PART TWO

IN REFLECTION: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS
AFTER THE FACT

We are aware of the fragility and fallibility of human memory, especially when memory is influenced by an overriding agenda. Yet, historians must work with such flawed sources (as, indeed, all sources are flawed) and from them fashion a reasonable picture of the past. Students of the Fourth Crusade know well the narrative accounts of Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Robert of Clari, both of which have had their strengths and shortcomings analyzed and debated by scores of historians. We need not involve ourselves in that on-going discussion, especially since there are other after-the-fact eyewitness or near-eyewitness sources that deserve study but have all too often been overlooked, undervalued, or misunderstood. These are the *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* (hereafter *DC*), the short relic translation account of the so-called Anonymous of Soissons, and that portion of the *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadiensium* (hereafter *GeH*) that deals with the crusade exploits of Bishop Conrad of

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The first of these is, as is the case with Villehardouin and Clari, an account by a crusade participant; the other two are what might be called oral histories—accounts written by parties who had not been on the crusade but who based their narratives on the reminiscences of high-ranking churchmen who had been there.

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4 The GeH is edited by Ludwig Weiland in MGH SS. 23:73-123. A translation appears in Andrea, “Anonymous Chronicler,” 116-121. Riant, Exuviae, 1:10-21, excerpted parts of the Anonymous’s account, beginning with the rubric “The Pilgrimage to Greece” and continuing down through the description of the relics and other treasures that Conrad brought back to Halberstadt. Riant titled the excerpt De peregrinatione in Greciam et adventu religiuarum de Grecia libellus (The Little Book on the Pilgrimage to Greece and the Arrival of Relics from Greece) and argued that this little book is complete in itself and should, therefore, be separated from the rest of the GeH: 1:lv. I disagree. This crusade account must be read in the context of the larger story of Conrad’s entire pontificate, to which it is subordinated. For further commentary, see Andrea, “Anonymous Chronicler,” 447-455, and Klimke, Quellen, 59-61.