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Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor (review)

Rebecca A. Wilcox

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in repressed form, upon narratives like *Troilus* explicitly remote in time and place. An astute reader of these poems as social documents, Marion Turner carries forward this historicist project with surprising insight and admirable, sustained scholarly rigor.

JOHN M. BOWERS
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

ALISON WIGGINS and ROSALIND FIELD, eds. *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007. Pp. xxii, 226. £50.00; \$85.00.

Guy of Warwick is one of the most popular figures of medieval literature and culture, particularly in England, where he gained the status of national hero. The romance *Guy of Warwick* has enjoyed a recent resurgence in critical attention as scholars begin to question the unflattering assessments of its literary quality by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century antiquarians. Recognition by scholars such as Velma Bourgeois Richmond and Thorlac Turville-Petre of the extent to which Guy functioned as a touchstone for early English national identity has brought the romances of Guy of Warwick into a much-deserved critical spotlight that has broadened to include new work on Guy in other literary genres and in other artistic media.

As the first book-length scholarly volume (other than editions) on Guy to appear in over a decade, *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor* is a most welcome addition to current scholarship on the legendary hero and his place in the English imagination. The collection offers new interdisciplinary research on topics as diverse as the manuscript histories of the Anglo-Norman and English-language Guy romances; nontextual and illustrative representations of Guy in the Middle Ages and the early modern period; political uses of Guy and his legend; and representations of women in Guy texts. Moreover, the volume engages the most current and influential trends in literary studies: gender theory, East-West relations, literary political activism, and translation theory, to name just a few. For the reader who is less familiar with the Guy romances, the volume's appendix includes both a short and a more detailed summary based on the famous Auchinleck manuscript of ca. 1330: one will want

to consult the more developed account if possible, as the abridged version is quite skeletal. It should be noted, too, that the articles are supplemented by a series of fifteen glossy black-and-white photographs of manuscript illustrations, woodcuts, and artifacts referred to in several of the pieces.

The brief "Editorial Introduction" that opens the volume serves primarily to highlight the four themes of the collection: "the 'popularity' of the tradition; Guy's 'Englishness'; the ancestral-baronial interest in the story; and the passage of the medieval legend into the Renaissance" (p. xvi). It is particularly interested in how notions of popularity intersect with definitions of "high" and "low" literature.

Judith Weiss's chapter, "*Gui de Warewic* at Home and Abroad: A Hero for Europe," suggests that *Gui* is unusual among Anglo-Norman romances because it depicts the Byzantine Empire remarkably favorably in contrast to the Holy Roman Empire. As Weiss demonstrates, this unique dichotomy is based on England's historically good relations with Constantinople, which became home to many English emigrants after the Norman Conquest of 1066. In support of her thesis, Weiss proposes that the romance may have been composed rather earlier than its traditional dating: she prefers a date closer to the first years of the thirteenth century than the middle. This chapter is undoubtedly a valuable asset to scholars of the Anglo-Norman *Gui* and opens room for further study both of medieval notions of place/space and of the relationships between this romance and its English adaptations.

The first two-thirds of Marianne Ailes's chapter, "*Gui de Warewic* in Its Manuscript Context," consist of a review of the manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman *Gui* romance, including physical descriptions, provenance (where indicated), and, in the case of the fragments, how they correspond to Alfred Ewert's published edition (1932–33). Ailes's primary goal is to look at the manuscript contexts of *Gui* in order to establish its insular interests and the importance of its "secular piety" as a major *raison d'être*. Ailes also suggests that scholars should reconsider the genre grouping of "ancestral romance," in which *Gui* has often been included, due to the inconsistency of ancestral themes among these romances and because medieval manuscripts do not support a strong generic categorization along these lines. The fewer than two pages devoted to an examination of genre and form may leave the reader hoping for a more thorough treatment of this topic in a future piece by the author.

Drawing on most of the extant manuscripts of the Anglo-Norman

Gui de Warewic and the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*, Ivana Djordjevic (“*Guy of Warwick* as a Translation”) argues convincingly for a fundamental reexamination of medieval translation theory. Respectfully distancing herself from scholars such as Susan Crane, who focus on the differences between the French and English versions of the texts they study in order to highlight emergent English identities, Djordjevic demonstrates that in at least some instances—*Gui/Guy* included—the linguistic similarities between Anglo-Norman and English are much closer than modern printed editions have led us to believe. Meticulously comparing lines and passages of *Gui* and *Guy*, Djordjevic shows that many characteristics of the Middle English romance—such as a “strident note of Christian self-righteousness” (p. 33)—that have been considered uniquely “English” are, in fact, translated directly or loosely from Anglo-Norman predecessors. As Djordjevic points out, this analysis leads one to suspect that many medieval translators/adapters remained as faithful to their originals as possible as much out of convenience as out of a particular sense of obligation or respect for their sources.

In “From *Gui* to *Guy*: The Fashioning of a Popular Romance,” Rosalind Field (like Djordjevic in the previous chapter) strives to impart to the reader a strong sense of continuity between the Anglo-Norman and the Middle English *Guy* romances. Opening with a discussion of three different measures of popularity (number of surviving manuscripts; whether a narrative is “high” or “low” literature; and how broadly it appeals to a range of audiences), Field argues that, while critics concur that both *Gui* and *Guy* were successful in terms of number of manuscripts produced, many scholars have created a false dichotomy between *Gui* and *Guy* in terms of literary quality and audience appeal. Though the “discontinuities” that Field sees in the romance may not all be universally agreed upon, she successfully demonstrates that many of the so-called popular tendencies of the Middle English versions of *Guy* are already present in their Anglo-Norman predecessors. Both the Anglo-Norman and the Middle English romances develop a more broad appeal over time, for instance, in their focus on secular piety and the shift away from including “disturbing” incidents that are found in earlier versions of the poems.

Alison Wiggins’s chapter, “The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*,” includes careful analyses of their relationships to Anglo-Norman versions; how they adapt and revise *Guy* material in accordance with changing tastes; and the possible movements of the

manuscripts themselves among families and regions. Of particular value are Wiggins's reappraisal of the likely production context of the Auchinleck manuscript—including the suggestion that manuscripts very like the Auchinleck were probably produced on a regular basis—and her lengthy commentary on the meticulous excisions of the Caius manuscript (1470s).

Moving away from the focus on romance established by this volume in its previous chapters, in "The *Speculum Guy de Warwick* and Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*: The Non-Romance Middle English Tradition," A. S. G. Edwards reviews the surviving manuscripts of two didactic poems that apparently draw on the popularity of the figure of Guy to heighten the appeal of their religious instruction. Edwards discusses several of the manuscripts in terms of the contexts of their production, their wide geographical distributions, and their possible patrons. The strongest sections of the chapter trace instances in which these poems appear with other works, thus providing evidence for the various uses to which medieval (and, in Lydgate's case, Renaissance) audiences put them.

Robert Rouse's close reading of the Middle English *Guy* in "An Exemplary Life: Guy of Warwick as Medieval Culture-Hero" seeks to trace the development of Guy's character through a series of "multiple yet complementary identities" (p. 109): the pinnacle of secular chivalry, the penitent knight of Christ, the divinely appointed savior of England, and the saintly hermit. Rouse particularly concentrates on moments of transition—such as Guy's starlit epiphany after his marriage—teasing the key appeals of the romance out of these scenes of heightened symbolism. Among the most important reasons for its long and widespread popularity is the sense of English national identity that Guy embodies and which may be read as sanctioned by God. Rouse also demonstrates how the figure of Felice is designed to appeal to a female audience.

David Griffith's chapter, "The Visual History of Guy of Warwick," is a thorough exploration of the appearances and uses of the legend of Guy of Warwick in material culture, both in manuscripts and in other artifacts. Beginning his more-or-less chronological analysis with Peter Langtoft's early fourteenth-century *Chronique d'Angleterre*, Griffith moves on to include discussions of the Teymouth Hours, the Smithfield Decretals, the Auchinleck manuscript, misericords in Wells and Gloucester cathedrals, lost paintings and carvings at Winchester, and the tapestries, manuscripts, and silver-inlaid maple bowl associated with the Beauchamp Earls of Warwick and their families. Though one may

sometimes wish for further substantiation of claims made about these relics, the chapter is quite useful both in the range of texts and artifacts it considers and in its astute observations about the interdependence of political programs and material production.

Martha Driver's "'In her owne persone semly and bewteus': Representing Women in Stories of Guy of Warwick" explores both literary and illustrative depictions of women in the *Guy of Warwick* romance, the Rous Rolls, the Beauchamp Pageants, and other nonromance texts. Driver's primary interest is to demonstrate ways in which the character of Felice is used to provide a model for, and later perhaps a comfort and complement to, the influential (and, like Felice, dynastically important) women of the Beauchamp family in late medieval England. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of this piece is Driver's identification of an editorial misrepresentation of a scene in the Cambridge University Library manuscript: as in certain other versions of the story, the scene under scrutiny includes the use of a half-ring as an identifier used by Guy and Felice. Because all other versions involving the half-ring have close ties to the Beauchamps, Driver suggests that a fresh look at the CUL romance may be in order.

Siân Echard's "Of Dragons and Saracens: Guy and Bevis in Early Print Illustration" offers a comparison of the programs of illustration, beginning in 1503, of the printed versions of two romances that early modern and recent critics alike have tended to conflate. Despite the superficial similarities, the Bevis illustrations tend to depict the hero in struggles against Saracens, while Guy is more often shown slaying monstrous beasts and giants. The fact that these two romances developed distinctive illustrative traditions indicates that printers anticipated and responded to their readers' tastes, choosing images based on market demands. Conversely, the choice of illustrated scenes seems in some cases to have influenced which episodes were highlighted in or dropped from the textual narratives when they were adapted for later audiences.

In "*Guy of Warwick* and *The Faerie Queene*, Book II: Chivalry Through the Ages," Andrew King argues that Spenser reinterprets medieval romance tales of high cultural value and gives them new life within a Protestant context. Drawing parallels between the quests of Guy of Warwick and Spenser's Guyon, King shows how both texts explore the meaning of chivalry as the achievement of temperance and restraint in the face of provocation. Tracing common tropes such as the loss/abandonment of the knight's horse—the defining symbol of chivalry—King

demonstrates the extent and richness of Spenser's use of Guy in his allegorical masterpiece.

In "Guy as Early Modern English Hero," Helen Cooper looks at Guy's literary and cultural history from about 1590 through the twentieth century. Unlike many medieval romances, which either disappeared from the English literary tradition or became material only for "lowly" chapbooks, Guy enjoyed the attention of playwrights and acclaimed poets who reworked the narrative for diverse Reformation audiences glad to lavish interest on a distinctly English hero. The success of Cooper's two primary texts, the play *A Tragical History of Guy of Warwick* (1661) and Samuel Rowlands's *Famous Historie of Guy of Warwick* (1609), demonstrates the ongoing adaptability and appeal of the legendary figure for political and religious environments far removed from his medieval origins.

Overall, this collection of articles is an enriching read that demonstrates a remarkable continuity among the individual pieces. The volume may be read as a more-or-less chronological account of the cultural history of Guy of Warwick; this sense of continuity is accentuated by the frequent references of the authors to one another's work. This intratextuality, however, also leads to a certain amount of overlap and repetition from one chapter to the next. Taken individually, the selection of articles is a praiseworthy one, offering compelling reading not only for the Guy specialist but also for scholars of the medieval and early modern periods generally.

One of the volume's weaknesses is the fact that a number of the authors fail adequately to engage Richmond's *The Legend of Guy of Warwick* (1996), a seminal work on Guy that seems to have been overlooked in part because it has already established so much of what interests the authors under consideration here; this neglect, however, is by no means universal among the contributors. Some readers will be disappointed also by the lack of attention given to non-English and French versions of the Guy legend, but this makes sense given the volume's stated topic and interests, and should not be seen as inherently detracting from what is already a well-rounded book of outstanding scholarly significance.

REBECCA A. WILCOX
University of Texas at Austin