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The Seven Champions of Christendom (1596/7)

by Richard Johnson

Edited by
Jennifer Fellows



THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS OF CHRISTENDOM

Although Richard Johnson's chivalric romance *The Seven Champions of Christendom* is little known today, it was widely read for over three centuries after its first appearance in print in the 1590s, influencing the work of English writers from John Bunyan to G. K. Chesterton and profoundly affecting the representation of St George, England's patron saint, in folklore and popular culture.

In this volume, Jennifer Fellows offers, for the first time, a scholarly edition of *The Seven Champions of Christendom*. The text is based on the original printings of Parts I and II of the romance and is accompanied by explanatory notes and by an extensive introduction which places the work in its literary-historical context, traces its evolution through the centuries and presents what little is known of its author's life.

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The Seven Champions of Christendom (1596/7)

by Richard Johnson

Edited by
JENNIFER FELLOWS

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List of Abbreviations

<i>7Ch</i>	<i>The Seven Champions of Christendom</i>
<i>BH</i>	<i>Sir Bevis of Hampton</i>
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. Stephen et al.
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
OS	Ordinary Series
<i>FQ</i>	Edmund Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i>
<i>ODEP</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs</i> , ed. Wilson
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>STC</i>	<i>Short-Title Catalogue ... 1475–1640</i> , ed. Jackson et al.
Wing	<i>Short-Title Catalogue ... 1641–1700</i> , ed. Wing



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Introduction

Richard Johnson's life and works

Despite the enormous popularity of such works as *The Seven Champions of Christendom*¹ and *Tom a Lincolne*, very little is known of the life of their author. According to J. Payne Collier, Richard Johnson was baptized on 24 May 1573 and died in 1659;² but, as Richard S. M. Hirsch points out, 'Since Collier cited no authority, and is known to have been fond of fabricating, there is no good reason to accept [these dates].'³ Johnson may have been born and bred in the Huntingdonshire area: he dedicated his romance *Tom a Lincolne* to 'THE RIGHT WORSHIPFVLL SIMON WORTEDG of *Okenberrie* [i.e. Alconbury] in the County of *Huntington*', being (he says) emboldened to do so by 'the great friendship which my parents haue heretofore found at the hands of your renowned Father'.⁴ It may also be significant that the earliest work now attributed to Johnson, *Musarum Plangores* (1591), was written on the occasion of the death of Sir Christopher Hatton, who owned properties not far from Alconbury, in the neighbouring county of Northamptonshire.⁵

It is clear that Johnson spent the greater part of his life in London: the subject-matter of several of his works (such as *The Nine Worthies of London*, *The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields*, *Looke on Me London*) is London-related, and in many of his later writings he describes himself as a 'freeman of this City'.⁶ It may well be also that his knowledge of the dramatic works of Marlowe and of Shakespeare, to which he makes several allusions in *7Ch*, was acquired in the London theatre.

In the dedication to *The Nine Worthies of London*, Johnson describes himself as 'a poore apprentice', though it is not known what his trade was. Given the phenomenal success of *7Ch*, however, it seems likely that he abandoned it and supported himself by his writings. The works attributed to him are as follows:

¹ Hereafter *7Ch*.

² J. Payne Collier, *A Bibliographical and Critical Account of the Rarest Books in the English Language* ..., vol. II (London: Lilly, 1865), p. 183.

³ *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne*, ed. Richard S. M. Hirsch (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1978), p. 20 n. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵ Hatton acquired Kirby Hall (near Corby) in the early 1580s and was also responsible for building Holdenby (six miles north-west of Northampton) in order to entertain Queen Elizabeth.

⁶ *Tom a Lincolne*, ed. Hirsch, p. 20 n. 13. See also Naomi C. Liebler, 'Elizabethan pulp fiction: the example of Richard Johnson', *Critical Survey*, 12:2 (2000), 71–87 (p. 72).

1 *Musarum Plangores: vpon the death of the Right Honourable Sir Christopher Hatton, Knight, &c.* (1591). A competent, if undistinguished, verse elegy, first attributed to Johnson in 1963.⁷ *STC* 14685.5.

2 *The Nine Worthies of London, explaining the honourable exercise of armes, the uertues of the valiant, and the memorable attempts of magnanimous minds ...* (1592). A work in verse and prose celebrating the martial exploits of nine Londoners 'whose vertues made them great, and whose renoune sprung not of the noblenes of their birth, but of the notable towardnesse of their well qualified mindes' (sig. B2').⁸ Edited by Thomas Park in *The Harleian Miscellany*, vol. VIII (London: printed for White & Cochrane, John Harding and John Murray, 1811), pp. 437–61. *STC* 14685.7.

3 *The Most Famous History of the Seauen Champions of Christendome* (1596). See below.

4 *The Second Part of the Famous History of the Seauen Champions of Christendome* (1597). See below.

5 *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne ... the Red Rose Knight* (1599–1607). An 'Arthurian' prose romance which, among Johnson's works, was second in popularity only to *7Ch*. Edited by Richard S. M. Hirsch as *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1978). A dramatic version, which can probably be dated to the period 1611–1615, has been attributed to Thomas Heywood.⁹ *STC* 14684.

6 *Anglorum Lacrimæ: in a sad passion complayning of the death of our late soueraigne lady Queene Elizabeth* (1603). A verse elegy shown to have been plagiarized from Thomas Rogers's *Celestiall Elegies of the Goddesses and the Muses* (1598).¹⁰ *STC* 14671.

7 *A Lanterne-light for Loyall Subiects: or, A Terrour for Traytours* (1603). A prose tract 'describing many fayre examples of Traytours foule ends' (sig. A2') and, like Part I of *7Ch*, dedicated to Lord Thomas Howard. *STC* 14675.

8 *The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields* (1607). A tract on London life, in the form of a dialogue between a 'Countrey Gentleman, and a London Citizen' (sig. A3'); mainly based on John Stow's *Chronicle*. *STC* 14690.

⁷ See Jerry H. Bryant, 'Richard Johnson's *Musarum Plangores*', *Renaissance News*, 16:1 (1963), 94–8.

⁸ Quoted in John Simons, 'Medievalism as cultural process in pre-industrial popular literature', *Studies in Medievalism*, 7 (1995), 5–21 (p. 10).

⁹ See *Tom a Lincolne*, ed. Hirsch, pp. xxx–xxxii.

¹⁰ Franklin B. Williams Jr, 'Richard Johnson's borrowed tears', *Studies in Philology*, 34 (1937), 186–90.

- 9** *The Pleasant Conceites of Old Hobson, the Merry Londoner* (1607). A collection of anecdotes which Johnson has associated with William Hobson, a well-known London haberdasher who died in 1581. Edited by W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Willis & Sotheran, 1866). *STC* 14688.
- 10** *A Crowne-Garland of Goulden Roses* (1612). A collection of twenty-six poems and historical ballads. Edited by W. Chappell as *The Crown Garland of Golden Roses: Consisting of Ballads and Songs*, Percy Society Publications 6, 15 (London: for the Percy Society, 1842–5). *STC* 14672.
- 11** *A Remembrance of the Honors Due to the Life and Death of Robert Earle of Salisbury, Lord Treasurer of England, &c.* (1612). A eulogistic prose biography. *STC* 14691.
- 12** *Looke on Me London* (1613). An exposé of abuses in London life, dedicated to the Lord Mayor, Sir Thomas Middleton, and shown to have been plagiarized from the work of George Whetstone.¹¹ Reprinted in *Illustrations of Early English Popular Literature*, ed. J. Payne Collier, vol. II (London: privately printed, 1864; repr. New York: Blom, 1966), no. 7. *STC* 14676.
- 13** *The Golden Garland of Princely Pleasures and Delicate Delights* (1620?). Another collection of ballads and poems, of which Johnson has been described as ‘the compiler and reviser, rather than the author’.¹² Included among the twenty-nine items in this collection are ‘A Princely Song of Richard Cordelion King of England’, ‘A Gallant Song of the Garter of England’ and ‘Titus Andronicus Complaint’. *STC* 14674.
- 14** *The History of Tom Thumbe* (1621). A version of the well-known nursery tale; perhaps largely the invention of Johnson, although references to the character Tom Thumb occur much earlier.¹³ Edited by Curt F. Bühler as *R.I., The History of Tom Thumbe* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press for the Renaissance English Text Society, 1965). *STC* 14056.

¹¹ Richard S. M. Hirsch, ‘The source of Richard Johnson’s *Look on Me London*’, *English Language Notes*, 13 (1975), 107–13.

¹² Allan G. Chester, ‘Richard Johnson’s *Golden Garland*’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 10 (1949), 61–7. Given Johnson’s plagiarism record, however, this may be to put too charitable a construction on the nature of his activities here.

¹³ See *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (London: Book Club Associates, 1974), pp. 30–1; *The History of Tom Thumbe*, ed. Bühler, pp. v–ix.

The Seven Champions of Christendom

Although he claims in the dedication of Part I of *7Ch* that the names of the Seven Champions ‘to this day is [sic] held in great estimation through Europe’,¹⁴ Johnson actually seems to have invented the idea of this united band of Christian heroes himself, following a pattern established by, for example, the idea of the Nine Worthies or of the Fourteen Holy Helpers.¹⁵ At first sight it might appear that *7Ch* belongs to a Spenserian tradition of Protestant hagiography; yet Johnson’s protagonists (four from the British Isles, and one each from France, Spain and Italy)¹⁶ are saints in name only. With the exception of some incidents relating to St George,¹⁷ none of the adventures attributed to them here have any part in earlier, established versions of their legends;¹⁸ even their deaths (described in the last seven chapters of the 1616 redaction of *7Ch*)¹⁹ are, except in the case of St Denis, very different from those usually ascribed to them in more canonical hagiography. Johnson certainly knew *The Faerie Queene*,²⁰ borrowing from it many narrative motifs,²¹ as well (probably) as the idea of making St George one of his heroes, but he shares none of Spenser’s moral and religious preoccupations. For example, while Spenser (in accordance with established tradition)²² allegorizes the fight between Redcrosse and the dragon (*FQ*, I.xi) in terms of the defence of the True Church and its deliverance from error, St George’s encounter with the Egyptian dragon, though apparently influenced in some respects by *FQ*,²³ is merely the means by which he wins the love of the local princess, Sabra; nor is his deliverance of Egypt from the dragon used as an instrument of conversion, as in the *Legenda*

¹⁴ See p. 3 below.

¹⁵ The earliest instance of the phrase ‘Seven Champions of Christendom’ cited in *OED* is from the title of Johnson’s work. He had earlier followed the same traditional pattern in *The Nine Worthies of London*. On the Fourteen Holy Helpers, see David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 156.

¹⁶ Both St Denis (who, along with St George, was one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers) and St James the Great (whose shrine at Compostella was one of the principal places of pilgrimage in pre-Reformation Europe) were well known in England, with large numbers of churches dedicated to them. St Anthony has never been the patron saint of Italy – nor, indeed, was there any Italy as we know it in Johnson’s time; but insofar as Johnson’s Anthony relates to any recognized saint, it seems to be to St Antony of Padua.

¹⁷ See notes to pp. 12–13, 16, 18–19.

¹⁸ Indeed some of the protagonists’ activities in *7Ch* are the very reverse of saintly – as in the distinctly unsavoury episode of St George’s attempted seduction/rape of the Vestal Virgin Lucina (Part II, Chapter XIII).

¹⁹ See pp. xxiii–xxiv below.

²⁰ Hereafter *FQ*.

²¹ See the Notes (pp. 263–307 below), *passim*.

²² Cf. Cornelia Steketeer Hulst, *St George of Cappadocia in Legend and History* (London: Nutt, 1909), pp. 12, 39.

²³ See notes to p. 12.

aurea and its derivatives.²⁴ From time to time Johnson attributes to his heroes a specifically Christian motivation, or ascribes their success to their faith in God,²⁵ but not to the extent that this imparts to his work any real thematic unity – in *7Ch* the story is always paramount.

Where Spenser's narrative is directed by his allegorical purpose and informed by a high moral seriousness, the spirit of *7Ch* is, rather, that of a rather naive nationalism. The primary focus of attention is always the English champion, St George: he is the only one of the seven protagonists of whose *enfances* any account is given; he is always the one who rescues his fellow-champions from dangerous situations or exhorts them to new efforts; he sometimes brings to a satisfactory conclusion adventures begun by other champions.²⁶ Beyond their designations ('Saint Andrew of Scotland', etc.), there is no real association between the other champions and the countries of which they are patrons;²⁷ St George, on the other hand, is born in Coventry, the son of an English aristocrat, and the grandson of the king himself. The world outside England is a largely amorphous arena for the assertion of Christian, and specifically English Christian,²⁸ superiority; a region where one is as likely as not to find oneself in 'a Land as then inhabited with wild beasts' and to have to endure there 'pennurie & scarcitie of victualles'.²⁹ Part and parcel of Johnson's Anglocentrism is his cavalier disregard for (or ignorance of) geographical actualities: the Alps, we are told, 'deuide the countries of *Italie* and *Spaine*'; Hungary is apparently a pagan land in Asia; and Peru is in Greece, 'a myle from *Constantinople*'.³⁰

The world of *7Ch* is, then, very much that of romance rather than hagiography, let alone reality; indeed, the influence of Middle English romance pervades Part I.³¹ Undoubtedly the single most important influence on Johnson is the verse romance of *Sir Bevis of Hampton*,³² which he ransacks for narrative motifs (usually in relation to St George) and often quotes verbatim.³³ *BH* was itself enormously popular: the manuscripts range in date from the period 1330–40 to the end of the fifteenth century, and the romance continued to be printed in metrical form,

²⁴ Cf. Jennifer Fellows, 'St George as romance hero', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 19 (1993), 27–54 (p. 33).

²⁵ E.g. pp. 50, 60, 63, 86, 88, etc.

²⁶ E.g. pp. 5–9, 62–3, 69, 140–1.

²⁷ We are, however, told that St Anthony was born in Seville (p. 36).

²⁸ It is St George who leads the Christian armies and wins three crowns (p. 92).

²⁹ Quotation from p. 25; cf. pp. 46, 52, etc.

³⁰ See pp. 33, 88, 261.

³¹ Cf. notes to pp. 20, 34–5, 41, 115, etc.

³² Hereafter *BH*.

³³ Cf. notes to pp. 13, 14, 61, 62, etc.

substantially unchanged, from the late 1490s until 1711;³⁴ probably only *7Ch* itself can lay claim to a longer shelf-life as a popular text.³⁵

Johnson's debt to *BH* has long been recognized: in June 1762, the antiquarian Thomas Percy wrote to Richard Farmer:

I am convinced you are right with regard to the *Æra* of the 7 Champions; but I have to-day made a discovery with regard to that book: which is that the principal Features of St George's story are from the Old Romance in rhyme of *Bevis of Southampton*: Almost everything of consequence relating to the single story of St George is very literally copied from *Bevis*.³⁶

In fact, Percy has overestimated Johnson's dependence on *BH* and underestimated his facility in conflating narrative elements from a variety of sources. Johnson usually does this successfully, a particularly good example being his account of St George's dragon-fight and its aftermath, where motifs from two distinct episodes in *BH* are mixed with ones drawn from the Tristan story, from *FQ*, from bestiary lore and from the *Legenda aurea* tradition.³⁷ However, his 'maggie' habits sometimes betray him into narrative or thematic inconsistency. When St George escapes from a seven-year imprisonment, itself closely modelled on *BH*, he uses a trick borrowed from *Bevis* in order to induce the porter to open the gates for him, claiming that St George has killed his warders and escaped and that he has been sent in pursuit of him. Unlike *Bevis*, however, St George has *not* killed his warders. Later, he overhears Sabra's song, in which she makes it perfectly clear that she has been able to retain her virginity through seven years of marriage to Almidor, but only pages later shows, in a passage that echoes *BH* closely, that he is ignorant of the fact that she has managed to remain physically faithful to him.³⁸

A slightly more complex example of Johnson's failure fully to integrate with one another motifs or ideas from disparate sources occurs in the episode of St Anthony, St Andrew and the swan princesses. When Rossalinde tells St Anthony how her sisters came to lose their human forms, she says that when they were faced with the prospect of rape by the giant Blanderon, 'their earnest praiera so preuailed in the sight of God, that he preserued their chasteties by a most straunge and woonderfull miracle, and turned their comely bodies into the shape of milke-white Swannes'.³⁹ In thus combining a Christianized version of an Ovidian metamorphosis with narrative elements borrowed from the Swan Knight legend, however, Johnson has got himself into a thematic muddle: God's 'woonderfull

³⁴ See Jennifer Fellows, '*Bevis redivivus*: the printed editions of *Sir Bevis of Hampton*', in *Romance Reading on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative presented to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. Jennifer Fellows, Rosalind Field, Gillian Rogers and Judith Weiss (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 251–68 (pp. 256–61).

³⁵ See pp. xxiii–xxviii below.

³⁶ *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy & Richard Farmer*, ed. Cleanth Brooks, The Percy Letters (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1946), pp. 3–4.

³⁷ Cf. notes to p. 12.

³⁸ Cf. note to pp. 72–7.

³⁹ Quoted from p. 42.

miracle' later becomes the ladies' 'punishments', which can only be reversed by their father's conversion to belief in that same God.⁴⁰

I have discussed elsewhere the way in which romance and hagiography interacted in the literary representation of St George as early as 1311.⁴¹ Although the ascendancy of romance over hagiography in the treatment of George's legend might be said to have reached its apogee in *7Ch*, the process had in fact begun long before Johnson wrote. Many saints acquire a folklore of their own,⁴² or come to have associated with them attributes or narrative motifs unrelated to their original legends,⁴³ but I am not aware that the stories of any of the other protagonists of *7Ch* underwent such radical transformation as did that of St George, or that any of these other six saints found themselves playing a leading role in a secular romance,⁴⁴ before they appeared as characters in Johnson's work. It is probably the introduction into St George's legend of the dragon-fight that is responsible for this difference:⁴⁵ whereas he had hitherto been venerated primarily as a martyr, George came increasingly (from the *Legenda aurea* onwards) to be celebrated above all for his victory over the dragon⁴⁶ – an achievement that he shares with many heroes of secular romance. Whatever the reasons for it, St George's legend had undergone a considerable degree of 'romanticization' before the era of *7Ch*, and it may even be that romances now lost to us influenced Johnson's treatment of the English champion in his work.⁴⁷

Second only to medieval romance in their influence on *7Ch* are the classics. Much of Johnson's classical knowledge was probably derived from Virgil's *Aeneid* or from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*;⁴⁸ he may well have known also some of the Senecan tragedies current in English translation during the Elizabethan period.⁴⁹ His imagery is fraught with classical allusion, and he appears to feel no unease in the juxtaposition of classical deities and the Christian God.⁵⁰ He refers frequently to the Trojan War and its aftermath,⁵¹ to the story of Jason and Medea,⁵² and, above

⁴⁰ See p. 50.

⁴¹ Fellows, 'St George', pp. 39–41.

⁴² E.g. the tradition that St Patrick was responsible for expelling snakes from Ireland.

⁴³ St Cecilia, for example, was originally venerated as a martyr and only later came to be associated with music: see Richard Lockett, 'The Legend of St Cecilia in English Literature: a Study' (unpub. Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1972).

⁴⁴ See Fellows, 'St George', pp. 39–41, for St George's role in the *Roman d'Auberon*, an early fourteenth-century text attached to the *Huon de Bourdeaux* cycle, in which St George is the son of Julius Caesar and Morgan le Fay, and the twin brother of Auberon.

⁴⁵ The dragon-fight seems first to have been attributed to St George in the twelfth century: see John E. Matzke, 'The legend of Saint George: its development into a *roman d'aventure*', *PMLA*, 19 (1904), 449–78.

⁴⁶ See Fellows, 'St George', pp. 32–5.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 38, 41–2.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., notes to pp. 6, 21, 23, 58, 137, 165.

⁴⁹ See note to p. 7.

⁵⁰ Cf. pp. 21, 25, 28, 35, etc.

⁵¹ Cf. pp. 5, 6, etc.

⁵² Cf. pp. 34, 57, 128, etc.

all, to that of Tereus, Philomela and Procne. This last named is the only classical legend to have any significant *narrative* impact on *7Ch*; indeed, Johnson seems to take a salacious delight in tales of rape and violence against women, several such episodes in *7Ch* being influenced by this Ovidian story.⁵³

On the whole, Johnson seems to have been rather less well-read in the work of his contemporaries or near-contemporaries than he was in older literature. He apparently knew some of the dramatic works of Shakespeare and Marlowe,⁵⁴ perhaps from visits to the theatre; but, although there is some evidence for his familiarity with such works of Elizabethan prose fiction as Lord Berners's translation of *Arthur of Little Britaine*, William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, George Pettie's *A Petite Pallace of Pettie His Pleasure* and Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*,⁵⁵ there is surprisingly little for the specific influence of more sophisticated courtly romances such as Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* or the chivalric narratives of Iberian provenance that came largely to supplant the older, native romances in popular favour during the course of the sixteenth century.⁵⁶ However, *7Ch* does show a certain amount of similarity to these works in the interweaving of the adventures of a number of different characters, and in the use from time to time of relatively high-flown imagery (often based on classical allusion) and other rhetorical devices.⁵⁷ Without influencing the narrative substance of Johnson's work to any great extent, then, the general tradition to which these romances belong does seem to have contributed something to the stylistic and structural diversity of *7Ch*.

In the introduction to his edition of Johnson's *Tom a Lincolne*, Hirsch remarks that 'the author employs both a plain and an ornamented style, varying their use according to the necessities of his narrative';⁵⁸ much the same might be said of *7Ch*, except that here the stylistic situation is further complicated by Johnson's dependence on a variety of sources in a variety of different genres, and by the introduction into his narrative of sometimes quite extended passages of verse.

By comparison to much of the fictional prose of the period, *7Ch* is fairly unelaborate in its general style. The diction is usually plain and non-Latinate, and the syntax straightforward. This is not to say, however, that Johnson's prose is altogether innocent of rhetorical ornament.⁵⁹ In more descriptive passages, his imagery (as noted above), tends to depend heavily on classical allusion;⁶⁰ quite often it is circumlocutory, and therefore more obfuscating than ekphrastic in its

⁵³ Cf. pp. 95, 106–7, 180–4.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., notes to pp. 41, 91, 98, 106.

⁵⁵ See notes to pp. 39, 44, 45, 102, 115, 116, 119, 124.

⁵⁶ See Ronald S. Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance during the English Renaissance* (Menasha, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1919), p. 7. Cf., however, notes to pp. 118, 193, 198, for the likely influence of one episode in *Amadis de Gaule*.

⁵⁷ Cf. John J. O'Connor, *'Amadis de Gaule' and Its Influence on Elizabethan Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), pp. 4, 98, 110.

⁵⁸ *Tom a Lincolne*, ed. Hirsch, p. xiv.

⁵⁹ Cf. Hans Werner Willkomm, *Über Richard Johnsons 'Seven Champions of Christendom' (1596)* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1911), pp. 134–54, which provides a catalogue of the different rhetorical devices employed in *7Ch*.

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 138–9.

effect: for example, 'Thus sorrow was his companion, and dispaire his chiefe soliciter, till *Hiperion* with his golden Coach had thirtie times rested in *Thetis* purple Pallace, & *Cynthia* thirtie times daunst vppon the Christall waues ...' is a rather long-winded way of telling us that St George's sufferings continued for a month.⁶¹ More effective is Johnson's employment of homely images in a plain style, as when he describes how George and Sabra, having lost their way in the forest, 'were constrained to wander in the Wildernes like solitarie Pilgrims ... euen as a childe when hee hath lost himselfe in a populous Cittie, runneth vp and downe not knowing how to returne to his natiue dwelling'.⁶²

A favourite stylistic device of Johnson's, particularly in set speeches, is the use of balance and antithesis in combination with repetition, as in Osmond's lament for the loss of his power:

I that was wont to couer the Seas with Fleetes of ships, now stand amazed to heare the Christians Drums, that sound fourth dolefull Funerals for my souldiers: I that was wont with armed Legions to drinke vp riuers as wee marched, and made the earth to groane with bearing the number of our multitudes: I that was wont to make whole kingdomes tremble at my frownes, and force imperious Potentates to humble at my feete: I that haue made the streetes of many a Cittie run with blood, and stooede reiocyng when I saw their buildings burne: I that haue made the mothers wombs the Infants toombes, and caused Cradles for to swimme in streames of blood, may nowe behold my Countries ruine, my kingdomes fall, & mine owne fatall ouerthrow.⁶³

Sometimes Johnson's striving for effect results in downright absurdity: Lord Albert, bewailing the theft of his infant son, cries:

O that the winde would be a messenger and bring me happie newes of his abode: if hee bee drenched in the deepest Seas, thether will I diue to fetch him vp: if hee bee hidden in the cauerns of the earth, thether will I digge to see my sonne: or if hee like a feathered foule lye houering in the ayre, yet thether will I flie, and imbrace him that neuer yet my eyes behelde.⁶⁴

Still more bathetic is the description of St Denis's distress on finding himself transformed into a hart:

Thus discribed hee his owne miserie, till the watrie teares of calamitie gushed in such aboundance from the Conduits of his eyes, that they seemed to quench the burning thunder-bolts of heauen, & his scorching sighes so violently forced from his bleeding breast, that they seemed to dim the brightnes of the sunne; whereat the vntamed Beares, & merciles Tygers relented at his mones, and like to harmeles Lambes sate bleating in the woods to heare his wofull exclamations.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Quoted from p. 20.

⁶² Quoted from p. 124.

⁶³ Quoted from p. 137.

⁶⁴ Quoted from p. 7.

⁶⁵ Quoted from p. 26.

Another aspect of Johnson's rhetorical aspirations is the introduction into his prose narrative of passages of verse. Although these sometimes convey useful information to the reader or to other characters within the story,⁶⁶ they are on the whole more ornamental than functional: that is to say, they never carry any significant narrative weight. They tend to be either oracular and prophetic or elegiac and lyrical,⁶⁷ perhaps the most effective as verse being Rossalinde's 'swan song' and Sabra's 'sorrowfull Dittie' lamenting her prolonged separation from St George;⁶⁸ these themselves depend heavily upon such stylistic and rhetorical devices as apostrophe, alliteration and repetition.

One stylistic feature of *7Ch* that appears not to have been remarked hitherto is the contrast between Parts I and II. Part I is by far the more dependent on literary sources, which are sometimes quoted verbatim;⁶⁹ at times, indeed, Johnson appears to have inserted direct quotations of lines of verse into his prose: for example, '*Thetis tripping on the siluer sandes*'; 'the Doues did kisse when they beganne to sing ...'; 'Haue I had power to rend the vales of earth, and shake the mightie mountaines with my charmes?'.⁷⁰ Not only is Part II far less allusive than Part I, but it gives the impression of being a more careless composition altogether, as though Johnson was resting on the laurels of his success with Part I and was not always fully engaged with his own narrative. In the adventure of the golden fountain, for example, St James's encounter with the giant, and its outcome, are dealt with in a single sentence:

Thus in this gallant manner departed he from the Lewes habitation, leauing the other Champions at their deuine contemplations for his happie successe, but his fortune chanced contrarie to his wishes, for at the Giants first encounter he was likewise born to the rock of stone, to accompany Saint *Denis*.⁷¹

Sometimes Johnson experiments with different rhetorical or stylistic devices but then, apparently, loses interest or confidence in them, so that they fall rather flat. An example of this occurs in the account of Rosana's combat with the magician:

Rosana who saw his determination, did procure to defend her selfe, and offend her enemy.

Oh my muse that I had such learned eloquence, for to set out and declare the noble incounters of these two gallant warriors: *Rosana* although shee was but a Feminin nature, yet was she as bolde in heroycall aduentures as any Knight in the world, except the Christian Champions.

But now to retorne we to our historie ...⁷²

⁶⁶ See, e.g., George's appearance to Sabra in a dream (pp. 22–3), Eglantine's account of her own transformation into a mulberry tree (pp. 26–7), and Sabra's affirmation of her continued fidelity to St George (pp. 72–3).

⁶⁷ See, e.g., pp. 6–7, 57–8, 126–7, 208–9 (prophetic); pp. 39–40, 107–8, 225–6 (lyrical).

⁶⁸ See pp. 39–40, 72–3.

⁶⁹ See, e.g., notes to pp. 6, 7, 12–15, 41.

⁷⁰ See pp. 81, 142, 143.

⁷¹ Quoted from p. 169.

⁷² Quoted from p. 235.

Most striking of all is the anti-climactic ending of Part II, which fizzles out with the happy conclusion to the adventures of a distinctly secondary (if not tertiary) character, Pollemus. It is not until the 1616 redaction that Johnson brings his narrative to a proper close, with the deaths of the Seven Champions, and signs off with an appropriate peroration.⁷³

One area in which Part II takes rather *more* care than Part I is in the use of embedded narrative. Both parts contain episodes in which subsidiary characters pour out their woes to one or more of the protagonists. In Part I, they tend to recount events which they cannot possibly have witnessed, and which only an omniscient narrator could know (as in Ormondine's account of '*the miserie of his children*' in Chapter X). In Part II, on the other hand, Johnson is more careful to ensure that he has in place some narrative device by means of which secret events can become more generally known – as in Chapter VI, where Leoger's gruesome rape and murder of the shepherd's younger daughter are revealed partly through the introduction of the character of the faithful squire, partly through the narrative device of the dream in which the unfortunate girl herself recounts her 'vnhappie fortunes' to her father.⁷⁴

Whatever the stylistic infelicities of *7Ch*, and the occasional absurdities of its plot, these features seem to have had no effect on the work's popular appeal. Johnson published Part II only a year after Part I, 'being thertoo encouraged by [the gentle reader's] greate curtesie in the kinde acceptation of my first part'.⁷⁵ The two parts were re-issued together, with only minor textual changes, in 1608; in 1616 they appeared again, this time with more substantial modification, including the addition of seven new chapters to the end of Part II:

CHAP. XVII

Of the renowned and praise-worthy death of Saint *Patricke*, how hee buried his owne selfe: and for what cause the Irish-men to this day, doe weare their red Crosse vpon Saint *Patrickes* day.

CHAP. XVIII

Of the Honourable victory wonne by *S. Daudi* in *Wales*: of his death, and the cause why Leekes are by custome, of *Welsh-men* worne on *S. Daudis* day: with other things that hapned.

CHAP. XIX

How *S. Denis* was beheaded in his owne Country, and how by a miracle shewed at his death, the whole Kingdome of *France* receiued the Christian Faith.

CHAP. XX

Of the tyrannous death that the Spanish Champion was put vnto: and how God reuenged the same in a strange manner: and of other things that hapened.

CHAP. XXI

Of the Honourable and worthy death of the *Italian* Champion, how in the height of his pleasure in his owne country, death by a Prophesie seized vpon him.

⁷³ See p. xxiv below.

⁷⁴ See pp. 182–3, 185–6.

⁷⁵ Quoted from p. 149.

CHAP. XXII

Of the Martyrdome of *S. Andrew* the Scottish Champion, and how his death was reuenged by the King of that Countrey, and by what meanes *Scotland* was brought vnto the Christian Faith.

CHAP. XXIII

Of the aduerture performed by *S. George*: how he receiued his death by the sting of a venemous Dragon: and of the honours and royalties done vnto his name being entituled our English Patron of Knighthood.

The final chapter describes the honours and offices conferred on St George's three sons (it is here, for the first time, that an association is made between the eldest and Guy of Warwick)⁷⁶ and concludes with the focus firmly back on St George himself, always the first among equals of the original Seven Champions:

[The King] likewise decreed by the consent of the whole Kingdome, that the Patron of the Land should be named *S. George*, our Christian Champion, in that he had fought so many battels in the honour of Christendome. All which we see (with many more honours) to this day here maintained in remembrance of this good Knight, who (no doubt) resteth in eternall peace with the other renowned Champions of Christendome: so God grant we may doe all. Amen.⁷⁷

In this extended version, *7Ch* was reprinted steadily throughout the seventeenth century.⁷⁸ Indeed, with its lustful giants and deflowered virgins, not to mention the outlandish adventures associated with heroes who are nominally champions of Christendom, it is likely to have played a significant part in provoking the hostility towards popular romance that persisted throughout this period.

The most famous example of disapproval of this particular work is expressed by John Bunyan: in *Sighs from Hell* (1657), the condemned soul, looking back on his misspent youth, is made to say: 'The Scriptures, thought I, what are they? A dead letter, a little ink and paper ... Give me a ballad, a news-book, *George on Horseback* or *Bevis of Southampton* ...'.⁷⁹ Bunyan's attitude towards such works as *7Ch* and *BH* was, however, distinctly ambivalent: on the one hand, he inveighed against 'filthy ballads and romances';⁸⁰ on the other, these popular works clearly appealed to his imagination, furnishing him with the raw material for much of his allegory.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Guy is created Earl of Warwick; Alexander becomes 'Captaine generall of [the King's] Knights of Chiuallrie'; David becomes the King's cupbearer (sig. Cc3^v).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *STC* and *Wing* between them list twenty-two editions between 1616 and 1700. See also Willkomm, *Über Richard Johnsons 'Seven Champions of Christendom' (1596)*, pp. 2–6.

⁷⁹ *The Entire Works of John Bunyan*, ed. Henry Stebbing, vol. I (London: Virtue, 1859), pp. 126–78 (p. 166^a).

⁸⁰ 'Life and Death of Mr Badman' and 'The Holy War', ed. John Brown, Cambridge English Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), p. 213.

⁸¹ Harold Golder, 'Bunyan's Valley of the Shadow', *Modern Philology*, 27 (1929), 55–72 (pp. 59–64), and 'Bunyan and Spenser', *PMLA*, 45 (1930), 216–37 (p. 217), concludes that Bunyan undoubtedly knew *7Ch* and used it in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Cf., however,

Johnson's romance also seems to have had some influence on variant versions of the Mummings' Play, though scholars disagree as to the extent of that influence.⁸² The cast of characters often includes St George and 'the Morocco King', and St George's description of his own past exploits in, for example, the Minehead Mummings' Play is clearly influenced by *7Ch*'s version of events:

I am a famous champion,
Likewise a worthy knight,
And from Britain did I spring
And will uphold her might.
I travelled countries far and near,
As you may understand,
Until at last I did arrive
In the Egyptian land.
Wherein that horrid fight
With the fiery dragon bold,
Did neither overcome, nor kill,
Nor make my blood run cold.
I fought the cursed dragon and brought him to the slaughter,
And for that deed did win the King of Egypt's daughter.⁸³

More directly based on *7Ch* is John Kirke's play *The Seven Champions of Christendome* (1638).⁸⁴ This five-act blank-verse drama retains the outline of certain episodes in Johnson's romance (notably those of Kalyb, the Egyptian dragon, Ormondine and Blanderon), but with substantial modifications. Some episodes, such as that of the dragon, are related by the Chorus; others are omitted altogether. Comic relief is introduced in the person of the clown Suckabus, one of many characters who have no counterpart in *7Ch*. The play ends with the marriage of Sts Anthony, Denis and Patrick to the transformed swan princesses (here reduced in number to three) and with dancing at their nuptials, before the departure of the champions abroad 'for fame of Christendome'.

Willkomm, *Über Richard Johnsons 'Seven Champions of Christendom' (1596)*, p. 158, where the influence of *7Ch* on Bunyan is minimized.

⁸² See Sir Edmund Chambers, *The English Folk-Play* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 174–85; R. J. E. Tiddy, *The Mummings' Play* (1923; repr. Chicheley: Minet, 1972), passim; Alan Brody, *The English Mummings and Their Plays: Traces of Ancient Mystery* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1970]), pp. 46–52; Alex Helm, *The English Mummings' Play*, Mistletoe Series 14 (Woodbridge: Brewer for the Folklore Society, 1980), pp. 4–8. See also Fellows, 'Bevis redivivus', p. 261, on the influence of *BH* (Johnson's single most significant source in *7Ch*) on the Mummings' Play.

⁸³ See Helm, *The English Mummings' Play*, p. 74.

⁸⁴ *The Seven Champions of Christendome. Acted at the Cocke-pit, and at the Red-Bull in St Johns Streete, with a generall liking. And never Printed till this Yeare 1638. Written by J.K.* (London: Printed by J. Okes, 1638). It has been suggested, on stylistic grounds, that Thomas Heywood may have had a part in the composition of this work: see Paul Merchant, 'Thomas Heywood's hand in *The Seven Champions of Christendom*', *Library*, 3rd series, 33:3 (1978), 226–30.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Johnson's romance was affected by two significant changes. One of these was the addition in 1686 of a third part, which recounts the adventures of the original Seven Champions' sons;⁸⁵ the other was the appearance of the first chapbook versions of *7Ch*.

Chapbooks, which had begun to appear by the 1670s,⁸⁶ are notoriously hard to date. The earliest chapbook of *7Ch* listed in Wing is tentatively dated to 1700,⁸⁷ though there is some evidence that chapbooks based on Johnson's romance may have been in circulation before that, even if they did not share its title: Samuel Pepys's collection includes one, *The Life and Death of the Famous Champion of England, St George*, which was advertised by its printer, W. Thackeray, in the 1680s and apparently based on parts of *7Ch*.⁸⁸ Certainly *7Ch*, or something like it, was available in a form suitable (one hopes!) for children (and therefore, probably, as a chapbook) by 1709, when it was described by Steele in the *Tatler* as being among the favourite books of Mr Bickerstaffe's little godson.⁸⁹

Attention in the chapbooks is fairly equally divided between the original Seven Champions; there is no account of their sons (all the episodes included, with the exception of those of the champions' deaths, are from Part I), and very little of their lady loves – indeed, Sabra is barely mentioned. Verse is used where the

⁸⁵ *The Famous History of the Seven Champions of Christendom. The Third Part. Shewing The Valiant Acts and Renowned Achievements of St George's Three Sons, Sir Guy, Sir Alexander, and Sir David. AS ALSO The Warlike Exploits and Martial performances of Sir Turpin son to St Denis of France, Sir Pedro son to St James of Spain, Sir Orlando son to St Anthony of Italy, Sir Ewin son to St Andrew of Scotland, sir Phelim Son of St Patrick of Ireland, and Sir Owen son to St David of Wales. Their strange Fights and Combats with Gyants, Monsters, and Dragons, their Tilts and Turnaments in Honour of Ladies, their Battles with Miscreants and Tyrants in defence of the Christian Religion, and relief of distressed Knights and Ladies, their punishing of Negromancers, and putting to an end their enchantments, with other their knightly Prowess and Chevalry. AS ALSO How St George's three Sons came all of them to be Kings, as the Fairy Queen had Prophetied of them. Licensed, May the 29th. 1685. R.L.S.* (London: printed by J.R. for Benj. Harris at the Anchor and Marriner in Thread-needle, [1686]). (Wing J806.) The work is attributed to William Winstanley in Heinrich F. Plett, 'An Elizabethan best seller: Richard Johnson's *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596)', in *Modes of Narrative: Approaches to American, Canadian and British Fiction presented to Helmut Bonheim*, ed. Reingard M. Nischik and Barbara Korte (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990), pp. 234–51 (p. 236), where, however, no reason for the attribution is offered and the date is given as 1696.

⁸⁶ See 'Guy of Warwick' and Other Chapbook Romances: *Six Tales from the Popular Literature of Pre-Industrial England*, ed. John Simons (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), p. 16.

⁸⁷ Wing J809B.

⁸⁸ See Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 227–9; Chambers, *The English Folk-Play*, p. 179.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: the Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Athlone Press, 1964), p. 31; F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd edn, rev. Brian Alderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 32.

original work uses it (and sometimes where it does not), but this is rewritten in a more modern idiom. Thus Kalyb's prophetic pronouncement to Alfred becomes:

Sir Knight begone and mark me well,
 Within the lady's womb doth dwell,
 A son, who like a dragon fierce,
 His mother's tender womb shall pierce,
 A valiant champion he shall be,
 In noble acts and chivalry,
 Begone, I now bid you adieu:
 You'll find what I have told is true.⁹⁰

The scenes of rape and violence that abound in Johnson's work are all omitted, and there is nothing that would have been unsuitable reading for the children who seem to have constituted the principal part of the chapbook's public during the eighteenth century.⁹¹

Chapbooks of *7Ch* continued to be printed throughout the eighteenth century, together with longer versions of Johnson's work. By the end of the century, the romance was being published on both sides of the Atlantic,⁹² and (though the chapbook versions had largely died out by this time) it was steadily reprinted throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.⁹³ Many of these later editions seem to have been designed specifically for children: an edition of 1816 was published in the New Juvenile Library series, and one of 1862 was 'especially adapted for the enlightenment, edification, and instruction of the rising generation'.⁹⁴ Naturally, any explicitly sexual content was much reduced in such versions: in an edition of 1861, for example, the following account is given of the transformation of the swan princesses:

... when the cruel giant Blanderon espied us, as he walked upon his battlements, he suddenly descended the mountain, and fetched us all under his arm up into the castle, where ever since we have lived in great slavery; and, for my six sisters, he turned their comely bodies into the shape of milk-white swans.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Quoted from *'Guy of Warwick' and Other Chapbook Romances*, ed. Simons, p. 82; cf. pp. 6–7 below. The *7Ch* chapbook edited by Simons was printed in Shrewsbury in the 1730s.

⁹¹ See the passage from *Tristram Shandy*, ch. 20, quoted in Darton, *Children's Books in England*, p. 80; and cf. Gillian Avery, 'Books for the first enterers', *Signal*, 75 (1994), 194–208 (p. 202).

⁹² An edition was published by Stewart & Cochran in Philadelphia in 1794, and another by Samuel Preston in Amherst, New Hampshire, in 1799.

⁹³ See Willkomm, *Über Richard Johnsons 'Seven Champions of Christendom' (1596)*, pp. 7–8.

⁹⁴ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *The Extraordinary Adventures of the Seven Champions of Christendom* (London: Griffin, Bohn, [1861]), p. 55. Cf. p. 42 below, from which a whole paragraph is here omitted. A still more highly sanitized version of this same episode occurs in a retelling of *7Ch* by Rose Yeatman Woolf, published by Raphael Tuck in the 1920s; here Blanderon transforms the

During the nineteenth century, two pantomimic stage adaptations of *7Ch* appeared: one (under the title *St George and the Dragon*), by Gilbert A Beckett and Mark Lemon, in the 1830s; the other, by the prolific author of such 'fairy extravaganzas' James Robinson Planché, in 1879. Neither of these works treats its subject-matter with any reverence, but both seem to assume their audience's familiarity with some version of Johnson's romance, depending on it for many of their humorous effects. That such familiarity *could* be assumed is evident from the many literary references to *7Ch* throughout the century.⁹⁶ A painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Wedding of Saint George and the Princess Sabra* (now in the Tate Gallery, London), dates from 1854;⁹⁷ there was even a card game of the Seven Champions, produced in Manchester in 1858;⁹⁸ and in 1898 no lesser a literary luminary than G. K. Chesterton wrote a play for toy theatre based on the romance.⁹⁹

A few illustrated, and mostly abridged, versions of *7Ch* appeared in the early years of the twentieth century, but the stream of editions which had been flowing steadily for over three hundred years was at last beginning to dwindle to a trickle. In our own time, the work has been little read and less studied. Histories of the prose fiction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries barely mention it,¹⁰⁰ and no extended study of it has been published since Willkomm's monograph in 1911; there has never been a scholarly edition of the work. Typical of the responses to it are that it is 'virtually unreadable' and the work of 'a writer for the illiterate'.¹⁰¹ Perhaps it is time that it was reassessed: after all, generations of readers found it far from 'unreadable'. It may not be possible to hail it as a neglected literary masterpiece, but an informed understanding of its place in literary history might be expected to further our understanding of the popular culture of over three centuries.

princesses, who are depicted as young children, into swans because they are 'too small and thin to be worth eating' (p. 71).

⁹⁶ E.g. Washington Irving, *A History of New York ... by Diedrich Knickerbocker* (1809), vol. II, book vi, ch. 7; William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, v.344; W. M. Thackeray, *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* (1856), ch. 19; Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (1878), ch. 5; John Ruskin, *Præterita*, vol. I (1885), ch. 1.

⁹⁷ I am grateful to Dr Gillian Rogers for drawing my attention to this painting.

⁹⁸ See Willkomm, *Über Richard Johnsons 'Seven Champions of Christendom' (1596)*, p. 8.

⁹⁹ See Peter Baldwin, *Toy Theatres of the World* (London: Zwemmer, 1992), pp. 145–7. A toy theatre version of *7Ch* was available as late as the 1970s: see 'Guy of Warwick' and *Other Chapbook Romances*, ed. Simons, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Plett, 'An Elizabethan best seller', p. 235.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Helm, *The English Mummings' Play*, p. 4; Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel: the Elizabethan Age and After* (London: Witherby, 1929), p. 197.

The Text

The editions consulted in the preparation of the text are as follows:

1 THE MOST / famous History of the / Seauen Champions of Christendome: Saint / *George* of England, Saint *Dennis* of Fraunce, / Saint *James* of Spaine, Saint *Anthonie* of / Italie, Saint *Andrew* of Scotland, Saint / *Patricke* of Ireland, and Saint / *Dauid* of Wales. // Shewing their Honorable battailes / by Sea and Land: their Tilts, Iousts, and Tur- / naments for Ladies: their Combats with / *Giants*, *Monsters*, and *Dragons*: their / aduentures in forraine Nations: their / *Inchauntments in the holie Land: their* / Knighthoods, Prowesse, and Chiuallrie, / in Europe, Affrica, and Asia, with / their victories against the ene- / mies of Christ. // [Printer's ornament.] // AT LONDON / Printed for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be sold at his / shop, at the Royall Exchange. / 1596.

Quarto in 4s: A–Dd⁴; lacks end. Page and signature numbers. Errors in pagination: 21 for 31; 123 for 124; 124 for 125; 125–200 for 128–203; 200–4 for 204–8. Running heads: (verso) *The Honorable Historie of*; (recto) *the seuen* [or *seauen*] *Champions of Christendome*. Unique surviving copy in Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California (imperfect). STC 14677.

2 The second Part of / the famous History of the sea- / uen Champions of Christen- / dome. / Likewise shewing the Princely prowesse of / *Saint Georges three Sonnes*, the *liuely* / Sparke of Nobilitie. // *With many other memoriall atchiuements* / worthy the golden spurres of / Knighthood. // [Printer's ornament.] // LONDON, / Printed for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to / be solde at his shop, vnder the / Royall Exchange / 1597.

Quarto in 4s: A–Aa⁴; Bb³. No page numbers. Errors in signatures: A2 for B2; M2 followed by M, M2, M3, [M4]; Z3 occurs twice. Errors in chapter numbering: VI for VII; XII occurs twice. Running heads: (verso) *The second Part of*; (recto) *the seuen Champions*. Unique copy in British Library, London. STC 14678.

3 THE MOST FA- / MOVS HISTORY OF / the seuen Champions of Chri- / stendome: Saint *George* of Eng- / land, Saint *Denis* of Fraunce, Saint *James* / of Spayne, Saint *Anthony* of Italie, / Saint *Andrew* of Scotland, Saint / *Patricke* of Ireland, and / Saint *Dauid* of Wales; // Shewing their Honorable battailes by Sea / and Land: their Tilts, Iousts and Turnaments / for Ladies: their Combats with *Giants*, / *Monsters*, and *Dragons*: their aduentures / in forraine Nations: their inchaunt- / ments in the holy Land: their Knight- / hoods, Prowesse and Chiuallry [sic], in / Europe, Affrica, and Asia, / with their victories against / the enemies of Christ. // [Printer's ornament.] // LONDON / Printed for *Elizabeth Burbie*, and are to be sold at / her shop in Pauls Church-yard. / 1608.

Part II has a separate title-page:

The second part of / the famous Historie of the sea- / uen Champions of Christen- / dome. / Likewise shewing the Princely prowes of / *Saint Georges three Sonnes*, the *liuely* / Sparke of Nobilitie // *With many other memorable atchiuements* /

worthy the golden spurres of / Knighthood. // [Printer's ornament.] // LONDON, / Printed for *Elizabeth Burbie*, and are to / be solde at her shop, in Paules Churchyard / at the signe of the Swan 1608.

Quarto in 4s: A–Dd⁴, Ee³; A–Aa⁴, Bb³. Page numbers in Part I only. Errors in pagination: 31 for 30; 119 for 120; 102 for 121; 121–204 for 122–205; 203 for 206; 206–17 for 207–18. Running heads: (Part I, verso) *The Honorable Historie of the*; (Part I, recto) *seuen Champions of Christendome*; (Part II, verso) *The second Part [or part] of*; (Part II, recto) *the seuen Champions*. Copies in British Library, London; Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC (imperfect); New York Public Library (imperfect). *STC* 14679.

4 THE / FAMOVVS / HISTORIE OF / the Seauen Champions of / Christendome. // Saint GEORGE of *England*, Saint DENIS of *France*, / Saint IAMES of *Spaine*, Saint ANTHONY of *Italy*, / Saint ANDREW of *Scotland*, Saint PATRICKE / of *Ireland*, and Saint DAVID of *Wales*. / [Single rule.] / *The first Part*. [Single rule.] / Shewing their Honourable Battels by Sea / and Land: their Tilts, Iusts, Turnaments for Ladies: / their Combats with Giants, Monsters and Dragons: their aduentures in forraine Nations: their Inchantments / in the Holy Land: their Knighthoods, Prowesse and / Chiuallry, in *Europe*, *Africa*, and *Asia*, with their / victories against the enemies of *Christ*. // *Whereunto is added by the first Author, the true manner / of their deaths, being seauen famous Tragedies: and / how they came to be called the seauen Saints / of CHRISTENDOME.* / [Double rule.] / LONDON: / Printed by THOMAS SNODHAM. [1616]¹⁰²

Part II has a separate title-page:

THE / FAMOVVS / HISTORIE OF / the Seauen Champions of / Christendome. // [Single rule.] / *The second Part*. / [Single rule.] / *LIKEWISE* / Shewing the Princely Prowesse of Saint / GEORGES three Sonnes, the liuely / Sparkes of Nobilitie. / [Single rule.] / *Whereunto is added by the first Author, the true manner / of their deaths, being seauen famous Tragedies: and / how they came to be called the seauen Saints / of CHRISTENDOME.* / [Printer's ornament within single rules.] / LONDON: / Printed by THOMAS SNODHAM.

Quarto in 4s: A–Dd⁴, Ee³; A–Bb⁴, Cc³. Page numbers in Part I only. Errors in pagination: 33 for 29; 36 for 32; 29 for 33; 32 for 36; 131 followed by 132, 131, 132, 133; 131 for 139; 132 for 140; 123 for 141; 912 for 144; 129 for 145; 192 for 202. Errors in chapter numbering: (Part I) IIII for V; IIII for VI. Running heads: (Part I, verso) *The Honourable* [variously spelt] *History of the*; (Part I, recto) *seuen Champions of Christendome*.; (Part II, verso) *The second part of the*; (Part II, recto) *seauen Champions of Christendome*. Copies in British Library, London; Lincoln Cathedral Library; National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; Queen's College, Oxford (imperfect). *STC* 14680.

The text of this edition is based on the first printing of each part (numbers 1 and 2 above). The last two chapters of Part I have been supplied from the 1608 edition

¹⁰² The date appears at the end of Part I (p. 216).

(number 3), since they are lacking in the unique surviving copy of the first edition. Variants from later editions have been included only where they elucidate corrupt or obscure readings in the copy texts.

The transcription of the text is diplomatic except in the following respects: (1) patent errors that are clearly the compositor's have been corrected; except in the case of incorrect word-division, the unemended reading is shown in the footnotes; (2) *ée* has been transcribed as *ee*, and *vv* as *w*; (3) where a macron has been used to denote the suspension of a nasal (e.g. *vpō* for *vpon*), this has been silently expanded.

All the editions consulted are printed in black-letter, with proper nouns (usually) in roman type; I have represented the change of typeface by the use of italics (e.g. Saint *George* of *England*). The exception to this rule is in the transcription of the title-pages and preliminary matter, where black-letter is not used; here, therefore, italics represent the use of italic in the original.



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THE MOST
famous History of the
Seauen Champions of Christendome: Saint
George of England, Saint *Dennis* of Fraunce,
Saint *James* of Spaine, Saint *Anthonie* of
Italie, Saint *Andrew* of Scotland, Saint
Patricke of Ireland, and Saint
Dauid of Wales.

Shewing their Honorable battailes
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naments for Ladies: their Combats with
Giants, Monsters, and Dragons: their
aduentures in forraine Nations: their
Inchauntments in the holie Land: their
Knighthoods, Prowesse, and Chiualrie,
in Europe, Affrica, and Asia, with
their victories against the ene-
mies of Christ.

AT LONDON

Printed for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be sold at his
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