

Wielding the Cross

Crusade References in Cerverí de Girona and Thirteenth-Century Catalan Historiography

MIRIAM CABRÉ

In 1213, fresh from victory at Las Navas de Tolosa, King Peter the Catholic of Aragon died at Muret, in a turning point of the Albigensian crusade, while siding with his Occitan vassals against the crusaders.¹ His death left his young son, the future James I, in Simon de Montfort's custody, until Pope Innocent III claimed him and entrusted him to the Templar knights. This was a difficult period for the kingdom and the young monarch, as he recalls in his *Llibre dels fets* (*Book of Deeds*), but James, known today as the Conqueror, went on to acquire fame as a warrior and crusader.² He was involved in several projected expeditions to the Holy Land in the 1260–70s, yet his successful campaigns, which allowed him to enlarge his possessions with Mallorca and Valencia, were all against peninsular Muslims. It was in the early stages of a crusade in Tunis that, after the Vespers uprising in 1282, James's son King Peter the Great, married to Constance of Hohenstaufen, made a detour in order to successfully claim the Sicilian throne from Charles of Anjou. Last but not least, in 1285, briefly before Peter's death, the king of France unsuccessfully tried to invade the Crown of Aragon with papal approval as a direct consequence of the Aragonese intervention in Sicily.³

- 1 This chapter has benefited from funding from the research project *Mecenazgo y creacion literaria en la corte catalano-aragonesa* (s. XIII–XV): evolucion, contexto y biblioteca digital de referencia (MEC FFI2014-53050-C5-5-P).
- 2 *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, ed. Ferran Soldevila, revised 2nd edn. Jordi Bruguera, and M. Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, MSHA, 73, 4 vols (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalán (hereafter IEC), 2007–14), 1: *Llibre dels feits del rei En Jaume* (2007), pp. 61–74.
- 3 On the medieval Crown of Aragon, see the classic outline in T. N. Bisson, *The Medieval Crown of Aragon: A Short History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). For a detailed analysis of the battle of Muret, see Martín Alvira Cabrer, *Muret, 1213: La batalla decisiva de la cruzada contra los cátaros*, Grandes batallas (Barcelona: Ariel, 2008). See *Jaume I. Commemoració del VIII centenari del naixement de Jaume I*, ed. M. Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, MSHA, 91, 2 vols (Barcelona: IEC, 2011–13), for a wide range of aspects relevant to James's long reign. For Peter the Great's reign, see Ferran Soldevila, *Pere el Gran*, ed. M. Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, MSHA, 48, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Barcelona: IEC, 1995), and the interpretative biographical surveys in Ferran Soldevila, *Vida de Pere el Gran i d'Alfons el*

These pivotal moments in the history of the thirteenth-century Crown of Aragon, all associated with crusading campaigns, did not receive equal coverage in Catalan vernacular historiography, each version often revealing substantial differences, even disparities, depending on the nature of the outcome from a Catalan viewpoint, but also on the chronological distance from the incidents recalled and the motivations behind each report.⁴ Composed mainly in the last decades of the century, the earliest chronicles in Catalan are contemporary to the rise of vernacular historiography in neighbouring traditions, such as Alfonso of Castile's historical *summae* or the translation of the *Grandes chroniques de France* commissioned by King Louis IX, all undertaken *c.* 1270. In the Crown of Aragon, monks at Ripoll had been compiling the *Gesta comitum Barchinone et regum Aragonie* since the late twelfth century, based on which a Catalan version recounting rather swiftly some of the main events up to *c.* 1268 was drafted. In the last years before his death in 1276, James I of Aragon composed the most unusual of these historical works, his *Llibre dels fets*, a first-person account that displays an exemplary purpose but also results in a consistently constructed image of its royal author. Once crowned as a king, his son Peter the Great also seems to have had his side of the story told by the chronicler Bernat Desclot, who refers to the monarch in his prologue as a second Alexander 'per cavalleria e per conquesta'.⁵

After reviewing the role of crusades in these historiographical narratives, this chapter will focus on their use in the works of the most prolific troubadour in the late thirteenth century: Cerverí de Girona, whose poetry mirrors the concerns of his patron Peter the Great, and who was active for about twenty years in the milieu of the royal court.⁶ Although he never composed a crusade song as such, crusading references are recurrent in his poetic corpus, especially in his overtly political poems. The reasons behind his choices are interesting to analyse, both from a rhetorical point of view and because of the insight they provide into the politics of the time. Once compared with chroniclers' accounts of the same events, the recourse to crusade motifs makes these poems a good case study to explore the relationship between historiography and lyrics, and perhaps to gauge patron involvement in literary production.

Liberal (Barcelona: Aedos, 1963) and Stefano Maria Cingolani, *Pere el Gran: Vida, actes i paraula*, Base Històrica (Barcelona: Base, 2010).

- 4 See an updated overview of Catalan medieval historiography in ch. 3 of *Història de la Literatura Catalana*. 8 vols (Barcelona: Enciclopèdia Catalana – Barcino – Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2013–), I: *Literatura Medieval: Dels orígens al segle XIV*, dir. Lola Badia, with sections authored by Lola Badia, Josep M. Pujol and Xavier Renedo, Stefano M. Cingolani, and Josep Anton Aguilar. See Pujol and Renedo in the same volume, pp. 113–15, for the date of composition of the *Llibre dels fets*.
- 5 'By virtue of chivalry and conquest', *Les quatre grans Cròniques*, ed. Ferran Soldevila, revised 2nd edn, ed. Jordi Bruguera, and M. Teresa Ferrer i Mallol, MSHA, 80, 4 vols (Barcelona: IEC, 2007–14), II: *Crònica de Bernat Desclot* (2008), p. 34.
- 6 At 119 poems between lyrical and narrative, plus a long book of verse proverbs, Cerverí de Girona is the troubadour with the largest extant corpus. See Miriam Cabré, *Cerverí de Girona: Un trobador al servei de Pere el Gran*, Col·lecció Blaquerna, 7 (Barcelona and Palma: Universitat de Barcelona and Universitat de les Illes Balears, 2011).

CRUSADES IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY CATALAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Thirteenth-century Catalan chronicles are markedly focused on the reigns contemporary to their composition, whether that of James I or his son Peter the Great. Although they comment on a number of episodes that establish the origins of the Catalan ruling dynasty and especially on scenes that legitimize the claims to certain territories, they are for the most part accounts of near-contemporary events. Despite the vogue of Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada's universal historiographical scope in the peninsular historiography of the time, none of the chronicles in Catalan inserts the history of the counts of Barcelona and kings of Aragon into a universal scheme.⁷

Overall, even Peter the Catholic's reign seems somehow blurred in these narratives, composed several decades after his death. Chronological distance might have been a factor, but most likely the disastrous outcome of his last battle at Muret dictated their vagueness, emphasis, and, especially, their omissions.⁸ While the *Gesta comitum* mentioned Peter's aid to the count of Toulouse in their usual sweeping fashion, a point is made that he did not go 'en ajuda de negun hom partit de la fe cristiana' ('in aid of any man who had abandoned the Christian faith').⁹ Significantly, in his son James's account, Peter is mainly cited with regards to the extraordinary circumstances of the Conqueror's birth and his difficult childhood, two pillars of James's messianic profile.¹⁰ Despite the customary eulogizing of any ancestor, a censorious tone is patent. Although Peter's aid to the Occitan lords is attributed to his being easily misled, and no mention is made of an ongoing crusade, James clearly states his father's responsibility for his own defeat, both strategically and morally, because of his lack of mercy towards the enemy and his womanizing. Writing close to his namesake grandson Peter the Great, Bernat Desclot mentions Peter the Catholic briefly as part of a distinguished lineage, and describes his military prowess in battle against Islamic forces at Las Navas (an episode largely neglected by James's chronicle). His death is presented in the context of a fight against the French, without evoking it explicitly as a crusade, but as an example of the king's exceptional chivalric courage.¹¹

- 7 On the widespread influence of Jiménez de Rada's *De rebus Hispaniae* see Diego Catalán and Enrique Jerez, '*Rodericus*' romanizado: *En los reinos de Aragón, Castilla y Navarra*, Fuentes cronísticas de la historia de España, 10 (Madrid: Fundación Ramón Menéndez Pidal, 2005) and Pere Quer, *La 'Història i Genealogies d'Espanya': Una adaptació catalana medieval de la història hispànica*, Textos i estudis de cultura catalana, 137 (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2008).
- 8 For a similar rewriting of Peter's history in troubadour *vidas*, see Stefano Asperti, 'I trovatori e la corona d'Aragona: Riflessioni per una cronologia di riferimento', *Mot so razzo*, 1 (1999), 12–31, updated in Biblioteca del Repertorio Informatizzato dell'Antica Letteratura Catalana Medievale, <<http://www.riale.unina.it/bollettino/base/corona.htm>> [accessed September 2017].
- 9 *Gestes dels comtes de Barcelona i reis d'Aragó*, ed. Stefano Maria Cingolani, Monuments d'Història de la Corona d'Aragó, 1 (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2008), p. 131.
- 10 See Pujol and Renedo, in *Història de la Literatura Catalana*, 1, 109 for James's self-portrait.
- 11 For further examples of disparities in the different accounts, according to the chronicler's purpose, see Josep Anton Aguilar, 'L'art de (no) narrar una desfeta: Muret (1213), del

The treatment given to Peter the Catholic's involvement in the Albigensian Crusade in these chronicles illustrates the nature of their bias when narrating other crusading episodes. Their stated attitudes to crusades are unequivocally positive, encompassing the campaigns against Muslim kingdoms that are central to James I's account and constitute the first foray of his son Peter into international fame. As shown in the following paragraphs, James I built his public image on his reputation as a crusader, as is patent in the detailed recounting of successful conquests, which he complemented with substantial attention to his unfinished plans to travel to the Holy Land. Peter the Great, on the other hand, chose a more chivalric profile for himself: whenever convenient his chronicle evokes crusading events (including peninsular campaigns) but prowess is emphasized above faith, while the crusading nature of wars waged against him, his allies, or his ancestors are understandably downplayed.

In his own account, James I portrays himself as a pious servant of God, a thoughtful ruler and a mighty warrior. While also mentioning his problems early in his reign and the endemic rebellions by the nobility, including his illegitimate son Ferran Sanxis de Castro, James's narrative focuses chiefly on his campaigns to conquer Mallorca and Valencia from Muslim rulers.¹² However, he also explains and justifies at leisure his failed crusade project in 1269 (chapters 476–94). He details his contacts with possible allies, while emphasising that he had been divinely chosen as a crusade leader despite papal scepticism ('semblava obra de Déu, que ell volia açò comanar a nós', 'it seemed God's work, which he wanted to entrust to us').¹³ He set sail towards Acre two months later than planned but, on account of the fearsome weather and his companions' pleas, he decided to turn back. Only two companies, commanded by two of his illegitimate sons, reached their destination. Even more pointedly, the king's narrative emphasizes his role in the discussions of a new 'passatge' during the council of Lyon in 1274 (chapters 523–42), where he was the only monarch present. He styles himself as the main papal adviser and the only active promoter of the crusade, stalled by the Templars and other royal delegates, so that James remains the sole party ready to undertake the mission. His other business at Lyon turned out to be equally unsuccessful, as Pope Gregory X refused to crown him unless James paid the arrears on a tribute. Lastly, when James requested his release, the pope denied responsibility for Henry of Castile's imprisonment (in Charles of Anjou's power since 1268), which had been hailed as a great scandal by anti-Angevin authors.

Desclot's chronicle, associated with James's son Peter the Great, begins with some legitimizing episodes from the ancestral past, such as Peter the Catholic's victory at Las Navas, as already mentioned. His account of James I's time overlaps with that of the *Llibre dels fets* in focusing on the two major conquering campaigns in Mallorca and

Llibre dels fets a Ramon Muntaner', *800 anys després de Muret*, ed. Vicenç Beltran, Tomàs Martínez, and Irene Capdevila (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2014), pp. 13–52.

- 12 For the *Llibre dels fets*, see the outline in Pujol and Renedo, as well as numerous publications by both authors. On the 1269 crusade, see also Ernest Marcos Hierro, *La croada catalana: l'exèrcit de Jaume I a Terra Santa* (Barcelona: L'esfera dels llibres, 2007).
- 13 *Llibre dels fets*, ed. Soldevila, Bruguera, and Ferrer, p. 468.

Valencia, but adds several details regarding Peter's deeds as a crown prince and also portrays Charles of Anjou in a wholly negative fashion. While in the *Gesta comitum* only Peter's birth is mentioned, this is left out in the *Llibre dels fets*, and little is said of Peter's participation in the Murcia campaign.¹⁴ In his father's account, Peter is mostly cited because of his problems with his half-brother Ferran Sanxis and his role in quenching the baronial uprising after 1274. In 1272, the increasing hostility between Peter and Ferran had led to a break-up between the king and his heir, who was stripped of political power and economic allowances. Written after the reconciliation, the *Llibre dels fets* shows Peter's harsh attitude towards his brother and the rebellious nobility as energetic and, when reporting James's dying words, exonerates Peter of all responsibility or ill-behaviour.

As might be expected, the longest part of Desclot's chronicle is devoted to Peter's reign, in particular to his Sicilian success and the resulting French crusade against the Crown of Aragon (chapters 77 to 168). However, he more than makes up for earlier omissions in the *Llibre dels fets* by portraying Peter throughout as a chivalrous and courageous leader (encapsulated in the 'second Alexander' expression) from his early campaigning in Murcia to his fight against Charles of Anjou, most notably his renowned challenge at Bordeaux (chapters 104–5), and his dignified leadership during the French invasion.¹⁵ Several motifs chosen by Desclot to chronicle Peter's reign are significant with regards to the eventual focus on Sicily, some directly related to the crusade – such as the glowing portrait of Manfred of Hohenstaufen as Peter's future father-in-law and his dispossession by Charles of Anjou, presented as the pope's friend – and others to its aftermath: illustrated by Charles's wickedness, his mistreatment of his subjects, and his shameful behaviour towards Henry of Castile. Peter's claims to Provence and Toulouse are also justified, as well as his problems with the nobility. These motifs are doubly linked to James's crusade in 1269, because Peter clashed with the barons when he became his father's procurator in his absence, and Ferran stopped at Charles of Anjou's Sicilian court on his way back from Acre. It was during this visit that Desclot claims they plotted to kill Peter and make Ferran king instead. After narrating Peter's Sicilian campaign at length, the invasion, sanctioned as a crusade by the pope, is also reported in great detail, including the dissensions between an impatient papal legate and the French king, a God-sent plague of flies directed against the invaders, and the heroic behaviour of the king of Aragon and his vassals.

THE ROLE OF CRUSADES IN ROYAL PORTRAYALS

This quick survey of thirteenth-century Catalan chroniclers and their biased take on the crusades reveals, predictably, that each chronicler's view, his choice of episodes

- 14 Stefano Maria Cingolani, *Historiografia, propaganda i comunicació al segle XIII: Bernat Desclot i les dues redaccions de la seva crònica*, MSHA, 68 (Barcelona: IEC, 2006), interprets the Murcia campaign as Peter's first attempt to cultivate a chivalric image.
- 15 For Desclot, see Stefano Maria Cingolani's section in *Història de la Literatura Catalana*, and also Cingolani, *Historiografia*.

and focus, as well as the structure of his chronicle, are informed by his own agenda. In addition to the specific circumstances surrounding their actions and requiring justification, some general contemporary attitudes also need to be taken into account to understand the distinctive image they construct for each king and the role played by crusades in these images.

By the mid-thirteenth century, rulers counted on crusading as a means to enhance their reputation and international status – King Louis IX of France and King Edward I of England being cases in point – and James's image as a Christian warrior king, emanating from the king himself, responds to the continued prestige attached to crusading.¹⁶ Even if his plans to fight in the Holy Land are overshadowed by his successful strategic choices to expand his kingdom, these are presented on a par with crusades as a source of God-given honour: when discussing the Mallorca expedition, James reports one of his barons affirming 'E ço que Déus vol no pot negú desviar ni toldre' ('God's will cannot be deviated nor taken away'), and he gives two reasons to go through with the plan: 'la primera, que vós ne valret més e nos; l'altra, que serà cosa meravellosa' ('the first, that you and us will be worthier; the other, that it will be a thing of wonder').¹⁷ James's crusading fame is also the main reason why he is mentioned by troubadours, despite his being rather uninterested in troubadour patronage. His war against neighbouring Muslim lords instead of doing his bit against the French in Occitan lands was, on the other hand, a source of troubadour criticism.¹⁸

However, a century and a half after the first campaign launched by Pope Urban II, crusades had also become controversial. The repeated failure of the Christian armies to capture Jerusalem was sometimes accounted for by the immorality of the crusaders and the Church, while critical allusions also began to refer to the misuse of the concept of crusading, not only in wars against the Muslims in the Iberian peninsula, which some felt to be detracting attention from the main crusading objective, but above all in wars waged on Christian lands with papal approval.¹⁹ These latter deviations from crusading in the Holy Land had to arouse strong objections in the medieval Crown of Aragon: if involvement in the Albigensian Crusade was not enough reason, patent interests against Charles of Anjou's campaign in Sicily in 1266 and being on the receiving end of a crusade in 1285 surely counted as sufficient grounds.

This critical attitude to the crusades, at least to the 'other crusades', is connected to Peter the Great's portrayal in Desclot's account and other sources close to him.

16 On the prestige attached to Edward I as a consequence of his crusading experience, see Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095–1588* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), esp. pp. 233–5.

17 *Llibre dels feïts*, ed. Soldevila, Bruguera, and Ferrer, pp. 128–9.

18 For King James and troubadour literature, see Miriam Cabré, 'Trobadors i cultura trobadoresca durant el regnat de Jaume I', in *Jaume I*, ed. Ferrer i Mallol, I, 921–38.

19 See Penny J. Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095–1270* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1991), Christoph T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading, 1095–1294* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

Unlike his father, even when crown prince, Peter projected an image of courtliness and chivalry rather than of piety, which can be traced in the accounts of his attitude in Murcia and palpably illustrated by the Bordeaux challenge against Charles of Anjou. This chivalric image is visible, around the time of the French crusade against his kingdom, both in Peter's answer to King Philip of France, as reported by Desclot (chapter 144); and in his exchange of *coblas* with Pere Salvatge, when he invokes his lady's love as the best shield against the enemy.²⁰ Its foundation is to be traced to the troubadour heritage he was claiming from his ancestors and to the Ghibelline alliance he was championing after marrying Manfred's daughter: both troubadour and Ghibelline literature use crusading motifs in very specific terms.

Despite the disappointments, by the second half of the thirteenth century moralists and preachers were still castigating kings and noblemen for neglecting their primary duty as Christian knights and urging them to take the cross. Troubadour crusade songs borrowed these preaching formulations but were not always responding solely to a moral concern, revealing instead heavily connoted political attitudes, often reflecting anti-French and anti-clerical attitudes.²¹ Since the earliest crusades, French kings and barons had held an important role in organizing and participating in the expeditions to the Holy Land and especially in some of the other controversial crusades called by the papacy. Their role as ideal Christian rulers and papal champions was key to the Capetian trademark image, from St Louis to Charles of Anjou: a self-projected image of piety and loyalty to the papacy. It was also a key factor in the negative portrait drawn by their enemies. As already seen in Catalan chronicles, Charles of Anjou in particular was heavily criticized as a tyrant, on account of his involvement in the dethronement of Peter's father-in-law: this cemented Charles's role as the *bête noire* of the Ghibelline party, together with the imprisonment of his former ally Henry of Castile and the execution of Conradin of Hohenstaufen (the 16-year-old 'Corradino'), all great scandals in his time, as previously mentioned.²² When associating Charles's name with every possible source of discredit, Ghibelline authors also found abundant ammunition in his role during the Eighth Crusade, in 1270, launched by his brother Louis IX of France. After Louis's death during the siege of Tunis, Charles of Anjou negotiated with the sultan, thus receiving a handsome sum, and he called the crusade

- 20 *Crònica de Bernat Desclot*, ed. Soldevila, Bruguera, and Ferrer, p. 309; Martín de Riquer, 'Un trovador valenciano: Pedro el Grande de Aragón', *Revista valenciana de filología*, 1 (1951), 273–311.
- 21 See the survey in Saverio Guida, 'Le canzoni di crociata francesi e provenzali', in "*Militia Christi*" e crociata nei secoli XI–XIII: *Atti della undecima Settimana internazionale di studio Mendola, 28 agosto–1 settembre 1989*, Scienze Storiche, 48 (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1992), pp. 403–41, and, as an example, the poems analysed by Jaye Puckett, "Reconmenciez novele estoire": The Troubadours and the Rhetoric of the Later Crusades', *Modern Language Notes*, 116/4: *French Issue* (2001), 844–89, and Linda Paterson, 'James the Conqueror, the Holy Land and the Troubadours', *CN*, 71/3–4 (2011), 211–86.
- 22 Other than the classic Steven Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers. A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), see also David Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor* (London, Pimlico, 2002), pp. 413–28, a thoughtful review of Charles's and Peter's manoeuvres regarding Sicily.

off. Only Edward of England reached the Holy Land, thus acquiring lasting honour as a crusader. This episode, as told by Charles's enemies, provided copious details with which to build his reputation as avaricious, treacherous, and godless, and gave rise to the recurrence of crusading topics in anti-Angevin literature²³

CRUSADE REFERENCES AS A RHETORICAL WEAPON IN THE WORKS OF
CERVERÍ DE GIRONA

The troubadour more closely related to Peter the Great is, without a shadow of a doubt, Cerverí de Girona.²⁴ Although he had most likely been initially connected to the viscount of Cardona, by the late 1260s he was under the patronage of Peter, then crown prince, his attested activity in the royal entourage coinciding with the surge of Catalan vernacular historiography. Cerverí's earliest dated poem refers to the baronial rebellion in 1269 but others are likely to precede it: a few honouring the Cardonas, others describing Prince Peter's court as a paradigm of courtesy. His vast extant corpus is mainly transmitted in a single songbook that stands witness to his close connection with the royal court and the permanence of the interest in his works.

Cerverí's poetry when he was first in Peter's service portrays his patron as engaged in courtly endeavours, knowledgeable in poetry, and a troubadour himself at the centre of a fashionable and courtly court. However, by the 1270s Peter was reaching a critical point in his life and political career, when his interests were threatened by his enemies and his father James sided for a while with his half-brother Ferran Sanxis. The antagonism between Peter and Charles of Anjou, Ferran, and the rebel nobility as it escalated during these years seems to explain the mounting aggression in Cerverí's poems, particularly in a series of combative *sirventes*, where Cerverí cultivates a venomous brand of poetry, albeit veiled in a doctrinal, moral appearance. Once his troubles had mostly died down, Peter succeeded his father to the crown after his death in 1276 and this is signalled by another shift in Cerverí's poetry, which becomes markedly regal, didactic, and diplomatic. Desclot probably started his chronicle around the end of Cerverí's active period, but they choose to recount many of the same episodes. A document dated January 1285 shows Cerverí to be alive and still connected to the royal entourage, but there are no clear traces in his poetry of political events after Peter's departure for Tunis in 1282.

23 On the image of Charles of Anjou in Ghibelline literature, see Alessandro Barbero, *Il mito angioino nella cultura italiana e provenzale fra Duecento e Trecento*, Biblioteca storica subalpina, 201 (Turin: Deputazione Subalpina di Storia Patria, 1983). See Xavier Hélary, *La dernière croisade*, Synthèses historiques (Paris: Perrin, 2016) for a reinterpretation of Charles's actual role in 1270.

24 For his poems, see *Obras completas del trovador Cerverí de Girona*, ed. Martín de Riquer, Publicaciones sobre filología y literatura (Barcelona: Instituto Español de Estudios Mediterráneos, 1947); Cerverí de Girona, *Lírica*, ed. Joan Coromines, 2 vols (Barcelona: Curial, 1988). I quote from my edition, in preparation, while also referring to pre-existing editions. See Cabré, *Cerverí de Girona* for the context and interpretation of his works. For Cerverí's main MS witness, see Miriam Cabré and Sadurní Martí, 'Le chansonnier *Sg* au carrefour Occitano-Catalan', *Romania*, 128 (2011), pp. 92–134.

I have identified eleven possible references to the crusades (nine beyond doubt), of quite varied scale and significance, especially in his overtly political poems.²⁵ The most glaring example is undoubtedly ‘En breu sazo sera·l jorn pretentori’, where James’s impending involvement in a crusade is the opening and leading motif.²⁶ The poem presents him as the only hope of recovering the Holy Land, by leading a crusade despite Rome’s indifference or diffidence and despite the criminal neglect by kings and barons of their sacred duty. Among these immoral rulers, a nameless figure is highlighted as a model of vileness and treachery and his behaviour characterized as that of a corsair. I believe, given the historical context and the deliberate setting of the criticism in the framework of crusading activities, that this is a reference to Charles of Anjou. This champion of wickedness, says Cerverí, has taught the nobility (undoubtedly the Catalan barons who were rebelling against the Crown) everything there is to know about sin and crime: ‘Li croy baro sabon de mal l’estori: al som | son de vils faitz, e fan un letoari novel’ (‘The wicked barons are knowledgeable in the history of evil: they are | at the peak of vile deeds and they can brew a new recipe’). Among the catalogue of wickedness practised by these noblemen and their master, avarice and falsehood are presented as their main specialities. In this whole scenario, one figure is notoriously absent: no mention is made of Cerverí’s patron, Prince Peter.

In this *sirventes*, the crusade theme is central because James is used as a model to shame Peter’s enemies, always the same compact group, almost indistinct in its remarkable wickedness: Charles of Anjou; Peter’s illegitimate half-brother, Ferran Sanxis; and the rebel Catalan nobility. But, in the same vein, many other of Cerverí’s political poems use the crusade as one of the threads of his defamation of Peter’s adversaries, either as one of the chosen arguments, or an element in the background which helps colour the piece in anti-Angevin tones. The procedure is always the same, and an extremely effective one. Cerverí takes the voice of an expert in morality, courtly behaviour, and even Christian doctrine. In the guise of a counsellor to the powerful he often addresses these pieces to ‘the kings’, who bear the main responsibility for the course of worldly affairs, but equally often he points out the failings of the nobility. Early in each poem the troubadour usually presents some general moral doctrinal maxims, which help establish his wisdom and authority, as well as a common ground with his wider audience. No one can deny the truth of his opening moral scenarios or

- 25 See Miriam Cabré, “‘En breu sazo sera·l jorn pretentori’” (BDT 434a,20): Cerverí i Jaume I interpreten els fets de 1274’, in *Actes del X congrés internacional de l’associació Hispànica de literatura medieval*, ed. Rafael Alemany, Josep Lluís Martos, and Josep Miquel Manzanaro, *Symposia philologica*, 12, 3 vols (Alacant: Institut interuniversitari de filologia Valenciana, 2005), I, 453–68, and Miriam Cabré, ‘Per a una cronologia dels sirventesos de Cerverí de Girona’, in *Els trobadors a la Península Ibèrica: Homenatge al Dr. Martí de Riquer*, ed. Vicenç Beltran, Meritxell Simó, and Elena Roig, *Textos i estudis de cultura Catalana* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, 2006), pp. 135–50. Pinning down the meaning of Cerverí’s political poetry is not exactly easy, so this is not a definitive list.
- 26 See Cabré, ‘En breu sazo’, for a detailed reading of this poem, which shows the MS rubric *sirventes* to be correct, disproving previous proposals to interpret this poem as a crusade song connected to James I’s 1269 project. See also Paterson, ‘James the Conqueror’.

the aptness of his authoritative analysis. These are followed by more specific references, as summarized in the previous example, which may sound vague to us but were surely quite explicit and poignant for his audience back in the mid-thirteenth century. These references, as shown below, often evoke the crusade in terms that would be evident to a contemporary audience and would point the blame to very clear targets, whether by exalting James's prowess in the mentioned *sirventes*, or by highlighting the sultan's generosity and Prester John's virtue in the political pieces I will refer to below. They are all shown to contrast with the cowardice, avarice, and wickedness pervasive among kings and noblemen, while hinting at some specific scandalous cases, those of Peter's enemies. The result, as also illustrated in 'En breu sazo', is invariably the same: Cerverí's slander becomes a moral discourse (and as such was often read in later times and even in our own), rendered more damaging because of this doctrinal wrapping. Cerverí appears blameless (or tries very hard to give this impression) and the more so Peter, who is, if anything, only mentioned in passing.

This pattern is followed in other poems resorting to crusade topics in Cerverí's corpus, which also help to depict Charles of Anjou and his allies as false, cowardly, godless, expert in all deception, avaricious, and tyrannical: there is no nuance in the accumulation of accusations against this axis of evil. If in 'En breu sazo' Cerverí used James as a mirror of crusading virtue to show the cowardice, avarice, and general wickedness of the Angevin party, in 'Voletz aver be lau entre-ls valens' ('Do you wish to be praised among the worthy?'), the opening question already sets Cerverí as an expert, and will end up presenting the sultan as a source of shame for the French.²⁷ All through the poem, Cerverí reformulates many of the motifs in 'En breu sazo': the responsibility of kings and magnates as examples of good behaviour, the present decline in liberality and the pervasiveness of avarice, here personalized, again, in a nameless figure that becomes more tight-fisted when he should be more generous with his men. This particular moment of avarice is quite clearly associated with the crusade because of Cerverí's *excursus* on tardiness as a sin (one of the leitmotifs in crusade homilies) and, more specifically, because of the new model of behaviour he offers, highlighted with wordplay: 'que-l soudas te los frances vergoynos, | car bon sou da ez onr'a sos baros' ('the sultan is shaming the French, | because he gives a good reward and honour to his barons'), 'the French' most likely evoking Charles's reputation as avaricious and tyrannical, inferior in virtue to the infidel sultan.

Likewise, Cerverí's 'Mig sirventes' ('Can aug en cortz critz e mazans e brutz'), launches a frontal attack against the rebel barons, where Edward of England, the only magnate to reach the Holy Land in the fateful 1270 crusade, is referred as a crusader and a witness to the shameful decline of the world and the nobility.²⁸ Yet again the present corruption has been caused by a chain of responsibility, since the counts learned to be corrupt from the kings, and the barons from the counts, and so on. And again, Charles's crusading record is implicitly alluded to, as the alleged mentor

27 See also *Obras completas*, ed. Riquer, p. 94, and *Cerverí de Girona*, ed. Coromines, II, 143.

28 See also *Obras completas*, ed. Riquer, p. 106, and *Cerverí de Girona*, ed. Coromines, II, 118.

of the wicked Catalan nobility in ‘En breu sazo’ had negotiated with the sultan before calling off the crusade, while Edward had chosen to continue his holy mission.

In yet another apparent moral diatribe against the shortcomings of rulers, ‘Lo vers de la terra del Preste Johan’, Cerverí evokes Prester John’s land in terms that set the priest-king as a model ruler (‘Volgr’agesson li rey aytal usatge | com li rics reys prestre Joan avia’, ‘I would like the powerful kings to have the same behaviour | as the rich king, Prester John’) and a fundamental aid for crusader enterprises.²⁹ The crusade setting is essential to place this poem in the same context as the *sirventes*, and, once this is established, we can recognize the wise counsellor Cerverí (here also a courtly lover and a victim of courtesy’s decline) and the wicked nobility, up to their usual corrupt and harmful activities: ‘Dans es qui ve entre tanz d’aut lynatge | oblidar pretz e puyar vilania, | e cortz tenir d’orgoyll ses cortezia’ (‘When those of high birth | forget merit and elevate vileness | and have courts full of pride, without courtesy, [evil follows]’). Here their corruption is also linguistic, for they define falsehood and corrupt behaviour as courtesy. Conversely, in a more explicit mention than usual: ‘L’enfans Peyr’es cortez e gen parlanz | e fortz als braus e francs als mercejanz | e malenantz tal vetz que par que ria’ (‘Prince Peter is courtly and well spoken, | and strong with the aggressive and generous with the pleading, | and miserable sometimes when he seems to be laughing’).

Cerverí’s procedure is identical in all the cases analysed: crusade motifs ripe with anti-Angevin connotations allow him to highlight the connection between Peter’s enemies and to draw a picture of current wickedness. The troubadour presents himself as a worthy moralist and his patron as blameless, while he holds a mirror of virtue – be it James, Edward, Prester John, or even the sultan – up to the wicked, incarnated by Charles of Anjou, Ferran Sanxis, and the barons that follow him. Both anti-Angevin literature and the context of the council of Lyon had turned crusades in a very relevant topic, ideal for Cerverí’s purposes.

Paradoxically when Peter went on crusade (of sorts) no mention (or only a very passing reference) is deemed necessary: no mention either of the Sicilian affair or the crusade that came as a consequence are found in Cerverí’s extant poems.³⁰ The reason, I believe, is his ultimate goal was neither to record Peter’s deeds nor to compose a panegyric but relentlessly to promote a particular image of his patron and justify certain of his contemporary actions: there is no room or scope for gratuitous eulogy.

INTERPRETING THE LATE THIRTEENTH CENTURY IN THE CATALAN ROYAL COURT

Cerverí de Girona’s account contrasts, confirms, and enriches historiographical narratives, despite the small percentage of political lyrics in his vast corpus. In using James’s crusader image to shame Peter’s enemies, Cerverí draws on the king’s

29 See also *Obras completas*, ed. Riquer, p. 254, *Cerverí de Girona*, ed. Coromines, I, 132, and my forthcoming article in *Lecturae tropatorum*.

30 There might be such a reference in the *tornada* of *Lo vers del comte de Rodes*, but this is just hypothetical at this stage.

version of events and his projected image, which also made its way into his *Llibre dels fets*. It is interesting, then, that some of the events evoked in 'En breu sazo' are also narratively linked within the *Llibre dels fets*, highlighting not only an identical chronological sequence but the interpretation of a (polemical) historical moment, by connecting papal plans for a crusade with Henry of Castile's imprisonment, Ferran Sanxis's treason, and baronial uprising. Cerverí confirms James's image but seems to be exploiting it rather than constructing it. Although he is clearly serving Peter's interests without exposing him to criticism by drawing the listener's attention away from him and towards James's crusading profile, the intention of flattering James is not to be discounted. Cerverí's poems are much closer in time to the events than the chronicles are, and the break between father and son was very recent. James emerges from Cerverí's poem as a conquering hero, a flattering portrait that softens some of Cerverí's previous criticism of him for following bad advice in the conflict between his warring sons in other poems, while Peter is very subtly but consistently portrayed as worthier than the kings but currently powerless to redress their errors.³¹ There is an element of preaching to the converted in these poems, but not everybody in the royal court could be so considered. Other than James, who was not in perfect agreement with his son Peter at all times, among the rebels there was Peter's half-brother Ferran and also Cerverí's former patron, the viscount of Cardona. In this sense, the controversial edge to many of these poems is explicit. For instance, in 'Voletz aver be lau entre-ls valens', Cerverí affirms 'tals m'entendra qui'n sarrara las dens' ('one will hear me who will grind his teeth'). This might also explain his insistence that the targets of his censure get angry when castigated and refuse to be shown the right path.

The intrinsic immediacy of political lyrics and the different register required by two different genres are two of the main disparities between Cerverí's account and Desclot's, which are almost contemporary but not quite. They represent two moments in Peter's career: Cerverí justifies Peter's actions in the 1270s as the events unroll, while Desclot has a wider scope, culminating with the glorification of the Sicilian campaign, all written in hindsight. Cerverí's poetry corroborates the circulation of rampant anti-Angevin propaganda in the Catalan court prior to the Vespers and gives an insight into the range of pressing problems in Peter's entourage and their contemporary formulation. Peter's portrait in Cerverí and Desclot is remarkably similar. Like Cerverí, Desclot offers no formal panegyric or description of the king: the image is not destined to ingratiate the author with his patron but to present him and his actions in the desired light. As their works are not exactly contemporary, it is interesting to note how Desclot's portrait of Peter corresponds to his image as king in Cerverí's poetry, while the poems discussed dwell on Prince Peter at his most pugnacious and yet vulnerable. The coincidences between Cerverí and Desclot confirm the existence of a specific version of the events, very likely emanating from Peter himself.³²

31 See Cabré, 'Per a una cronologia'.

32 See some further examples in Cabré, *Cerverí de Girona*, pp. 196–200.

In this sense, only Peter's proximity, maybe somehow his involvement in the troubadour's poetic choices, can account for the degree in which Cerverí's poetic evolution follows his political path, whether with political comment or more often just with the desired image. Cerverí exhibits his poetic persona while Peter remains in the shadow. The authorship of both James of Aragon and Alfonso of Castile of the historiographical works attributed to them has been discussed and questioned by scholars; it might be worth wondering about Peter's authorial role. After all, he seems to have authored a self-portrait in his poetic exchange with Pere Salvatge, which is consistent with Cerverí's and Desclot's. Was Cerverí really an adviser to his patron, as he often implies, or merely a jongleur singing Peter's words?³³ The truth surely lies somewhere in between, in a place hard to define in anything other than speculative terms. In any case, they appear perfectly tuned to each other. While Peter ostensibly fights for Charles's oppressed Sicilian subjects and leads his own against a crusade presented as a scheming coalition between Rome and France, Cerverí uses the crusades to build his persona as a wise, authoritative, moral voice and as a battering ram against Angevin reputation. The word and the sword complemented each other as different means to the same end.

33 See Cabré, *Cerverí de Girona*, pp. 187–93 and 293–302 on these two sides of Cerverí's poetic self-depiction.