The Middle English *Guy of Warwick* narrates a *vita* that is, even by the often outrageous standards of medieval romance, extraordinary.¹ Guy’s life leads him from somewhat humble beginnings as the son of a provincial steward – the very margins of chivalric society – to his predestined place as chivalric, Christian, and most importantly, English culture-hero. Along the way he obtains chivalric glory, courtly paramour and associated noble title (Earl of Warwick), vanquishes Saracen threats both defensively (at the walls of Constantinople) and offensively (whilst on a one-man Crusade in the Middle East) – thus taking on the mantle of defender of European Christianity – before returning home to become England’s saviour from invasion and to finally die, as the circle of his life completes, back in Warwickshire as a devout hermit. As an example of popular romance entertainment, *Guy of Warwick* has few peers either in terms of popularity or its impact on wider English culture.² However, the romance’s importance is not limited to its function as popular entertainment. Much recent scholarship has established the important role of medieval romance in the articulation of national and group identity, figuring romance as a genre that is of great interest to the literary scholar and cultural historian alike. In addition to the importance of *Guy of Warwick* in the discourse of

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¹ For the purposes of this chapter I will primarily be making reference to the version of *Guy of Warwick* as found in the Auchinleck Manuscript (National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS. 19.2.1), as this is the Middle English version of the romance that has been most fully-discussed in terms of its ideological and manuscript contexts (*Guy of Warwick, Edited from the Auchinleck MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, and from MS. 107 in Caius College, Cambridge*, ed. by J. Zupitza, EETS ES 42, 49, 59 (London: Trübner, 1883 – 91). This will be augmented at times with readings from the Caius MS version, in those places where the Auchinleck is deficient.

identity politics, the figure of Guy also enjoys a powerful influence outside the romance, as he is appropriated for the promotion of family, civic, and national pride more widely within English culture. The narrative development of Guy as a medieval culture-hero – a figure that embodies a number of different identity groups – is the subject of this chapter.³

Thorlac Turville-Petre has described Guy as ‘the model of the knight of England.’⁴ Implicit within this designation is an understanding of this romance as exemplary narrative: a vita that in some fashion was intended to be imitated by its audience, or at the very least was intended to inspire its readers through admiration of the hero’s deeds. This purpose of the text is made clear from its very beginning:

Many aduentures hath be wrouȝt
Pat all men knoweth nouȝt.
Therfore men shull herken blythe,
And it vndirstonde right swythe,
For they that were borne or wee
Fayre aduenturis hadden they;
For euere they louyd sothfastenesse,
Faith with trewthe and stedfastnesse.
Therfore schulde man with gladde chere
Lerne goodnesse, vndirstonde, and here:
Who myke it hereth and vndirstondeth it
By resoun he shulde bee wyse of witte;
And y it holde a fayre mastrye,
To occupye wisedome and leue folye.

(7-20).

³The appellation ‘culture-hero’ is intended to signify Guy’s embodiment of English cultural and national identity. In my use of this term I differ somewhat from the more common folkloric definition of culture hero as ‘a character … regarded as the giver of a culture to its people.’ (“Culture-Hero”, in Maria Leach (ed.), The Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend (New York: Funk & Wagnells, 1972), p. 268) Rather than acting as a giver of culture to the English, Guy acts instead to reinforce and rearticulate the central cultural tenets of the English.
The text is clearly envisaged as didactic in nature, with Guy providing a model of behaviour and character that expresses communal values and expectations for its audience.\(^5\) Having accepted an exemplary function for the romance, we need next to address a number of questions with regard to both the ideological tenets that the text articulates, and the processes by which the text acts as *exemplum*: what is the text’s project, and *how* is it impressed upon the reader of romance?

So, what is the exemplary function of this romance? This is in many ways a question that defies a simple answer: the complicated literary archaeologies that lie behind the creation of many medieval romances represent a process of literary accretion that, in the words of Geraldine Heng, ‘exemplifies medieval textual culture and literary production at work, [and thus] can be read only as a sedimented repository of cultural patterns, investments, and obsessions that were deemed important enough to be inscribed, and reinscribed, over a span of centuries….’\(^6\) In the context of such a model of textual production, a popular romance such as *Guy of Warwick* can be seen to voice many and varied cultural discourses. However, arguably the most important concern within *Guy of Warwick*, and the one that has been the focus of much recent scholarly interest, is the romance’s role in the cultural project of articulating a sense of English group identity. Turville-Petre observes that ‘the establishment and exploration of a sense of a national identity is a major preoccupation of English writers of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries: who are the English; where do they come from; what constitutes the

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\(^5\) Susan Crane (Dannenbaum) convincingly argues that ‘[m]edieval romance is itself an exemplary form’ (p. 368).

English nation?’ In my recent study of the use of the cultural memory of Anglo-Saxon England within this phenomenon, I have argued that *Guy of Warwick*, along with that other Auchinleck manuscript romance *Bevis of Hamtoun*, seeks to answer these pressing questions, and in doing so appropriates England’s Anglo-Saxon past ‘as an important temporal space in which … tensions of national identity can be examined and incorporated into a national fantasy of Englishness.’ However, while Guy has been understood as representing, particularly within the context of the Auchinleck manuscript, a particularly English project of national identity creation, the English are not the sole identity group that he embodies. Guy is constructed within the Auchinleck romance as a hero who has multiple group affinities: ‘Gij of Warwike’ (157), ‘Gij þe Englisse’ (3889), and Guy the ‘Cristen’ (110:5) – a series of epithets which alert the reader to the multiple identity groups which he stands for within the text.

*Guy of Warwick* acknowledges the claims of at least two group affinities other than that of ‘English’. The first, and what from the title of the romance appears to be the most immediate one, is that of the region or city: Warwick. Secondly, over and above the claim of the nation came the knightly duty to God, expressed territorially in the defence of a much larger realm than the homeland, namely Christendom. These identity categories are further complicated by Guy’s reputation as the epitome of knighthood, the identity that is his goal – demanded by his *objet d’amour* Felice – during the first half of

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8 Robert Allen Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), p. 158. Heng comments that ‘[the] characteristic freedom of romance to merge fantasy and reality without distinction or apology, and the ability of the medium to transform crisis into celebration and triumphalism, mean that romance has special serviceability for nationalist discourse.’ (p. 67)
9 These titles are not editorial, and are found in both the manuscripts and in other medieval references to the romances such as the Paston letters (Ronald S. Crane, ‘The Vogue of Guy of Warwick from the Close of the Middle Ages to the Romantic Revival’, *PMLA*, 30 (1915), pp. 125-94 (p. 126)).
his romance. This complex hierarchy of group affinities and the sense of ever-expanding ‘territories of the self’,\textsuperscript{10} from personal chivalric identity, to region, to country, to Christendom, informs both the action of \textit{Guy of Warwick} and the differing epithets through which the text identifies its hero.\textsuperscript{11} However, it is important to note that these multiple identities are in no way contradictory: rather they are indicators of Guy’s role as polysemous symbol within the text. As culture-hero, Guy represents a complex understanding of the multiple allegiances demanded of a knight in medieval society, a figure around whom accrete multiple levels of identity as he moves through the different stages of his \textit{vita}. Susan Crane (Dannenbaum) sees in \textit{Guy of Warwick} an impulse to ‘integrate diverse interests through the hero’s character and actions’\textsuperscript{12}, and these discourses manifest to differing degrees at different points within the narrative. The junctures between the stages of Guy’s life are marked by a series of transformative moments, and it is within these moments that we find some of the key episodes of identity formation with the romance.

Caroline Walker Bynum has highlighted the importance of moments of transformation in medieval narratives of identity formation:

\begin{quote}
The question of change is, of course, the other side of the question of identity. If change is the replacement of one entity by another or the growth of an entity out of another in which it is implicit, we must be able to say how we have an entity in the first place. What gives it its identity … ?\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] Dannenbaum, p. 359.
\end{footnotes}
Moments of change thus ask multiple questions regarding identity: what identity is being transformed? Is it replaced in such moments of change, or simply modified? What is the nature of the transformed identity? And what is the process or mechanism of such change? This chapter will examine four such moments of identity change within Guy’s *vita*: firstly his maturation narrative rise to fame as a chivalric knight – a process which culminates in his defence of Constantinople against the Saracens; secondly his religious epiphany after he has married Felice, which prompts him to leave his new bride to undertake a penitential pilgrimage; thirdly the climax of his pilgrimage to the East – his defeat of the Saracen giant Amoraunt; and fourthly his transformation into an English hero-saint through his defeat of Colbrond the Dane and his subsequent sanctified death as a hermit.

**Identity at the Edge: Guy as Maturation Romance**

*Guy of Warwick* constructs its hero as a shining example of a chivalric knight. In the couplet romance that narrates the first section of his *vita*, Guy seeks to establish a chivalric reputation through deeds of arms in order to earn the love of Felice, daughter of the Earl of Warwick. He ventures to the continent, winning there a reputation at tournaments in Normandy, Spain, and Germany, and in numerous wars in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. It is important for the exemplary strategy of Guy’s *vita* that he initially establishes his reputation within this historically realistic behavioural frame: if the romance was to be seen as a model of the chivalric life – as secular *imitatio* – then it must necessarily structure itself in a manner familiar to the lived experience of
contemporary knights.\textsuperscript{14} This first movement within \textit{Guy of Warwick} follows the familiar pattern of the maturation romance: the young knight constructing his personal chivalric identity through martial combat with other knights. However, the usual pattern is extended within this romance as Guy’s efforts are initially rejected by Felice, who repeatedly sends him out to seek higher degrees of glory, and to face greater dangers, whenever he returns to Warwick to seek her approval.

The apotheosis of Guy’s reputation as secular knight comes in his defence of Constantinople from the Saracen army of the Sultan of Coyne. While at the Emperor Reyner’s court in Germany, Guy and his companion Herhaud encounter foreign merchants arrived from the east, carrying with them grave and momentous news. The merchants tell of the dire need of Ernis, the Emperor of Constantinople, who is besieged by a Saracen host. This report of the siege provokes in Guy a desire to confront the ultimate enemy of a medieval Christian knight, the Saracen. Equipped by the Emperor with a company of one hundred German knights, the two Englishmen travel to Constantinople and put themselves at Ernis’ command. From the very start, this ‘aventure’ has a markedly different tone to those that Guy has undertaken thus far. Guy wishes to aid the Emperor against the Sultan’s forces, who ‘Pat lond destrud & men aqueld, / & cristendom þai han michel afeld’ (2853-4). Here Guy’s actions turn from his earlier individual tournaments and the squabblings of European princes to the defence of a larger religiously delineated geo-political entity: he seeks to defend ‘cristendom’ from its heathen enemies. Given the religious overtones of this expedition, it is tempting to imagine Guy’s defence of Constantinople as representing a form of crusade, especially

given the associations of the city with numerous historical crusades – a point of reference what would not have been lost on the romance’s medieval audience. Such an optimistic reading of the motivations that lie behind Guy’s exploits would lead us to view him as already developing into the role of the milites Christi. However, Guy is not yet ready for such a spiritual transformation, as can be seen from the comments of his companion Herhaud, who provides the following secular gloss on Guy’s motivation: ‘y graunt it be / Miche worþschipe it worþ to þe’ (2855-6). That Guy’s motivation at this point is not governed by a sense of Christian duty is further indicated through his complaint to Felice during his eventual transformation into a milites Christi: ‘Ac for þi loue ich haue al wrouȝt / For his [Christ’s] loue dede y neuer nouȝt’ (25: 7-8).¹⁵

Rather than casting Guy in the role of a pious milites Christi, the romance presents him as the more troubling figure of a crusading knight motivated not by God, but by his own continuing quest for chivalric glory: a secular figure replete with dubious connotations of previous, historical crusaders. In the process of aiding the defence of Constantinople, Guy’s vita moves into the defining stage of its development of Guy’s reputation as the ‘best doynge / In armes that man may fynde’ (1157-8). The choice of Constantinople as the site of Guy’s confrontation with the Saracen is one that is geographically appropriate, given the city’s position at the margins of Christendom, but historiographically problematic, in the context of the uneasy relationship between Constantinople and the crusading knights of Western Christendom. Rebecca Wilcox has argued that Guy’s defence of Constantinople, and more importantly his refusal to marry Ernis’ daughter Clarice, is emblematic of a narrative that seeks to elide the historical

¹⁵ This episode is discussed in detail in the following section of the chapter.
memory of the conquest and sack of Constantinople by the Western crusaders during the Fourth Crusade.\textsuperscript{16} In contrast, however, Heng views such romance refiguring of crusade history as acts not of elision, but rather as narratives that emphasise the discourse of empire and conquest that is implicit within crusade.\textsuperscript{17} Far from being a narrative that is in any way apologetic for the conquest and civic rape of 1204, \textit{Guy of Warwick} reads as a reaffirmation of Western military and cultural superiority over the Christians of the East, and Guy’s personal rejection of the city acts to further condemn its hybridised cultural status.\textsuperscript{18} However, despite such tantalising historicising of the text, Guy’s sojourn in Constantinople is clearly important in terms of its own narrative function, acting as an important episode in the development of Guy’s identity as superlative chivalric knight, without the need for us to provide extra-textual meaning for Guy’s actions by conjecturing the \textit{Guy}-romancier as some species of cultural apologist.

Constantinople provides an appropriate location for the realisation of Guy’s chivalric reputation, and the most powerful aspect of this process of identity construction is to be found located within the bodies of the enemies that he faces there: the Saracen Other. As the antithesis of the Christian West, the image of the Saracen provides a powerful racial, cultural and religious Other during the later Middle Ages. Making use of psychoanalytic theory, scholars such as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen read medieval images of the Saracen as acting to simplify the inherent complexities of identity formation.\textsuperscript{19} By


\textsuperscript{17} Heng, pp. 153-4.

\textsuperscript{18} The Western view of the problematic hybridised nature of Constantinople is discussed more fully in Heng (p. 48), Rouse (pp. 77-80), and Wilcox (pp. 222-9).

\textsuperscript{19} Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, \textit{Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages} (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999), pp. 132-3. Cohen further develops these ideas in his chapter ‘On Saracen
adhering to the binary paradigm of Christian as good and Saracen as evil, the 
oppositional model of identity formation produces a construction of identity that, while 
reductive, allows a clearer and less problematic definition of self and nation. Dianne 
Speed describes the important role fulfilled by such racial and religious Others in the 
process of national and group identity formation:

The nation is defined and asserted essentially as a response to the challenge 
of the unknown, what Regis Debray explicates as the ‘twin threats of 
disorder and death.’ Prominent amongst particular discourses signifying 
nationness is what Bhabha speaks of as ‘the heimlich pleasure of the 
hearth, the unheimlich terror of the space and race of the Other.’

The opening chapter of Siobhain Bly Calkin’s study of the image of the Saracen within 
the Auchinleck manuscript addresses the important role that Saracens play within the 
process of identity construction within romance. Pointing towards the ‘bizarre 
similarity’ that exists between the Saracen and Christian knights in the Auchinleck 
romances, Calkin argues that this sameness ‘provokes consideration of how groups may 
be differentiated when the samenesses connecting them are many and the difference 
few.’ In her discussion of Guy of Warwick, Calkin points towards Guy’s first encounter 
with the Saracen Other as an example this ‘sameness’. In the process of defending 
Constantinople, Guy encounters for the first time the Saracen Other – in the person of the

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23 Calkin, p. 59.
invading Sultan’s nephew, *pe amiral Costdram* (2905). This initial image of a Saracen warrior is presented in surprisingly complimentary terms:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{So strong he is, \\ of so gret mi\text{t}, \\ In world y wene no better kni\text{t}; \\ For \text{per nis man no kni\text{t} non} \\
\text{Pat wi\text{p} wret\text{pe} dar loken him on.}
\end{align*}
\]

(2907-10)

Costdram is a knight of great strength, without peer, upon whom other men fear to look, a mirror image of Guy’s own reputation, and thus an appropriate chivalric foe against whom Guy can test himself. However, while it is true that Costdram does closely resemble the Christian knight, this mirroring effect is not without imperfection. In presenting her argument, Calkin omits the lines that follow this initial description, which provide one important difference that *does* exist between Guy and his Saracen foe:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{His armes alle avenimed be\text{p};} \\
\text{Pat venim is strong so pe de\text{p};} \\
\text{In his world nis man \text{pat he take mi}\text{t}} \\
\text{Pat he ne schuld dye anon ri}\text{t.}
\end{align*}
\]

(2911-14).

The envenomed nature of Costdram’s weapons indelibly mark him out as Other, casting doubt upon his honour and thus differentiating him from Christian knights such as Guy, to whom the use of such weapons is both unknown and unthinkable. Costdram here represents an image of a knightly Other, *unheimlich* in comparison with the normative values of Guy’s own Western conception of knighthood. Costdram’s role as a *doppelgänger* figure in relation to Guy is emphasized by the way in which the battle is

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24 The use of poisoned weapons is often used to indicate a dishonourable knight in medieval chivalric literature. One example of this motif is found in the *Morte Darthur*, where Marhault uses a poisoned spear-head against Tristram (Thomas Malory, *Malory: Works*, ed. by Eugène Vinaver, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 237-8)
structured. Each of Guy’s knights are involved in individual combats within the wider melee, pairing off with named opponents: Herhaud slays the King of Turkey (2943), the French knight Tebaud kills Helmadan (2949), while the German Gauter strikes down Redmadan (2955). This initial encounter with, and vanquishing of, the Saracen Other utilises a comparative model of chivalric behaviour through which Guy’s identity as a chivalric knight is established.

Guy’s defence of Constantinople allows Guy’s identity as culture-hero to reach the conclusion of its first stage of development: Guy as superlative secular chivalric hero. Subsequent to this point of extremity in his outward movement from England (within the couplet romance at least), the narrative draws him slowly back towards his homeland, and the object of his love. The final symbolic moment of identity formation that we witness in this first half of Guy’s vita – his slaying of the Dragon in Northumberland – is an act of monster slaying that operates both as Guy’s final act of secular knighthood and simultaneously engenders the first in a series of personal and symbolic transformations.

*Epiphany by Starlight*

Following the slaying of the dragon, and his subsequent triumphant marriage to Felice, Guy undergoes the first of a series of transformative episodes: from chivalric knight to penitent pilgrim-crusader. Soon after the marriage, having begat an heir upon his new wife, Guy undergoes a ‘road to Damascus moment’ that irrevocably alters the course of his vita. Late one summer’s evening, walking upon the battlements of a tower in Warwick castle, Guy finds himself awestruck by the vastness of the heavens. Falling
into a state of wonder, Guy reflects upon the life that he has led thus far, and upon his motivations in carrying out his heroic deeds:\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{verbatim}
To a turet sir Gij is went, 
& biheld pat firmament, 
  Pat thicke wiþ steres stode. 
On Iesu omnipotent, 
  Pat alle his honour hadde him lent, 
  He þouȝt wiþ dreri mode; 
Hou he hadde euer ben strong werrour, 
  For Iesu loue, our saueour, 
  Neuer no dede he gode. 
Mani man he hadde slayn wiþ wrong. 
\end{verbatim}

(21:1-10)

The awful nature of the firmament causes Guy to take stock of his life at the very point that most romances end.\textsuperscript{26} Rather than allowing Guy to settle down into married life, the stanzaic section of the romance propels our hero onwards through the trajectory of life, asking – and answering – the question of what knights are best to do once they have achieved the secular goals of the maturation romance: reputation, noble title, wife and heir. Guy’s revelation – that he has performed deeds of arms solely for the purposes of earthly love – is one that represents an existential crisis in his \textit{vita}. Why, Guy seems to be asking himself, is he here? And what are the correct motivations for a knight in this world? The answer, of course, is clear, and the wondrous sight of the heavens reminds Guy of the proper motivation for a Christian knight: the service of Christ. Having

\textsuperscript{25} Bynum discusses the importance of moments of wonder in narratives of transformation, pp. 37-75. 
\textsuperscript{26} Like its hero, Guy’s \textit{vita} itself undergoes a transformation at this point, changing from a standard maturation romance into a ‘pious’, or exemplary, romance.
realised this, Guy laments upon the misdirected heroic deeds that he has undertaken to
win Felice’s love:\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{quote}
Ac 3if ich hadde don half þe dede  
For him þat on rode gan blede  
Wiþ grimly woundes sare,  
In heuene he wald haue quit mi mede,  
In joie to won wiþ angels wede  
Euer-more wiþ-outen care.
\end{quote}

(25:1-6)

Guy recognises that his deeds have indeed been misdirected, and it is this realisation that
acts as the catalyst for his transformation from secular chivalric hero into an \textit{exemplum} of
the \textit{milites Christi}. His former primary motivation – his love for Felice – is transformed
into his love for Christ:

\begin{quote}
For his loue ichil now wende  
Barfot to mi liues ende,  
Mine sinnes for to bete
\end{quote}

(26:4-6)

This new identity that Guy takes on, that of the pilgrim-knight, is one through which he
seeks redemption for his past sins. As he explains to his understandably confused wife,

\begin{quote}
Y schal walk for mi sinne  
Barfot bi doun & dale.  
Pat ich haue wiþ mi bodi wrouȝt  
Wiþ mi bodi it schal be bouȝt,  
To bote me of þat bale.
\end{quote}

(29:8-11)

Walking, the act of penance mandated to many a historical knightly sinner, is one that is
to define the remainder of Guy’s \textit{vita}.\textsuperscript{28} Notably, in the Middle English versions of the

\textsuperscript{27}While not carrying the same degree of scorn and rejection as Troilus’ infamous laugh during his ascent
through the spheres at the end of Chaucer’s \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, Guy nevertheless participates in the
\textit{contemptus mundi} discourse in his abandonment of Felice and his unborn son.
romance, Felice takes an active role in the affirmation of Guy’s newly chosen path in life. Upon his departure, Felice gives to Guy a golden ring as a love-token – a ring that will later operate as the recognition symbol expected through generic convention. However, in this romance the ring also acts to symbolise Felice’s tacit approval of Guy’s actions, as Crane notes: ‘Felice remarkably extends the convention that love improves knights when she connects Guy’s love for her to service of God.’

Felice’s act is one of extreme self-sacrifice, but is fully in keeping with the exemplary tone of the romance, highlighting the fact that it is not only knights who may have something to learn from Guy’s vita, but also the female readers of romance: one might be tempted to read Felice’s approval of Guy’s penitential abandonment of her and their unborn child as a tacit acknowledgement of her own role, and the role of the courtly paramour more generally, as the motivating inspiration for his lack of focus on the service of Christ.

Guy’s journey through Europe and the East, which dominates the rest of the romance, represents on one level the allegorical pilgrimage of the Christian soul through the world, facing challenges and combating evil with the full confidence of Christian belief, while simultaneously acting as the stage for a new and very real heroic identity that Guy begins to embody. As Cohen describes it, ‘[h]e sets off for Jerusalem to become a martial saint, the next transfigurative plateau of heroic selfhood.’ This new stage of Guy’s multivalent culture-hero identity allows him to be inscribed with the cultural discourses of penitence and repentance, while still maintaining narrative drive of the

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28 The act of walking, for a knight, is a rejection of that most symbolic of chivalric possessions – the horse. The horse defines the medieval knight, and as such is an integral part of his identity: as Cohen points out the warhorse was ‘the knight’s beloved companion and the sine qua non of chivalric identity.’ (Medieval Identity Machines, p. 49).
29 Dannenbaum, p. 361.
30 Cohen, Of Giants, p. 87.
romance’s imperial project through his repeated affirmations of both Christian and English identity during his experiences in the East. However, it is important to understand that Guy’s pilgrim status does not in fact replace his role as chivalric knight: nor, as Crane observes: ‘does Guy ultimately deny his identity within his family, or abandon its interests for the interests of God.’

In the development of Guy’s identity from secular knight to Christian pilgrim, we witness the characteristic model of identity (trans)formation found within this romance. Guy’s identity is indeed altered, in that his motivation for chivalric deeds is now located in his love for Christ, but his previous chivalric identity remains vital to his new identity as a martial-pilgrim: identity change in this romance is accretive in nature, rather than a matter of replacement-change.

Further still, the personal salvation that Guy seeks in this second section of his vita becomes the essential preparation for the divinely approved national salvation that occurs at the end of the romance, thus inscribing saintliness as an integral part of Guy’s developing English culture-hero identity.

*Arms and the Man*

Guy’s pilgrimage to the East is crowned by his single combat against another monstrous foe: the Egyptian giant Amoraunt. Guy enters into this contest on behalf of the Saracen King Triamour at the behest of Jonas, the Christian Earl of Durras.

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31 Dannenbaum, p. 361.
32 Bynum discusses the nature of evolution-change (developmental, or accretive) vs. replacement-change (p. 20).
33 Jonas tells him a long tale of misfortune, which has resulted in him being sent to search for Guy, so that the latter can champion the Saracen king Triamour in a judicial combat. The back-story to this request for Guy’s help is a long and complicated tale, in which Jonas and his sons defend Jerusalem from the Saracens, but then make the fatal mistake of following them into their own lands where they are captured by the Saracen King Triamour. Sometime later, Triamour’s son inadvertently slays the Sultan of Alexandria’s son following an argument over a game of chess, which leads to Triamour’s accusation by the Sultan and his
Amoraunt, as Saracen giant, operates within the text as a powerful signifier of identity, the defeat and decapitation of whom represents an important step in the hero’s process of identity construction. The excess of the Saracen Other is here manifested in the body of the giant Amoraunt. This avatar of bodily excess, the conquering of which is so important to the process of the physical and spiritual maturation of the romance hero, combines the Other of the Giant with the Other of the Saracen, creating a potent synthesis of these two elements of identity formation. The Saracen Giant embodies all those things that the romance hero by necessity approaches, but must not become: he is *michel & unrede* (62:7), huge and uncontrolled – an image of unrestrained masculine power, which Western heroes such as Guy must seek to sublimate within chivalric codes of behaviour and honour. This uncontrolled masculinity is given demonic form in the figure of the Saracen Giant, characterized by the blackness of the fiend, the Western archetypal construction of the uncontrolled nature of the African. Guy’s defeat of Amoraunt partakes of the common romance motif of the subjugation of the monstrous Other, and action through which Guy’s identity as chivalric knight and Christian martial saint is realized.

However, Guy’s defeat of Amoraunt is not the only important aspect of this stage of his development as culture-hero. Prior to the battle, the romance presents another important moment in the process of heroic identity construction: the arming scene of the hero. Arming scenes are found, as Derek Brewer observes, ‘usually at a crucial moment

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34 Turville-Petre notes that ‘the lengthy fight with Amoraunt is not just between a Christian and an infidel, but also between an Englishman and a foreigner’ (*England the Nation*, p. 118).
35 Cohen’s theorizing of the role of gigantomachia has made clear the important connection between the defeat of the monstrous opponents and the development of heroic identity in romance (cf: *Of Giants*, pp. 62-95).
in the development of a story’, and operate as a form of heroic *descriptio* in which the
virtues and qualities of the hero are described, often through a symbolic understanding of
their arms and armour.\(^{36}\) Well-known examples of such semantically-replete scenes
include the arming of Achilles in Homer’s *Iliad*, of the eponymous hero in *Beowulf*, and
of Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In the Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick*, we
find a similarly significant example of the arming topos:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Gij was ful wele in armes di}_3t \\
\text{Wiþ helme & plate & brini bri}_3t \\
\text{þe best þat ever ware.} \\
\text{The hauberk he hadde was Renis} \\
\text{þat was King Clarels, ywis,} \\
\text{In Jerusalem when he was þare.} \\
\text{(91:1-6)}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{His helme was of so michel mi}_3t, \\
\text{Was never man overcomen in fi}_3t \\
\text{þat hadde it on his ventayle.} \\
\text{It was Alisaunders þe gret lording,} \\
\text{When he fau}_3t wiþ Poreus þe king,} \\
\text{þat hard him gan aseyle.} \\
\text{(92:7-12)}
\end{align*}
\]

Guy’s arming topos is here characterised by a desire to provide for his arms and armour a
‘heroic genealogy’.\(^{37}\) Guy is described as being armed in the hauberk of one King
Clarels, and as wearing the helm of Alexander. Furthermore, he also receives a sword –
that essential symbol of knighthood – which has an equally resonant legendary
provenance:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A gode swerd he hadde wiþ-outen faile,} \\
\text{þat was Ectors in Troye batayle,} \\
\text{In gest as so men fint.} \\
\text{Ar he þat swerd dede forgon,}
\end{align*}
\]

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\(^{36}\) Derek Brewer, ‘Arming II: The Arming Topos as Literature’, in Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson

139.
Hector’s sword – with its readily-accessible Trojan connotations – provides a third heroic referent for this scene of heroic identity creation. The heroic provenance of his arms transforms Guy into a new stage of his culture-hero identity. The legendary heroes associated with Guy’s arms are Hector and Alexander, two of the Worthies of the ancient world, and the somewhat more problematic King Clarels. Judith Weiss has suggested that this arming scene, as it is found in the romance’s source, the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*, was intended to establish Guy amongst the company of the Nine Worthies – that exalted list of famous legendary heroes from across the ages. Alison Wiggins argues that the effect is somewhat lessened in the Auchinleck version of the narrative, as the reference to Charlemagne (another of the Nine Worthies) that is found in *Gui de Warewic*, is replaced by the reference to King Clarels. Clarels is a Saracen king who appears in another of the Auchinleck manuscript romances, *Otuel*, and Wiggins suggests that ‘[t]he replacement may suggest an interest in representing warriors from the East or it may represent a particular knowledge of *Otuel* on the part of the redactor or scribe.’ One might also propose that the name-substitution may equally have been the result of scribal error. However, whatever the cause for the dilution of the arming scene, its

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38 In addition to the connotations of Guy’s appropriation of Trojan majesty, the allusion also works in a more straightforward narrative sense: ‘The association of Guy with Hector (he carries Hector’s sword, line 1105) and Amorant with Achilles (his sword having the strength of Achilles) also colours the battle through a further legendary allusion. Portrayed as the descendants of these heroic ancestors, their meeting is dramatized in terms of the famous battle between Hector and Achilles, Trojan and Greek.’ (Wiggins, p 140


40 Wiggins, p. 139.
purpose remains clear: to present Guy as taking on – in a most literal fashion – the mantle and arms of his culture-hero predecessors.

In taking up the sword of Hector, Guy is laying claim to the legacy of Troy, with all its medieval connotations of *translatio imperii.* Guy’s role as the defender of Western civilization, and by extension the defender of Christendom, is made clear by his defeat of Amoraunt in the following battle. The significance of Guy’s arming and subsequent victory is two-fold. Firstly, Guy wins for all Christians the right to safe pilgrimage to the Holy Land, as this is one of the promises made by King Triamour, thus ensuring that his own pilgrimage provides a clear path for subsequent pilgrims in both a geographical and an exemplary sense:

> And so gode pes y schal festen anon,  
> Pat Cristen men schul comen & gon  
> To her owhen wille in wold.’  
> (88:7-9)

Secondly, and more importantly for the trajectory of Guy’s role as culture-hero, his victory elevates him to the status of the Nine Worthies, glorifying his role as not simply a knight of the Christian faith, but as a martial-pilgrim of the first rank. The notion of Guy

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42 There also exists a later tantalising inter-textual meaning to Guy’s acquisition of the sword of Hector. There is a tentative connection between Guy’s reclaiming of this weapon from the Saracens, and the discourse of empire inherent in the text (aside from the obvious one of Trojan *translation imperii*): in Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* (1516), Roland’s sword Durendal is also said to have been the sword of Hector, and this (at least from the later sixteenth-century context – when Guy was still being widely read and printed) gives us the fascinating possibility that Guy’s acquisition of the sword represents a reclaiming of what was lost at Roncesvalles.
as being one of the Nine Worthies is one that becomes a powerful aspect of his reputation in the following centuries.\textsuperscript{43}

The arming topos acts to set the scene for yet another transformative episode within \textit{Guy of Warwick}, which inscribes upon Guy a further layer of symbolic identity. His reputation as one of the Nine Worthies appears in the Auchinleck romance as an attempt to further elevate his status as culture-hero, fulfilling both the task of cementing his identity as Christian militant-pilgrim and preparing the ground for his final transformation into an English national hero.

\textit{St Guy of England?}

\textit{Guy of Warwick} constructs Guy as a series of successive exemplary models: firstly as chivalric knight, then as repentant \textit{milites Christi}, and thirdly as one of the Nine Worthies. However, as an English text, in a compilation manuscript that articulates a marked sense of English identity, there is one further transformation awaiting him: into his enduring role as English national saviour.\textsuperscript{44} Following a similar itinerant arc to the couplet romance, the stanzaic \textit{vita} narrates a journey that leads from England to the lands of the East, before returning at the end of the romance to the land of his birth. Guy, driven by a desire to find his son, Reinbroun, arrives back in England where he finds the kingdom in a state of national crisis. England has been invaded by the Danish army, which sits encamped near Winchester, where the Danish king has issued a challenge to

\textsuperscript{43} An example of this aspect of Guy’s reputation can be found in Richard Lloyd’s \textit{A brief discourse of the most renowned actes and right valiant conquests of those puisant princes, called the nine worthies} (1584), which is discussed in Siân Echard’s chapter (p. 0).

\textsuperscript{44} The ideological discourse of Englishness that dominates the Auchinleck manuscript has been the subject of a number of recent studies, including Turville-Petre’s \textit{England the Nation}, Calkin’s \textit{Saracens and the Making of English Identity}, and my own study, \textit{The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance}.\textsuperscript{44}
the English King Athelstan: to find a champion to fight, in a *judicium Dei*, the African giant Colbrond to decide who shall rule the country. Athelstan, informed through an angelic vision that England’s salvation is to be found in the body of a mysterious pilgrim, meets the disguised Guy at the gates of the city and entreats him to take up the battle for his nation’s sake. Guy eventually accepts, and the scene is set for his final defining battle against the monstrous Colbrond. Once again we find the romance use of gigantomachia as the basis of an episode of identity transformation. Giant slayings, as Cohen as shown us, are key episodes of heroic identity creation, and Guy’s defeat of Colbrond is no exception. However, this battle holds more significance than simply that of individual heroic identity, and the combat provides the scene for the fullest manifestation of Guy’s multi-layered identity as chivalric, Christian, and English culture-hero.

We recall, at this point, what we have learned of the changing motivations that lie behind Guy’s chivalric feats of arms, and the hierarchy into which they have been organised by the romance. Guy began by fighting for the love of Felice, a purpose that motivated the first 7000 or so lines of the romance. Then, after his starlit revelation, he turned his mind to Christ, abandoning his wife and unborn child to carry out chivalric deeds inspired by divine love. In this final episode of *Guy of Warwick*, we find a curious correlation of the secular and the divine: this final battle is fought to ‘saue ous þe riȝt of Inglond’ (246:11), but Athelstan asks Guy to do so ‘for him þat dyed on rode’ (246:7). Here, in the final martial drama of the romance, we find the English national interest

\[45\] Cohen discusses the specifics of the Guy and Colbrond fight in terms of identity theory in *On Giants*, pp. 88-90.

\[46\] Guy’s role as an English national hero becomes the most important aspect of his role as culture hero in the centuries following the composition of the Auchinleck manuscript. Later medieval retellings of his legend, such as the Percy folio *Guy and Colebrande* and John Lydgate’s *Guy of Warwick* focus on this episode to the exclusion of the wider narrative of his life.
underpinned by divine approval, both in Guy’s tacit conflation of the national cause with his divine mission, and in the angelic intervention that initially leads Athelstan to Guy. Following his defeat of Colbrond, Guy returns to Warwick, where he lives out his final days in a hermitage at what will later become Guy’s cliff. At his death, Guy’s soul is received into heaven by 1007 angels and his body emits a ‘swete braþe’ (294:8): clear signs of his saintly nature.

Once again we witness the complementary nature of Guy’s successive transformations, which build upon each other to finally coalesce in his final incarnation as English hero-saint. National heroes are vitally important to the articulation of national identity, and the process of sanctifying such a hero is often the final act in their development. Steven Grosby comments on this process of hero sanctification:

> When the king or hero of a nation becomes a saint, the nation is joined to the universal order of the universe, thereby contributing to the justification of its territorially bounded, cultural distinctiveness.⁴⁷

England is ‘materialized through the body of Guy’⁴⁸, and this body is revealed to be that of a saint. England is thus construed, by association, as having the same degree of divine approval as Guy possesses throughout his vita: and if England enjoys divine endorsement, then, the romance reminds its readers, so do the English.

In the course of his vita, Guy embodies multiple identities that appeal to the varied readers of his romance. He is by stages heroic monster-slayer, courtly lover, penitent pilgrim, one of the milites Christi, a member of the Nine Worthies, English national saviour, and ultimately saint. The romance thus constructs a multi-layered

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conception of chivalric knighthood through a series of transformative episodes, figuring
Guy as an exemplum who encompasses a broad range of ideological and social concerns.
In any project of national identity construction, the bounds of this identity must be both
clearly delineated, yet flexible enough to encompass the disparate elements of such an
‘imagined community’.\footnote{Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities} (London: Verso, 1983), p. 6.} It is through the multiple yet complementary identities that
Guy represents that he is constructed as an ideal culture-hero for the English. The
transformative process that he undergoes through the course of his \textit{vita} is accepting of
difference, yet at the same time acts to encourage a progressive development towards a
religious and national ideal. It is the very nature of the developmental process that
accommodates Guy’s pluralistic symbolism. As we have seen, Guy’s various stages of
identity change do not represent ‘replacement-change’, to use Bynum’s phrase, but rather
a process of the accretion of multiple and non-contradictory identities, reminding us of
the medieval mode of reading that provided ample imaginative space for one thing to be
many: Guy stands simultaneously as Guy of Warwick, Guy the paragon of chivalry, Guy
the pilgrim-saint, and Guy the National hero.

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