*)
- The career of the Swan Knight and his founding of the line leading to Godfrey (*Chevalier au Cygne* and first part of *Enfances Godefroi*); whilst all these follow the same basic narrative arc, there is significant variation in the various versions;
- Cornumarant as a counterpart to Godfrey (the *Fin d'Elias*, second part of *Enfances*, *Retour de Cornumarant*).

The birth and origins of the Swan Knight: different versions of the Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne

The texts collectively described as the *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne* in fact comprise a number of different versions. Gaston Paris was the first to identify these: *Elioxe*, *Béatrix*, a composite version, and a different version preserved in the Spanish compilation the *Gran Conquista de Ultramar*.[199]

The Elioxe *version*

This is found in full in only one manuscript: BN fr 12558. King Lothair is out hunting. He rests beside a fountain; Elioxe appears from a mountain. She agrees to become his wife and foretells that she will bear him seven children at the cost of her own life; one of the descendants of these children will become a king in the Orient. Her future mother-in-law Matrosilie tries to prevent the marriage, unsuccessfully. Whilst Lothair is away defending his realm against the pagan king Gordoce de Palie, Elioxe does indeed give birth to seven children and die. Matrosilie orders her servant Monicier to take them into the forest and leave them to die; instead, he leaves them outside a hermit's hut, and they are raised by the hermit and his sister. Matrosilie, meanwhile, tells Lothair that Elioxe had given birth to seven serpents and died of their bite. Seven years later, the king's servant Rudemart finds the hermitage. He reports that he has seen seven children wearing gold chains. Matrosilie sends him back to get them; he takes six which belong to six brothers but does not get the chain belonging to their sister. The six male swans fly to a pond near the castle of Lothair. His nephew Plantol tries to kill one against his orders; Lothair throws a gold basin at him in rage, and Matrosilie directs one of the gold

chains to be used to repair it. Meanwhile the sister goes to the city and encounters the swans. The King's seneschal reports to him the response of the swans to their sister. Lothair goes to see for himself and is told the story. Matrosilie confesses and returns the five chains she still possesses. Five of the swans are restored to human form, and four go to seek their fortune. The fifth, the Swan Knight, chooses to remain with his brother in swan form; they set out with the swan pulling his brother's boat and arrive at Nijmegen.

This is close to, though not identical with, the version found in the *Dolopathos*. *Sone de Nansay* refers to the wife as Elouse, although the story is not particularly close otherwise.[200]

The Béatrix *version*

This is the more common version, found in the majority of manuscripts and clearly preferred by the scribes is the version used in BN fr 786, BN fr 795, BN fr 1621, BN fr 12569 and the Turin manuscript, all of which date from the second half of the thirteenth century. It was also used in the summary in the Talbot manuscript, the abbreviated prose version BN fr 781, and in the Latin prose version of the text preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript, Bodley Rawlinson Misc 358. The story of the fairy bride is completely absent: Béatrix is resolutely human. The marriage is broken by the death of the wife in *Elioxe*, and by the breaking of the taboo on naming in the *Béatrix*. Both versions have an evil grandmother and the story of the children being transformed into swans; however, the *Elioxe* has the sister as the one who escapes transformation and hence the heroine, whereas in the *Béatrix,* this is the role of the Swan Knight. The diabolical malice of Matabrune is heavily emphasised compared to the largely unmotivated malice of Matrosilie. The two have different names for the characters and are set in different locations.

The combined version

This is found in two manuscripts: Arsénal 3139 and B Mus Add 36615, which both give lines 1–1345 of the *Elioxe*, then move to the *Béatrix* version omitting the first 200 lines. There is some attempt to make the two narratives coherent, notably the omission of Elioxe's death in childbed, which would sink the entire plot of the *Béatrix* where she is saved by her son. Arsénal 3139 is the only manuscript for which we have a precise date, 1268, so we can say with certainty that both texts existed by this time. Barron examined the texts in detail and concluded that there is no obvious set of relationships between the manuscripts: the compilations in Arsénal 3139 and B. Mus. Add 36615 are not directly related; none of the thirteenth-century versions of *Béatrix* show a direct correspondence; and neither does the surviving text of *Elioxe*.[201]

The version preserved in the ***Gran Conquista de Ultramar***

The Spanish compilation known as the *Gran Conquista de Ultramar* has long been recognised as containing significant sections of the Cycle.[202] It was commissioned

possibly by Sancho IV of Spain at the end of the thirteenth century. The basic framework of the text was supplied by the *Livre d'Eracles*, the Old French translation of William of Tyre. The author also inserted much of the Old French Crusade Cycle alongside some of the Occitan *Canso d'Antioca* and intermixed with material whose source cannot be identified. The use made of these texts varies from faithful translation to loose summarisation and adaptation, and it cannot therefore be taken as a faithful copy of its sources. Nevertheless, it provides us with a valuable guide to the version of the Cycle it drew upon.

The *Gran Conquista* starts with 46 chapters going back to the preaching of Mohammed and the loss of Jerusalem. It then describes the initial expedition of Peter the Hermit, which ended in failure. At this point it breaks off abruptly and moves to recounting the Swan Knight texts, which occupy some 140 chapters. At chapter 185 the narrative breaks off and moves to an otherwise unparalleled story about the start of the crusade, then picks up Godfrey's departure for Outremer and moves into material from the *Chanson d'Antioche*.[203]

The story of the seven swan children told in *Elioxe* and *Béatrix* is replaced by a completely different version about the infanta Isonberta.[204] She is a princess born in Asia to Popleo and Gisanca. Overwhelmed by the number of suitors for her hand, she runs away and finds a boat which takes her to a deserted landscape. Here Eustacio de Portemisa comes upon her with his hunting dogs: she hides in a tree, crying out with fear. Eustacio initially thinks she is a devil but soon learns better; he takes her back to his mother Ginesa, who is not delighted. During Eustacio's absence, Isonberta has seven sons (there is no daughter), to each of whom an angel gives a golden chain. Eustacio's seneschal Bandoval writes to Eustacio; Ginesa gets the messenger drunk and substitutes a letter alleging that Isonberta bore seven puppies. Eustacio writes back to say they are not to be harmed; again, Ginesa intercepts the letter. Bandoval abandons the children in the forest, where first a deer then the hermit find them. The hermit unwittingly tells Ginesa, who asks to keep all the children, as she is their grandmother: she takes their chains with the inevitable result, having one made into a cup. Sixteen years later (!) Eustacio returns. Ginesa says she killed the children because of the disgrace of the alleged adultery. Isonberta is about to be burned when an angel tells the hermit and her son comes to the rescue. Ginesa is walled up and five of the swans regain human form.

The Elioxe *and* Béatrix *versions compared*

Clearly the *Elioxe* version was less popular than the *Béatrix* version. It raises twin dilemmas: the Swan Knight's mother is a fairy and not a human, and the Swan Knight himself spends part of his life as a swan.

The encounter between Lothair and Elioxe takes place under the classic conditions of a nobleman lost in a forest and near a fountain.[205] Relationships between fairies and human beings were well known to be dangerous, a belief which persisted well beyond the Middle Ages.[206] Walter Map tells of Eadric hunting in the woods and finding a house full of succubi, with one of whom he bears a son.[207] Gervase of Tilbury tells a story about the lady of the castle of Château-Rousset

who similarly turned out to be a fairy.[208] Such beings were suspected to be "fantasma", created from air and not only potentially demonic but with a question mark as to their existence at all: Walter Map tells a whole sequence of stories about "fantasma".[209] We might remember the concerns voiced by Geoffrey of Auxerre about couplings between supernatural beings and humans. The author of the *Elioxe* takes some steps to counter these concerns. Elioxe is only once referred to as "fée", although the audience could hardly have been in doubt about the situation.[210] She commends herself to the Virgin: she may be a fairy but believes in Christianity.[211] As Jacques Merceron has shown, she has a belt with twelve jewels from the pre-Fall Paradise, and dreams of seven apples of Paradise which symbolise her seven children: this defines her firmly as an actor in the divine plan.[212] And she dies in childbirth, having played her part in the plan and provided Godfrey with a lineage which ultimately goes back to Adam in Paradise.[213] Nevertheless, she remains a supernatural being, and when she dies, her body is buried outside the church, though right next to the wall.[214]

The *Elioxe* version raises a second dilemma. The Swan Knight does in fact become a swan for part of his life The liminality of the border between animal and human was one which exercised theologians greatly.[215] Creatures are given a form by God, so any form of metamorphosis must by definition be diabolical: in the words of Thomas Aquinas, "transmutationes corporalium rerum quae non possunt virtute naturae fieri".[216] People might be turned into animals as a punishment: the fourth branch of the *Mabinogion* has several examples such as Blodeuedd being turned into an owl for arranging the death of her husband Lleu, who himself turns into an eagle.[217] A story which brought an actual animal into Godfrey's ancestry potentially carried unsettling overtones. Marie de France in the lai *Yonec*, which tells of a knight taking on the form of a bird to meet his beloved, is careful to specify that he is a Christian and takes the Eucharist.[218]

The *Béatrix* removes both these concerns. The ambiguity attendant on having a fairy wife is gone: Béatrix is a human princess, married to Orians at the start of the story. Rather like Eve, her transgression in succumbing to temptation is redeemed by her suffering. Similarly concerns about the borders between animal and human are removed: the Swan Knight is the only one of the seven children not to have been transformed into a swan, as he is fortuitously absent with the hermit when the chains of the other six children are stolen. The *Chevalier* and *Fin* go to some pains to underline Elias' credentials as a Christian knight and even as a parallel to Christ.

This nervousness may account for the limited circulation of the *Elioxe* and the much longer shelf life and dissemination of the *Béatrix* in a work which was fundamentally about the genealogy of Godfrey and hence the divine plan for the conquest of Jerusalem. This would also explain the creation of the mixed version in manuscripts Arsénal 3139 and B Mus Add 36615: the scribes followed the *Elioxe* to fill a gap in their exemplar and switched to the *Béatrix* as soon as they could. The obvious corollary is that both versions were available, and it was a conscious choice to use the *Béatrix* where possible. Conversely, the redactor of BN fr 12558 includes material from the *Béatrix* in his version of the introduction to the *Chevalier au Cygne*, suggesting a conscious choice to use the *Elioxe*.[219] The concept of the

supernatural origin is maintained, but sanitised by being placed firmly in a Christian context: "la féerie sent toujours quelque peu le soufre en contexte chrétien".[220]

There is no evidence to suggest as argued by Gaston Paris that the *Elioxe* represents a more primitive version of the story which was then superseded by the *Béatrix*: both are found at the same time, and existed concurrently rather than consecutively. Whilst the *Elioxe* is close to the late twelfth-century *Dolopathos* and early thirteenth-century *Roman des Sept Sages*, that is not evidence for an early dating. The manuscripts containing the *Elioxe* in full or in part are not earlier than those containing the *Béatrix*; in particular the McGill manuscript, which is very early thirteenth century, contains a fragment of the *Béatrix*.

The tone of the two texts is very different.[221] The *Elioxe* is strongly reminiscent of Arthurian literature; indeed the author asserts that the story can be believed unlike the "fable d'Artu".[222] The *Béatrix* is much closer to the style of the *chanson de geste*, particularly in the long combat between the Swan Knight and Malquaré, and contains less fantastic material.[223]

It is to be honest impossible to construct any kind of stemma or origin for these stories: "chacune des versions écrites suppose la connaissance des versions antérieures et en outre de versions orales différentes".[224] Paris claims with little evidence that they reflect a Lotharingian legend which became linked to the image of the swan boat.[225] How far this reflects variations in source material and how far the *mouvance* inherent in the *chanson de geste* we cannot say. Both versions clearly existed during the thirteenth century. Both have prologues, suggesting that each had its own identity.[226] It is clear from the *Gran Conquista* that the story continued to change and develop, adapting to meet the needs of its audience. It is also clear that the *Béatrix* sat more comfortably in a cycle devoted to establishing the ancestry of Godfrey and the primacy of the divine plan.

The career of the Swan Knight: the Chevalier au Cygne *and the first part of the* Enfances Godefroi

These texts form the backbone of the Swan Knight tale and the establishment of Godfrey's ancestry. The *Chevalier au Cygne* describes how the Swan Knight comes to Nijmegen to fight duke Renier of Saxony on behalf of the duchess of Bouillon; he subsequently marries her daughter Béatris, but is forced to leave when she asks the question which must not be asked. The *Enfances Godefroi* recounts how the Swan Knight's daughter Ida is married to count Eustace of Boulogne and gives birth to Eustace, Godfrey and Baldwin for whom a great future is foretold. In a narrative diversion Eustace spends time in England. The story returns to Godfrey who, in a reprise of his grandfather's exploit, fights for a maiden against an adversary seeking to take her lands: he is invested with the fief of Bouillon. The focus now shifts abruptly to the Saracens, where Calabra foretells the coming of Godfrey and the Christians. Cornumarant decides to go to Europe to see for himself; aided by abbot Gerard of St Trond he manages finally to meet Godfrey and elicit a promise that if he does not invade within five years he will not invade at all.

These texts are found in all manuscripts and, as demonstrated by Berne 627 and the fragments in Montreal and Damascus, seem to have circulated too as freestanding texts outside the Cycle. They are also found in the version in *Gran Conquista*, where the duchess of Bouillon is called Catalina; they are summarised in the Talbot manuscript alongside part of the *Jérusalem*.

The *Chevalier au Cygne* shows a significant amount of variation. Nelson identifies four main manuscript groupings reflecting successive stages of revision, though a certain amount of *mouvance* should be factored into this analysis.[227] One manuscript, BL Add 36615, contains a different account of the battle in which Galien is killed.[228] This manuscript, as well as 12569 (in part) and 3139 does not contain the horn and fire episode at laisses 140–142.

The *Enfances Godefroi* exists in two distinct versions, with some overlap. The first and significantly shorter version is in BN fr 12558, BN fr 12569, Arsénal 3139, B Mus add 36615, Bern 627 and Bern 320. This provides a narrative which starts with Ida's marriage and the birth of her children; Godfrey claims Bouillon as his fief; Calabra's visions cover only the First Crusade; and Cornumarant's trip to Europe is told in summarised form.

A second version getting on for twice the length is found in BN fr 1621, BN fr 795 and BN fr 786. It adds four significant episodes:

- Ida's divinations with the shoulderbone and her subsequent prophecy about her children;
- A visit by Eustace to the king of England, and his flying visit to kill Rainaume, the enemy of his father. In BN fr 786 and the Jeanroy fragment it is Godfrey rather than Eustace who undertakes the journey[229]
- Calabra's prophecy extends to the Second Crusade and, in BN fr 1621, to a detailed description of the Third Crusade;
- Cornumarant's journey round Europe is extended to a kind of medieval road trip which takes him to visit all the leaders of the First Crusade with the exception of Robert of Flanders but including the Pope.

Mickel has argued that this variant version was produced by a redactor who knew the history of the Bouillon/Boulogne dynasty well and wanted to promote the achievements of the family.[230] The episode of Ida's divinations underlines the significance of Godfrey and Baldwin's future status as rulers of Jerusalem. The visit of Eustace to the king of England seems rather out of place in the narrative, but could be justified as providing a counterweight to the perception that Eustace was something of a disappointment compared to Godfrey and Baldwin. If so this was a subtlety missed by the redactors of BN fr 786 and the Jeanroy fragment, who ascribe the episode to Godfrey. BN fr 786 also adds a further episode where Godfrey fights and kills the half-brother of the king, Alori; unlike Eustace in the other two versions, this leaves Godfrey out of favour with the king. Cornumarant's road trip round all those involved in the First Crusade with the slightly surprising exception of Robert of Flanders serves to underline the preeminent position of Godfrey.

The idea of an author for this version with detailed local knowledge is supported by other elements in the text. The use of shoulderbones of rams for divination is described by Gerald of Wales as a specifically Flemish strange habit.[231] The redactor of this version demonstrates considerable local knowledge of the area around Boulogne: Eustace's sheep farm is at Longvilliers about 30 km south; and Rainaume's march to Boulogne from Montreuil can still be traced from fording the river Canche through Attin. Beutin, Estree, Etaples, Samer and Dannes all the way to Neufchâtel-Hardelot just south of Boulogne.

The *Enfances* and the *Chevalier* are closely related and show a number of parallels, although the nature of that relationship is hard to disentangle. Both have a prologue, though the *Chevalier*'s is longer and more elaborate.[232] The episode in the *Enfances* in which Ida forces the infant Eustace to bring up the wetnurse's milk is prefigured in the *Chevalier*, where Béatris is forbidden by an angel to use a wetnurse for Ida. Conversely, the conflict between Godfrey and Guion in the *Enfances* to restore land to the daughter of Yvon is a close reflection of the conflict between the Swan Knight and Renier to restore the lands of Béatris: the difference is that Godfrey refuses the offer of the lands, whereas the Swan Knight accepts them along with Béatris as his wife. Maria Einstein argues on somewhat flimsy evidence that the two texts were written separately and that the *Enfances Godefroi* preceded the *Chevalier au Cygne*.[233] Mickel conversely sees the first version of the *Enfances* as an addition to the *Chevalier* which provided a transition to the *Antioche* before substantial additional material was inserted around the house of Bouillon.[234] Whilst there is no definitive evidence, the motif of the knight arriving in a boat drawn by a swan was, as set out above, widely recognised late in the twelfth century. That central motif arguably provided the basis of an initial text which has a clear prologue in at least some manuscripts.[235] This text could then have formed the model for an *Enfances Godefroi* which, in classic cyclification mode, provided a childhood for the future ruler of Jerusalem and reused episodes from its predecessor as well as setting up a plot line leading to the events of the crusade. The episodic nature of the *Enfances* points in a similar direction. The testimony of Berne 627 and the Damascus fragment suggests that the two texts were seen as linked and complementary from relatively early in the thirteenth century.

The Fin d'Elias *and the* Retour de Cornumarant

The *Fin d'Elias* might be described as an episodic narrative which (rather unconvincingly) ties up loose ends from the preceding narratives, ranges far and wide geographically and sets the scene for what is to come. There is a two-laisse prologue. At the beginning the swan is transformed back into a human, closing that plot line; at the end the Swan Knight explains that he caused the fire in the hall and the loss of the horn as a punishment for Béatris, then dies. The Swan Knight builds an exact copy of his castle of Bouillon, for reasons not entirely clear. The central episode describes Pons, a character from the *Chevalier au Cygne*, put centre stage and abruptly racked with remorse for his past life, going to the Holy Land and accompanied by the abbot Gerard: this serves purely as a plot motor for

Cornumarant's visit to Europe and as a way of setting up the elaborate confrontation between the heir to Jerusalem and its future king recounted in the *Enfances Godefroi*.

The *Retour de Cornumarant* follows on immediately from the *Enfances*. It is dedicated to the Sultan of Persia's condemnation of Cornumarant as a traitor and to a set of fights amongst the Saracens, concluding with the reconciliation of Cornumarant and the Sultan. It serves explicitly as a precursor to the events to come in the *Antioche*, *Chétifs* and *Jérusalem*. There is a summary prologue in laisse 1. The text ends with two laisses marking a clear transition to the *Antioche*.

The *Fin d'Elias* and *Retour de Cornumarant* are not found in all manuscripts: they are both missing from BN fr 12558 (which contains the only full version of the *Elioxe*) and Berne 627 (which contains only the *Chevalier au Cygne* and *Enfances Godefroi*). The *Fin* is omitted from BN fr 1621 and the *Retour* from Berne 320. The two texts are also missing from the compilations in the Talbot manuscript and in the *Gran Conquista*. Compared to the other texts in the Cycle, the various manuscripts show little variation.

If the two texts are omitted, the end of the *Chevalier* segues seamlessly into the start of the *Enfances*: Ida's future is foretold as the mother of Godfrey, Baldwin and Eustace, and the *Enfances* starts with her marriage to Eustace, count of Boulogne.[236] The *Enfances* by contrast ends rather abruptly with Cornumarant thanking Gerard for his encounter with Godfrey and his brothers; there is no obvious join with what would be the following text, the *Chanson d'Antioche*, which starts with a long prologue drawn from the Vengeance of Christ theme.[237] By contrast the manuscripts which do have the *Retour de Cornumarant* have a very clear transition to the *Antioche*.

It is fair to say that the narrative makes sense without the two texts; and their absence from the Talbot compilation might suggest that the scribe of that manuscript took a similar view as did the compiler of the *Gran Conquista*. Equally, they are found in more manuscripts than not, and the two where they are both absent (BN fr 12558 and Berne 320) could be described as outliers in the manuscript tradition. The lack of scribal variation suggests they did not attract as much interest as the other Swan Knight texts, perhaps reflecting their role as plot motors rather than texts with a narrative in their own right. The second half of the *Fin* and all of the *Retour* are entirely taken up with the prophecies of Calabra and Cornumarant's subsequent visit to Europe, which in turn link to the narrative of the central trilogy and set up the culminating death of Cornumarant at the end of the *Jérusalem*.

The place of these texts in the Old French Crusade Cycle: genealogy and the divine plan

Contemporaries were in no doubt that the success of the First Crusade was divinely ordained: in the words of Robert the Monk, "hoc enim non fuit humanum opus, sed divinum"[238] In a post-1187 world, the First Crusade became the template to follow, a proof that it really was God's intention that Jerusalem should be Christian even as events made this increasingly unlikely. The key purpose of these texts is therefore

to establish the genealogy of Godfrey as the future ruler of Jerusalem and hence by implication the fulfilment of the divine plan which establishes the restoration of Jerusalem to Christendom.[239]

The future destiny of Godfrey and Baldwin as the first and second rulers of Jerusalem is a *leitmotif* throughout the text, becoming increasingly prominent as the stories proceed. They are not mentioned at all in the *Béatrix* or *Elioxe*. The prologue of the *Chevalier* refers to the First Crusade and their future fame, with a reference to Godfrey's birth at Mainz.[240] The theme is spelt out in more detail in the visit Béatris receives from an angel on her wedding night, predicting that her future grandsons will be a duke, a count and a king.[241] The text closes with a reference to their future glory.[242] In the *Fin d'Elias* there are two *annonces*: a forward look to the narrow escape from being murdered by Cornumarant, and a reference in the final *laisse* to their future feats on crusade.[243] Unsurprisingly the theme of future greatness is much more heavily emphasised in the *Enfances Godefroi*. Ida has a dream on the night in which Eustace is conceived foretelling the future conquest of Jerusalem by two griffins and an eagle.[244] It is underlined again by the divination episode in some manuscripts, where Ida's correct interpretation of the shoulder-bone acts as a guarantee of the truth of her prophecy about her future sons.[245] The prophecy is played out further in the episode of the feeding and the lesser achievements of Eustace compared to Godfrey and Baldwin, and in the episode where Ida tells Eustace she has a king, a duke and a count beneath her cloak.[246]

The latter part of the *Enfances* and the whole of the *Retour* reinforce this future destiny by validating it through Saracen eyes. The *Enfances* marks the abrupt transition from France to Sarmasane with a reference to a "fiere canchon".[247] The Saracen prophetess Calabra, familiar from her powers of divination in the *Antioche* and *Chétifs*, again foretells their deeds on crusade and their future rule of Outremer which she has foreseen in the stars.[248] This episode goes all the way back to the *Gesta Francorum*, but here becomes a major narrative driver.[249] A parallelism is set up between Calabra as the Saracen prophetess and Ida as the Christian prophetess: what Ida foresees for her children is validated by her Saracen counterpart.[250] The *Enfances* closes with the first episode in which Godfrey takes an active role, his elaborate deception of Cornumarant leading to a confrontation between the two in which Godfrey explains that he will invade Syria and take Jerusalem.[251] This sets up a parallelism between the two, the Saracen heir to Jerusalem and the Christian ruler, which will ultimately play out in the *Jérusalem* when Godfrey honours him as a worthy opponent.[252] As Mickel points out, it is no coincidence that Godfrey receives the fief of Bouillon on exactly the same day as Calabra makes her prophecies; this is marked by a reference to the source.[253] This parallelism sets up multiple ironies which go to the heart of the text: Cornumarant's courteous treatment of abbot Gerard turns out to be his undoing; his journey to Europe to thwart Calabra's prophecies in fact brings them about because he tells Godfrey what is to come; his contempt for the Christian princes is converted to admiration when he meets Godfrey, his future conqueror; and his attempt to save the Saracens from defeat is treated as treason. The *Retour de Cornumarant* expands on these themes though does not add to them, with

Cornumarant explaining to Corbadas and then the Sultan of Persia that the divinations will come true and Outremer will be lost to the Christians.[254] Godfrey takes a lesser role in this text with the emphasis on Cornumarant, although his plans to invade are referred to a number of times and the text closes with two laisses which explicitly look forward to the First Crusade.[255]

If Godfrey is to be the agent of the divine plan, he needs an appropriate genealogy. This is emphasised through two characters in the Cycle: his mother Ida, and his grandfather the Swan Knight. The saintly nature of Godfrey's mother Ida is repeatedly emphasised in the text, and her role is foreshadowed at the beginning of the *Chevalier au Cygne*.[256] Crucial to this is the episode of the wetnurse told in the *Enfances Godefroi*; this appears in all manuscripts and is found in the *Beatae Idae Vita*.[257] It is foreshadowed in the *Chevalier au Cygne* where Ida's mother Béatris is enjoined not to use a wet-nurse for Ida.[258] Ida is adamant that she will feed her children herself (even though that appears to mean feeding three children aged between one and three simultaneously, an exaggeration which underlines the point); this is emphasised in *laisses similaires* which combine reference to Ida's saintly nature, her desire to feed the boys personally and their glorious future.[259] The children refuse to settle; in desperation the nursemaid sends for a wetnurse who feeds one of the children; it is not specified which. When Ida returns she is furious and, depending on the manuscript, either holds the child upside down or massages him vigorously to make him bring up all the milk. However the damage is done: "puis en fu a tos jors ses fais et ses nons menre".[260] It is hard to see this applying to Godfrey or Baldwin, particularly given the references in *laisses* 27 and 28 to their future achievements on crusade, and we are left to assume it must be Eustace; this is spelt out more clearly in BN fr 12558 and Berne 320.[261] Ida's action reflects the symbolic importance attached to breastfeeding by the mother as ensuring not only the bond between mother and child but ensuring the continuation of an uncontaminated line and ultimately mirroring the Virgin's feeding of the infant Jesus.[262] This all seems rather hard on Eustace, who did in fact go on crusade. But the story is operating in a fictional rather than a realistic universe in which the renown of Godfrey is inextricably linked to the divine plan and his genealogy must therefore be beyond question.

The Swan Knight, Elias, is also depicted repeatedly as being protected by God as befits an agent of the divine plan. He benefits from a series of miracles. In the *Béatrix* he is given a shield destined for him with a cross painted on it: at a key point in the battle the cross emits a jet of flame and burns his opponent Malquaré; when it looks as though he is about to lose, a cloud stops Malquaré from seeing.[263] He is saved from Saracens by a fleet of white galleys led by St George which has overtones of the intervention of saints in white at the battle of Antioch led by St George.[264] Whilst the devil makes repeated attempts to thwart him, intervening in combats to stop him striking the fatal blow, Elias always comes out on top.[265] This is particularly clear in the contrast with Matabrune. She is described on her first appearance as ".I. diables por le mont enchanter", and renounces God and all his works in her final words. She is repeatedly described as diabolical and an agent of the devil.[266] However she is ultimately defeated.