Studies in Medieval Romance

SIR BEVIS OF HAMPTON IN LITERARY TRADITION

Edited by
Jennifer Fellows
and Ivana Djordjević

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Sir Bevis of Hampton is one of the most widespread and important Middle English romances. This book – the first ever full-length study to be devoted to it – considers it in its historical and literary contexts, and its Anglo-Norman, Welsh, Irish and Icelandic versions. It also offers detailed textual analyses, and discusses particular aspects of the story, its 'afterlife' and its influence during the early modern period.

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JENNIFER FELLOWS
IVANA DJORDJEVIĆ

D. S. BREWER

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Contents

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Abbreviations and Sigla

Abbreviations

BHF	Jennifer L. Fellows, '*Sir Beves of Hampton*: Study and Edition', 5 vols (unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Cambridge, 1980)
BHK	*The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun* …, ed. Eugen Kölbing, EETS, ES 46, 48, 65 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. for the EETS, 1885–94)
Boeve	*Der anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. Albert Stimming, Bibliotheca Normannica 7 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1899; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974)
Bown	*Ystorya Bown de Hamtwn*, ed. Morgan Watkin (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1958)
Bs	*Bevers saga*, ed. Christopher Sanders, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi 51 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2001)
CFMA	Classiques français du moyen âge
EEBO	Early English Books Online
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
OS	Original Series
SATF	Société des anciens textes français
STC	*A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, ed. W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer, rev. edn, 3 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91)
Wing	*Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America and of English Books Printed in Other Countries 1641–1700*, ed. Donald G. Wing, 3 vols (New York: Columbia University Press for the Index Society, 1948–51)

Sigla

A	Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1 (Auchinleck MS)
B	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. d.208
C	Cambridge University Library, MS Ff.2.38
Cp	*Bevis* edition (1560?) by William Copland (*STC* 1988.8)
E	Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 175/96
G	*Bevis* edition (*c*. 1626) by G. W. for W. Lee (*STC* 1993)
K	*Bevis* edition (1582?) by Thomas East (*STC* 1990)
M	Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS 8009

N	Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS XIII.B.2
O	*Bevis* edition (*c*. 1503) by Richard Pynson (*STC* 1988)
Q	*Bevis* edition (1565?) by William Copland (STC 1989)
S	London, British Library, MS Egerton 2862
T	Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.13
V	*Bevis* edition (*c*. 1610) attributed to T. Snodham (*STC* 1992)
W	Fragments of a *Bevis* edition (*c*. 1533) by Wynkyn de Worde (*STC* 1988.6)

Boeve/Bevis: A Synopsis

The following plot summary is based on the Anglo-Norman narrative. Major differences between the Anglo-Norman (AN) and Middle English (ME) versions are indicated in parentheses.

The ten-year-old Boeve (the seven-year-old Bevis in the ME) is sold into slavery through the machinations of his wicked mother, who arranges the death of her elderly husband (Gui, earl of Southampton) at the hands of her lover Doun (unnamed in most ME texts), the emperor of Germany, whom she then marries. Bevis finds favour at the court of the pagan King Hermine of Egypt (Armenia in the ME), whose daughter Josiane falls in love with him and presents him with the horse Arundel. After Boeve has led Hermine's armies to victory against the invading King Brademond, Josiane declares her love; Boeve eventually agrees to love her provided that she embraces Christianity. At this point Boeve is falsely accused to the king of having seduced Josiane and is sent as a messenger to King Brademond in Damascus, bearing a letter which orders his own death. On the way he meets the son of his 'master'/foster-father Sabaoth (his uncle Saber in the ME), who is protecting his interests in England. Bevis is incarcerated in Brademond's dungeon, while Josiane is forced to marry King Yvori of Monbrant but manages to preserve her virginity.

After seven years Boeve escapes and, disguised as a palmer, comes to Yvori's castle. He rescues Josiane and Arundel and flees into the forest. Here he kills two lions and subdues the giant Escopart (Ascopard in the ME), who has been sent by Yvori to bring Josiane back, and who becomes Boeve's 'page'. The three travel to Cologne, where Boeve's uncle is bishop; Josiane and (in the AN but not in the ME) Escopart are baptized. (In the ME, Bevis proceeds to deliver the city from a dragon.)

Boeve returns to England to reclaim his lands, only to be recalled by Escopart to Cologne, where Josiane has been forced into marriage with Earl Miles. Having strangled him on their wedding-night, she is condemned to be burned at the stake but is rescued by Boeve and Escopart. They all go to England, where Boeve wrests his earldom from his stepfather. Doun comes to an ignominious end in a cauldron of boiling lead; his wife, the hero's mother, flings herself from a tower. Boeve and Josiane are married.

Boeve wins a race on Arundel at Whitsun and with the prize money builds Arundel Castle, but he is driven into exile when King Edgar's son attempts to steal Arundel and is kicked to death. A pregnant Josiane accompanies her husband into exile. After giving birth to twin sons in a forest, she is carried off by the traitor Escopart, who has again been sent in pursuit of her by Yvori.

Learning of Josiane's predicament through a dream, Sabaoth sets out to rescue her; he kills Escopart. For seven years, Sabaoth and Josiane seek Boeve, who meanwhile has married the duchess of Civile, though their marriage remains unconsummated. After the family is finally reunited, Boeve's son Gui becomes king of Egypt upon his maternal grandfather's death. Boeve kills Yvori in single combat and becomes king of Monbrant.

Boeve returns to England again, to support Sabaoth's son Robant against King Edgar. (In the ME, the king's steward stirs up the citizens of London against Bevis; a street battle ensues, in which Bevis kills many thousands of men.) The king sues for peace with Boeve, offering his daughter in marriage to Boeve's son Miles. Boeve and Josiane return to Monbrant, where they and Arundel all die on the same day.

Introduction

IVANA DJORDJEVIĆ and JENNIFER FELLOWS

Although it is relatively little known today, the story of Bevis of Hampton was among the most popular narratives of the medieval and early modern periods, its only serious rival in this respect being that of Guy of Warwick.[1] There are many parallels between the textual and reception histories of the English versions of *Bevis* and of *Guy*, but also considerable differences. Both are translations of Anglo-Norman texts that are generally regarded as 'ancestral romances', associated with particular aristocratic families and specific localities;[2] texts of both appear in two of the major medieval manuscript compilations of Middle English romances extant from the medieval period;[3] both were translated into Irish in the fifteenth century;[4] both were printed in the sixteenth century by Wynkyn de Worde and William Copland, the giants among Renaissance printers of medieval romance;[5] the 'vogue' of both continued well into the seventeenth century, both being repeatedly singled out in Humanist and Puritan denunciations of popular secular literature;[6] both Bevis and Guy have, to some extent, an extra-literary life as folk heroes;[7]

1 Cf. Ronald S. Crane, 'The vogue of "Guy of Warwick" from the close of the Middle Ages to the Romantic revival', *PMLA*, 30 (1915), 125–94; *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. by Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field, Studies in Medieval Romance (Cambridge: Brewer, 2007).

2 See, e.g., M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 139–75.

3 See *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 19.2.1*, introd. by Derek Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham (London: Scolar Press in association with the National Library of Scotland, 1977); *Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38*, introd. by Frances McSparran and P. R. Robinson (London: Scolar Press, 1979).

4 See 'The Irish lives of Guy of Warwick and Bevis of Hampton', ed. and trans. by F. N. Robinson, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 6 (1908), 9–180, 273–338.

5 See Carol M. Meale, 'Caxton, de Worde, and the publication of romance in late medieval England', *Library*, 14 (1992), 283–98; A. S. G. Edwards, 'William Copland and the identity of printed Middle English romance', in *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance*, ed. Phillipa Hardman (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002), pp. 139–47.

6 See Ronald S. Crane, *The Vogue of Medieval Chivalric Romance during the English Renaissance* (Menasha, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1919).

7 See, e.g., David Griffith, 'The visual history of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 110–32; Jennifer Fellows, 'Sir Bevis of Hampton in popular tradition', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, 42 (1986), 139–45.

scenes from both romances are (or were) represented in a variety of visual media.[8]

On the other hand, while *Guy* gave rise to a generically more diverse group of texts than did *Bevis*,[9] the latter is unique in having continued to be printed in its fifteenth-century metrical form from the beginning of the Tudor period until the early years of the eighteenth century.[10] The respective lengths of the two romances are probably significant here: only about one-third the length of *Guy*, *Bevis* would lend itself more readily to cheap production for a mass market. By contrast, *Guy* tended to be adapted and excerpted, as well as accruing self-contained episodes (such as that of the Dun Cow) that formed no part of the Middle English romance.[11] Curiously, given that the Guy of the romance that bears his name is not of noble birth, he was appropriated as an ancestor for the purposes of 'baronial propaganda' by the families associated with the earldom of Warwick in a way that the aristocratic Bevis seems not to have been by the earls of Arundel.[12] This is perhaps because Guy was, from early on, taken seriously by chroniclers (including Knighton, Hardyng and Holinshed) as a part of English history,[13] whereas the story of Bevis remained largely confined to the realms of fiction and folklore.

Bevis belongs to a much larger and more complex literary tradition than does Guy, versions of his story spreading throughout Europe during the medieval and early modern periods. In the heyday of Continental philology, with its source-hunting obsession, theories about the origins of the Bevis story were numerous and often fiercely argued over. It was suggested, for example, that it was of German origin, *Hamtone* being a misidentified town not far from Mainz; that the home of the earliest version was in north-western France; that the roots of the story were to be found in a tenth-century Viking saga and that King Hermin's country is not Armenia but Armorica, i.e. Brittany; that the story had to be of Celtic origin because adultery was a central motif in it; that this obviously Anglo-Saxon story was no more than an expanded and romanticized version of the tale of Horn; that the Persian–Armenian origin of the story was confirmed by its onomastics; that the story of Bevis was essentially the same as the story of Hamlet, ultimately derived from a conflation of the

8 Jessica Brantley, 'Images of the vernacular in the Taymouth Hours', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700*, 10 (2002), 83–113; Jennifer Fellows, 'Romance among the choir-stalls: Middle English romance motifs on English misericords', in *Profane Images in Marginal Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Elaine C. Block and Malcolm Jones (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

9 Cf. A. S. G. Edwards, 'The *Speculum Guy de Warwick* and Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*: the non-romance Middle English tradition', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 81–93.

10 See pp. 109–13 below.

11 Cf. Griffith, 'The visual history of Guy of Warwick', p. 116.

12 See Emma Mason, 'Legends of the Beauchamps' ancestors: the use of baronial propaganda in medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 10:1 (1984), 25–40.

13 See *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500*, ed. by J. Burke Severs, I: *Romances* (New Haven, CT: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967), p. 30; Griffith, 'The visual history of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, p. 118.

stories of Bellerophon and of Brutus; and so forth.[14] These views illustrate both the impossibility of establishing where the individual building-blocks of this not too original narrative came from and the difficulty, for these mostly Continental scholars, of separating the Insular versions of the narrative from the Continental ones with which they were also familiar – especially at a time when the dating of all these texts was even more uncertain and contentious than it is now.[15] We may smile at the foibles of our scholarly ancestors, but there is a reason for their perplexity: the story's pan-European success was so overwhelming that we should not be surprised to see its origins questioned. The Anglo-Norman version, whose Continental French reworkings inaugurated Bevis's triumphant eastward march across Europe, reversing the customary direction of *translatio studii*, featured a hero whose Englishness is more tenuous than subsequent English recastings would indicate.

In this respect further comparison with Guy of Warwick is illustrative. Mobilized for the promotion of a rather ostentatious kind of Englishness as early as its Anglo-Norman redactions, the story of Guy was enormously popular in England but did not spread very far beyond the area of English cultural influence. Thus both the fifteenth-century Irish *Life of Sir Guy* and the *Romaunt de Guy de Warwik et de Herolt d'Ardenne*, composed at roughly the same time in Continental French prose, appear to have been commissioned by English patrons;[16] and while some manuscripts of the French romance did make it to the Continent, they left no progeny. Guy's emphatic Englishness did not travel well; Bevis, on the other hand, did not acquire the status of national hero until he was translated into English (see Robert Allen Rouse's chapter below). The Anglo-Norman narrative was largely free of nationalist baggage, a feature that greatly facilitated its protean transformations in Europe. Only the Irish version, produced in the fifteenth century, was translated from a Middle English redaction; as suggested below by Erich Poppe and Regine Reck, it may have been produced for a family with strong ties to England.

14 For the views summarized above, see Pio Rajna, *Ricerche intorno ai 'Reali di Francia'* (Bologna: Romagnoli, 1872), p. 123 (Gaston Paris was of a similar opinion); Max Deutschbein, *Studien zur Sagengeschichte Englands* (Cöthen: Schulze, 1906), p. 205; Hermann Suchier, 'Nachtrag', in *Der anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. by Albert Stimming, Bibliotheca Normannica 7 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1899; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), pp. cxcv–cxcvi; Richard Wülker, *Geschichte der englischen Literatur von den älteste Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipzig; Vienna: Bibliographisches Institut, 1896), p. 98; Prentiss C. Hoyt, 'The home of the Beves saga', *PMLA*, 17:2 (1902), 237–46; Franz Settegast, *Quellenstudien zur galloromanischen Epik* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1904), pp. 338–69; Rudolf Zenker, *Boeve–Amlethus* (Berlin: Felber, 1905).

15 A further problem is posed by the relationship between the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* and the Provençal *chanson de geste* of *Daurel et Beton* – a puzzle as yet without a satisfactory explanation: see *A Critical Edition of the Old Provençal Epic 'Daurel et Beton'*, ed. by Arthur S. Kimmel, University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures 108 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), esp. pp. 43–6.

16 See Martha W. Driver, ' "In her owne persone semly and bewteus": representing women in stories of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Wiggins and Field, pp. 133–53 (p. 134).

All the other European versions go back to the Anglo-Norman text and its descendants, in a tradition that places little emphasis on the hero's national origins. *Boeve* was the source of the Middle Welsh *Ystorya Bown o Hamtwn*, discussed here by Poppe and Reck, who study it alongside the Early Modern Irish *Stair Bibuis*; it was also the original of the Icelandic *Bevers saga*, examined in this volume by its editor, Christopher Sanders.[17] The paucity of extant manuscripts of *Boeve* cannot be a true reflection of the story's popularity in the century after its composition. A much better indicator of its attractiveness is the alacrity with which it was translated and otherwise appropriated. Within a few decades of its composition, most convincingly dated to the last decade of the twelfth century or the first few years of the thirteenth,[18] *Boeve* was translated into Welsh (around the middle of the thirteenth century).[19] The Icelandic translation is harder to date, but it too may have originated in the thirteenth century, as Sanders argues. There are two Faroese ballads of Boeve, *Bevusar tættir* and *Bevusar ríma*, based on material from the first few chapters of *Bevers saga*.[20]

Three Continental French verse redactions, all from the thirteenth century, expanded the briskly compact Anglo-Norman narrative to between ten and twenty thousand lines.[21] The story was then recast in French prose in the early fifteenth century, in a redaction that subsequently went through several printings.[22] From north-eastern France, the Bevis material eventually made its way to the Netherlands, where a verse redaction, of which little remains, preceded a much better-documented prose adaptation, printed texts of which begin to appear in the first decade of the sixteenth century.[23]

It was, however, the story's southward move to Italy that was crucial to its subsequent dissemination as far as Russia and to its enduring appeal. The various stages in its journey were marked by narrative transformations, sometimes of a very radical nature. In Italy we encounter a multiplicity of versions composed in different dialects, shaped into different prosodic forms, and performing different functions in the broader context of the Italian narrative

17 *Bevers saga*, ed. by Christopher Sanders, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi 51 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 2001).

18 See Judith Weiss, 'The date of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumton*e', *Medium Ævum*, 55 (1986), 237–41.

19 See p. 37 n. 3 below.

20 On the Faroese ballads, see ibid., pp. cxxxv–cxxxvi; 'Bevusar tættir', ed. by N. Djurhuus, in *Fóroya kvæði*, Corpus Carminum Færoensium 5 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1968), pp. 309–12; Michael Chesnutt, '*Bevussrímur* and *Bevusar tættir*: a case study of Icelandic influence on Faroese balladry', in *Opuscula*, vol. XII, ed. by Britta Olrik Frederiksen, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 44 (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 2005), pp. 399–437.

21 *Der festländische Bueve de Hantone,* ed. by Albert Stimming, 5 vols, Gesellschaft für romanische Literatur 25, 30, 34, 41, 42 (Dresden: Niemeyer, 1911–20).

22 Marie-Madeleine Ival, *Beufves de Hantonne: Version en prose* (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA; Marseilles: Lafitte, 1984).

23 See *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes: Characters in Medieval Narrative Traditions and Their Afterlife in Literature, Theatre and the Visual Arts*, ed. by Willem P. Gerritsen and Anthony G. van Melle, trans. by Tanis Guest (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), p. 63.

tradition. Franco-Venetian *cantari* of the fourteenth century were followed by several Tuscan versions in *ottava rima*, as well as versions in prose. A 1497 printing of a verse tale of Buovo (or Bovo) d'Antona, as the hero is usually called in Italian, was the source of Elia Levita Bachur's translation into Yiddish, *Bovo-Buch*, composed in 1507 and first published in Venice in 1541.[24] *Bovo-Buch* was one of the most popular narratives in Yiddish secular literature for five hundred years; it was translated into Romanian as late as 1881. In Italy itself, an important fourteenth-century Franco-Italian redaction, which formed part of a compilation attempting to merge different stories from the Carolingian cycle into a unified whole, served as the basis of Andrea da Barberino's lengthy prose romance *I reali di Francia*, written around the turn of the fifteenth century, first printed in 1491, and endlessly reprinted throughout the sixteenth century.[25] Readers familiar with the Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions might not immediately recognize the much-amplified story or some of the characters. Sabot is here called Sinibaldo, though his son is still recognizable as Teris or Terigi, just as the hero's father remains recognizable under his lightly Italianized name, Guido. The boy's mother, who was nameless in the Insular texts, is here called Brandoria and is still an odd combination of the *malmariée* and the wicked stepmother, arranging to have her husband killed by her lover, Duodo di Maganza, and plotting the death of her son too. As in the Insular versions, merchants sell the young Buovo to King Erminione of Erminia. In due course the hero acquires a horse, Rondello, and attracts the attention of the king's daughter, Drusiana. Adventures and characters proliferate, diverging more and more from earlier versions of the story and yet preserving its overall shape. Names change, sometimes beyond recognition, but Yvori is still identifiable in Marcabruno, and Bradmund in Lucafero. Escopart, no longer a giant, has become Pulicane, half-man, half-dog, product of the unnatural union of a woman and a mastiff. In spite of all these, and many other, substantial changes, the principal episodes of the original narrative remain in place until the latter part of the text, when Buovo engages in military campaigns in Central and South-Eastern Europe (rather than in the Middle East), before dying at the hands of his half-brother Gailone.

It is in this form that the story attained its greatest popularity and, from the sixteenth century, spread eastwards by way of Venice. In 1549, twenty copies of the Italian *Buovo d'Antona* were shipped from Venice to Ragusa.[26] With its sizeable population of educated Slavs fluent in Italian, this city-state on the Adriatic coast (present-day Dubrovnik, Croatia), was ideally placed to act as a conduit for Western cultural goods; thus when the story surfaced in

24 Elia Levita Bachur, *Bovo-Buch*, trans. by Jerry C. Smith (Tucson, AR: Fenestra, 2003).

25 Andrea da Barberino, *I reali di Francia*, ed. by Giuseppe Vandelli and Giovanni Gambarin (Bari: Laterza, 1947).

26 Veselin Kostić, *Kulturne veze izmedju jugoslovenskih zemalja i Engleske do 1700. godine* (Belgrade: SANU, 1972), pp. 359–60.

a Byelorussian manuscript (now in Poznań, Poland) a few decades later, it was in a form that showed clearly both its derivation from an Italian version current in Venice and traces of its passage through Balkan lands.[27] The quickly multiplying Russian versions can all be traced back to the Byelorussian text represented by the Poznań manuscript. It is in Russia that Bevis, now called Bova, reached the apex of his social ascent. Whereas in the West the story was almost certainly never read at royal courts, in 1693 an illustrated copy of a Russian redaction was among the books enjoyed by Peter the Great's young son Alexis. The tsarevich must have made good use of the book, 'many pages of which were torn out and spoiled', as was recorded at the time.[28] In Russia the story appealed to all social strata and was transmitted orally, in manuscript form, in chapbooks and broadsheets, well into the nineteenth and, in the case of oral folk narratives, the twentieth century.

In Italy too there is evidence of continuing interest in the story beyond the sixteenth century. In the 1750s, the Italian composer Tommaso Traetta capitalized on the popularity of Buovo d'Antona and, armed with a libretto by Carlo Goldoni, turned a romantic episode from the story into a *dramma giocoso* or comic opera in three acts, first performed in Venice in 1758.[29] The comedy must have derived part of its appeal from a radical reversal of the audience's expectations. To the extent that they were familiar with Buovo's life and adventures, listeners would have expected his courtship of the Erminian princess Drusiana to result in their marriage, as in the narrative tradition; instead, Drusiana is tricked into marrying Buovo's rival Maccabruno, while the hero, after some aristocratic misgivings, finds happiness with Menichina, a miller's daughter. In some parts of Italy, just as in Russia, Buovo's exploits attracted and entertained popular audiences as recently as the twentieth century. This was the case in Sicily, where the story became part of the repertoire of storytellers (*cuntastorie*) and puppeteers (*pupari*), who helped preserve the name and fame of Buovo, his father and his twin sons. Sephardic ballads, ultimately derived from the Continental French *Beuve*, were sung on Rhodes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[30]

A seventeenth-century Russian copy of the story ends with the assurance that 'Bova's fame shall endure henceforth unto all generations'. The words were prophetic, at least for a century or two. The fame of Bova/Bevis/Boeve/Buovo/Beuve/Bovo no longer endures, but few other medieval heroes can boast of such a long, distinguished, and socially and geographically wide-ranging career.

27 For an in-depth study of the Russian versions of the story, see V. D. Kuzmina, *Rytsarskii roman na Rusi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), pp. 17–132, 245–64.

28 *History of Russian Literature, 11th–17th Centuries*, ed. by Dimitry Likhachev, trans. by Kathleen Cook-Horujy (Moscow: Raduga, 1989), p. 472.

29 A recording made in 1994 and conducted by Alan Curtis, with the tenor Howard Crook in the title role, is available on the Opus 111 label.

30 *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes*, ed. Gerritsen and van Melle, pp. 63–4.

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The scope of this volume is limited to the Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*, the Middle English *Sir Bevis of Hampton*, and their direct descendants. In common with most popular romances and their *chanson de geste* sources, *Boeve/Bevis* received very little serious scholarly or critical attention until twenty or thirty years ago. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, attention was focused primarily on sources and analogues and on the interrelationships of the various European versions of the story; [31] the approach in such scholarship was literary-historical rather than critical. The boom in medieval translation studies in the past quarter-century or so has, however, generated increased interest in processes of linguistic and cultural translation in relation to 'popular' texts; along with this has come a belated recognition of the literary qualities of such works and a growing appreciation of their poetics. At the same time, Anglo-Norman literature has become more and more a subject of serious study – with particular emphasis on its social, political and historical contexts. With the burgeoning of codicological studies and the production of Scolar Press facsimiles of two important romance collections in the 1970s,[32] the Middle English *Bevis* came to be considered in its manuscript context, in its thematic relation to other texts (particularly romances) that appear in the same anthologies. Foremost among collections that have been studied in this way is the Auchinleck MS, which has attracted the attention of, among others, postcolonialist and feminist critics – the primary focus being on issues of national, religious and gender identity as they are reflected in this manuscript.[33] Book history has also been a growth area in recent years, as has the literary-historical study of the post-medieval reception and influence of Middle English texts.[34]

All these approaches are reflected in the present volume. Marianne Ailes discusses the genre and technique of the Anglo-Norman *Boeve*, relating its stylistic features to the rhetoric of the schools. Erich Poppe and Regine Reck, Christopher Sanders, and Ivana Djordjević all deal with issues of translation and cultural transfer – from Anglo-Norman to Welsh, Icelandic and Middle English, and from Middle English to Irish. Judith Weiss examines the character of the hero's *mestre*, Sabaot, in *Boeve* in relation to social practices in Anglo-

31 Cf., e.g., Christian Boje, *Über den altfranzösischen Roman von Beuve de Hamtone*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie 19 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1909); John E. Matzke, 'The oldest form of the Beves legend', *Modern Philology*, 10 (1912/13), 19–54.

32 See n. 3 above.

33 E.g. Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), passim; Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript*, Studies in Medieval History and Culture (London; New York: Routledge, 2005). Felicity Riddy, in an unpublished paper presented at the third Romance in Medieval England conference (Bristol, 1992), discussed the Auchinleck MS as a 'women's manuscript'.

34 See, e.g., Andrew King, *'The Faerie Queene' and Middle English Romance: The Matter of Just Memory*, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000); Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Norman England and shows how it contributes to the construction of English identity within the poem. Issues of identity – with respect to nationality, religion and gender – are also the subject of the chapters by Robert Allen Rouse, Siobhain Bly Calkin, Melissa Furrow and Corinne Saunders, each of these treating a particular theme (Bevis as a distinctively English 'kniȝt of cristene lawe') or characters (Ascopard, Josian) in the Middle English *Bevis* and demonstrating how they complement and help define the character of the protagonist. Jennifer Fellows addresses the complex textual history of the English *Bevis* in the Middle English and Renaissance periods; while Andrew King describes the nature of the English romance's influence on the works of such post-medieval writers as Spenser, Richard Johnson, Drayton and Bunyan.

The genesis of this volume was in a one-day colloquium organized by Dr Mishtooni Bose in Southampton in May 2004. We are very grateful to her for her interest in our hero and for bringing together, for the first time, *Boeve*/*Bevis* scholars from diverse linguistic disciplines and thus sowing the seeds of fruitful interaction and collaboration; we hope that she approves of the fruits that these have borne. Bevis studies have undergone a modest resurgence in the past few years; perhaps the present collection of essays will stimulate further interest in this long neglected, but once hugely popular, romance.

1

The Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone* as a *chanson de geste*

MARIANNE AILES

The enigma that is *Boeve de Haumtone* is summed up in M. Dominica Legge's seminal study of Anglo-Norman literature, where she discusses the text under the chapter heading 'Ancestral Romance', and describes it as belonging to 'the class labelled romance … cast in the form of a *chanson de geste*'.[1] As form is a major generic marker, her ambivalence over the nature of the text invites examination. In this chapter, I shall examine the way the poet presents *Boeve* as a *chanson de geste*, and the use of both *chanson de geste* discourse, based on the *laisse,* and more scholarly rhetoric, such as chiasmus and *annominatio*, as a way of approaching this question of genre. Legge's term 'ancestral romance' has not gone unquestioned. Susan Crane, in her examination of Insular literature, debunks the theory of 'ancestral romance' linked to individual patrons but continues to classify *Boeve* and the other texts that have English heroes as 'romances'.[2] The catalogue of Anglo-Norman texts and manuscripts compiled by Ruth J. Dean and Maureen B. M. Boulton does not endorse the concept of ancestral romance, though the texts usually listed under this category are there grouped together. The authors describe *Boeve* as a romance, but add that 'there are also three continental versions usually considered *chansons de geste*'.[3] François Suard describes *Boeve* as a '*chanson d'errance*', but he is concerned more with the later, Continental versions of the tale.[4] My concern is with the Anglo-Norman

1 M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 156. All references to the text of *Boeve* are to *Der anglonormannische Boeve de Haumtone*, ed. by Albert Stimming, Bibliotheca Normannica 7 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1899; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974) (hereafter *Boeve*).

2 Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 13, 16–18; also Susan Dannenbaum, 'Anglo-Norman romances of English heroes: "ancestral romance"?', *Romance Philology*, 35 (1981/2), 601–8.

3 Ruth J. Dean and Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, ANTS Occasional Publications (London: ANTS, 2000), p. 89.

4 'Le *Beuves de Hantonne* en prose: importance et expression du sentiment amoureux', in François Suard, *Chanson de geste et tradition épique en France au Moyen Âge* (Caen: Paradigme, 1994), pp. 399–414 (p. 399).

text, generally considered the oldest extant version; I am accepting Dean and Boulton's description of this as thirteenth-century.[5]

We can certainly recognize generic similarities between the romances of *Horn*, *Haveloc*, *Gui de Warewic*, *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, *Waldef* and *Boeve* – particularly in terms of narrative pattern, one Crane characterizes as 'a pattern of dispossession and reinstatement, the hero regaining through his admixture of courage and legal knowledge a rightful inheritance wrongly seized from him'.[6] A pattern of dispossession and reinstatement is not unique to the Insular texts, but in the Continental *chanson de geste* the regaining of a rightful inheritance would more probably be achieved by physical reconquest.[7]

The difficulty in attempting to classify *Boeve* in relation to *chanson de geste* is brought out by Crane, who considers that all these stories of English heroes, dealing with external, political forces, 'may seem close to epic'. The crucial difference for Crane is that each of these Insular heroes is essentially self-centred, not entirely 'representative of his community, bent on winning its survival even at the expense of his own life',[8] as might be expected of an epic hero. A problem here is our imprecise use of terms such as 'epic' and 'romance'. Instead of imposing modern generic classifications on *Boeve*, we need to consider how the text presents itself, what horizons of expectation are set up in the audience/readership and how we are invited to read the text.

Let us begin at the beginning, for the prologue establishes the expectations of listeners/readers. We are immediately invited to enter the world of the *chanson de geste*:

I

Seingnurs barons, ore entendez a mei,
si ws dirrai gestes, que jeo diverses sai,
de Boefs de Haumtone, li chevaler curtays,

5 On the dating of *Boeve*, cf. p. 25 n. 1 below. The text was preserved in two manuscripts, which form the basis of Stimming's edition. These are the fourteenth-century Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS nouv. acq. fr. 4532 (B) and the thirteenth-century MS Firmin Didot (D), which perished in World War II (see Judith Weiss, 'The Anglo-Norman *Boeve de Haumtone*: a fragment of a new manuscript', *Modern Language Review*, 95 (2000), 305–10). Both were incomplete, but they were complementary: the former contained lines 1–1268 of Stimming's edition, and the latter lines 913–3850. A further 62-line fragment, corresponding to lines 1003–65 of the printed edition, was recently discovered on a pastedown in the Hunterian Library of the University of Glasgow and has been transcribed by Weiss (ibid.). The overlapping portion of the poem shows that while the three manuscripts differed in the quality of the copyists' work, linguistic features and relatively minor details, they all seem to have represented the same version of the narrative. Dean and Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 89, mention some fragments of *Boeve* in binding fragments in London, Lambeth Palace, MS 1237, nos. 1, 2, dating them to the second half of the thirteenth century.

6 Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 18.

7 As in *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. by Sarah Kay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Cf. Jean-Louis Picherit, 'L'évolution de quelques thèmes épiques, la dépossession, l'exhérédation et la reconquête du fief', *Olifant*, 11 (1986), 115–28.

8 Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 14.