scope for interpretation. *Pace* Anderson, the poet in *Pearl* was perhaps not serenely indifferent to radical religious views. Hard-line orthodoxy, sweetened with the best refined sugar decorations, is itself arguably a response to a felt need to write in this way at this time. The secular *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* offers readers considerable latitude to make of it whatsoever they will, and Anderson's reading is more evidently personal.

He takes a harsher view of the hero than some—perhaps a pearl among white peas (the Green Knight's own verdict) is hardly one of great price. To this reviewer's mind, Gawain's responses to situations are explicable as a function of plot rather than of 'psychology'—for example, his delay in responding to the Green Knight's challenge seems to owe more to the narrator's desire to create a moment of local drama than the hero's fastidious obsession with courtesy. This Gawain puts too much faith in magical prophylactics, rather than the whole armour of God, including that much-discussed 'pentangle'—not a usual heraldic device. Perhaps readers have been too content to take the poet's own description of its values on trust. As Ronald Hutton has noted, he has done his best to claim the pentagram for Christianity by associating it with the five wounds of Christ (increasingly a focus of devotion in the fourteenth century), but it is perhaps too mired in witchcraft to evade the text's silence on this point. It is as much a talisman as the green girdle (or the sign of the cross, to which Gawain also has recourse, even if in jest), albeit one with associations with bookish esoterica, somewhere in that confused area where religion and magic meet and mingle. Gawain, in Anderson's view, is a proponent of worldly chivalry, not a proto-Galahad, one whose religion is largely a matter of outward observance and custom. Maybe in a book of this kind it is intolerable to offer paradoxes, but perhaps it is possible for a man reared in the faith both to desire sincerely to hear Mass on Christmas Eve and eye the female talent dressed becomingly for the occasion when he gets there without compromising the piety of the wish (he is not a monk). And what do the rules say, exactly, about one's obligations to confess to a priest when one has cheated at party games? It comes down to the old problem: to what extent was the poet a precisian? His views are severe in the three explicitly religious poems, but genre must count for something. Finally, Anderson says nothing about that enigmatic Garter motto, presumably on the assumption that it is a scribal, not an authorial, addition. But whoever thought mention of it appropriate was astute: the story is, at least in part, a commentary on the founding of an order of chivalry, one with origins just as dodgy as the reported circumstances in which the Garter was instituted. The motto may yield either 'Honey, your silk stocking's hanging down' (Sellar and Yeatman) or 'To the pure, all things are pure', as the reader pleases.

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ROBERT ALLEN ROUSE. **The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance.** Pp. viii+180 (Studies in Medieval Romance 3). Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005. £45.

The pre-Conquest English-speaking people have left a perplexing legacy down to the present. Those most perplexed are perhaps the members of the cultural establishment, uncomfortable with memories of the mischief perpetrated by immoderate enthusiasts for the 'Anglo-Saxons' in the past and abashed by the potential for insensitivity of asserting myths of 'English identity' at the present. Myths of nationhood and nuance do not often cohabit. But anyone, say, visiting Winchester, Malmesbury, or Shaftesbury, or witnessing

a group such as Regia Anglorum, cannot doubt that there is a fair degree of interest outside academia in such historical memorializing. King Athelstan is not forgotten yet. It seems that the case was much the same in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as testified, among other phenomena, by the 'Matter of England' romances. A proto-heritage industry was active in promoting the claims of towns and institutions for association with the past, and Matter of England fantasies competed with the rival Arthurian mythology—the 'Matter of Britain'.

Much of our perplexity resides in that vexed nineteenth-century coinage 'Anglo-Saxon' which proclaims discontinuity. Presumably, although Rouse retains the usage—he cannot keep saying 'pre-Conquest'—the discontinuity was less apparent to late medieval observers unaccustomed to describing the time before 1066 in this way. Certainly, in *Athelston*, the protagonists behave like late medieval knights, albeit ones living in a golden age of respect for law and for kings who upheld it: the law of England, that is. King Athelston in the story is converted from tyrant to good ruler by his archbishop's interdict, and the intervention of his barons, in an alternative history which, in its own fashion, engages with topics live in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Rouse describes the efficacy of such a notion of law, good because it is old, for promoting an English identity.

'Anglo-Saxon*ism*' comprehends several different, but overlapping, notions: a cult of Germanic origin myths by interested parties to serve social and political ends, and a concomitant sense of continuity with the early English among their successors, having a concept—an 'idea' in the current parlance—of the Anglo-Saxon past, and, finally, the academic, and supposedly disinterested, study of that past. One need look no further than J. R. R. Tolkien to see how entangled such motivations may become in practice. Moreover, regional loyalties interact with broader 'English' concerns. Thus, when it came to a hero like that popular 'Anglo-Saxon', Guy of Warwick, who, despite his improbably Norman name, saved England single-handed from the Danes in the days of King Athelstan, everyone wanted a slice of the action. The Beauchamp family preserved their 'ancestor's' sword in Warwick castle as a family relic, and built a chantry on the site of his hermitage. The inhabitants of Winchester, alongside their Arthurian souvenirs, also possessed the famous axe with which Guy dispatched the very large Danish champion Colbrand in a nearby field called 'Denemarche'. Folk etymology readily converted a prosaic 'valley boundary' into 'Denmark'. Even within Winchester, Rouse argues, St Swithun's Priory and Hyde Abbey vied for association with the hero. By identifying Athelstan's decisive victory over the Danes with Guy, the romancer grabbed the glory for the south of England in a manner analogous with the relocation, forcible at times, of saints' relics. Guy's victory at 'Denmark' displaced the chroniclers' battle at 'Brunanburh', a place of uncertain location—in a comparable popular study of pre-Conquest English identity and the present, Yorkshireman Michael Wood has argued unromantically for a stretch of the M1 outside Doncaster—but certainly northern. And in 1863 Elizabeth Gaskell did her bit literally to bring Guy to Yorkshire in *Sylvia's Lovers* (in which the 'Guy' figure reads the story appropriately just by Winchester and sets out to walk back north to his 'Felice', or 'Phyllis'). In an English setting, the romances interact with topography, as well as history as understood by the chroniclers: real places are mentioned in the romances, just as relics of romance heroes are preserved in real places.

It is a commonplace that identity, 'Englishness' in this case, is defined by the availability for comparison of the 'other'. The matter of England engages with the matter of the East in *Beues of Hamtoun*, and *Guy of Warwick*, featuring a very large Saracen Other. (The Man of Law's Tale is also apropos.) Those 'others' with whom the English share their space are perfidious: the Cornish in *Havelok*, and *Guy of Warwick* (as well as Malory), the Welsh in *Horn Childe*. Foreign immigrants in London trouble Beues of Hamtoun

(nothing new there, then). The Danes, however, are more difficult; if Colbrand represents a fantasy of monstrous berserker alterity, *Havelok*, a representation of Anglo-Danish origin myths, is another kettle of fish (given this romance's concerns with Grimsby, the cliché may be pardonable). *Havelok*, too, participates in this interaction between regional and national history with romance: Grimsby's great seal, supposed to have been founded by Havelok's foster-father and henchman, Grim, portrays the principal characters. As Rouse points out, for many people, the Matter of England romances *were* their history—an early form of 'infotainment' or 'faction'.

As he acknowledges, Rouse is building on the work of others, especially Thorlac Turville-Petre's influential *England the Nation* (1996), but he has identified a rich vein of material; there is very good detailed historical discussion, though it must be said that sometimes the material seemed a little disorganized. There is some overlap between the chapters. The first chapter, on the *Proverbs of Alfred*, though illuminating, did not seem quite to fit with the title's emphasis on 'romance', though undoubtedly it makes a contribution to the theme of Anglo-Saxonism and the representation of history in popular medieval writing. The study originated as a thesis, and, from time to time, the unmistakable dissertation style breaks through, as in the somewhat strident signposting of authorial intentions, and the repeated propensity to fall back on that limp and dissatisfying verdict that information given is 'interesting'. WHY is it interesting? Nevertheless, Rouse has made a valuable contribution to a live discussion. He can hardly fail of an engaged readership.

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The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, volume ii: *De Profundis*, 'Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis'. Edited by IAN SMALL. Pp. 346. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. £80.
The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, volume iii: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: The 1890 and 1891 Texts. Edited by JOSEPH BRISTOW. Pp. lxxviii+466. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. £90.

Different as these two works are in Wilde's astonishingly diverse oeuvre, both the editions considered here have the distinguishing features of the Oxford *Complete Works*: by meticulous textual scholarship coupled with unusual reticence in questions of critical judgement, they break with the century-long tradition of personal engagement, biographical advocacy, and editorial prioritizing which has made it difficult if not impossible for non-specialist readers to know in what sense the work they are reading can be trusted as a dependable text. Both these volumes are a major advance in Wilde cartography, and enable readers to be confident navigators among the shoals. In each case the editorial procedure is comprehensively informative but determinedly non-prescriptive, and the result places future reading of Wilde on a new and welcome footing.

All things being relative, Joseph Bristow's task with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is the easier of the two, but it exhibits the fundamental points that emerge with greater complexity in the case of *De Profundis*, above all that what is known as one work is actually two (or in the case of *De Profundis* arguably more than two) distinct ones. At least in the case of *Dorian Gray* Wilde's own part in his work's evolution and shape-shifting is securely traceable, and the editorial intervention of other hands restricted to the professional and benign, neither of which luxuries is available to the editor of *De Profundis*. Likewise, the generic distinction between novella and novel which arises with *Dorian Gray* is less extreme