

Interrogating Chivalry and the Hunt in the Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick*

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Due to their complex textual affiliations, great popularity, and historical significance, *Guy of Warwick* and its Anglo-Norman progenitor, *Gui de Warewic*, have been a favourite subject for textual criticism, thematic analysis, and cultural studies. Following in that vein, this paper will examine the cultural and textual contexts of several morally problematic episodes. Chief among them is a passage in which Guy kills the Earl Florentine's son after the young man had attacked him for poaching, and then defeats the father in battle when the latter seeks to avenge his son's death. This 'Florentine episode' can be tied to two other critical passages: one, prior to it, detailing how Guy's ally, the Duke Segyn, is driven to kill his liege lord's nephew, and another, later, in which Guy rejects secular chivalry for a divinely oriented path. Each passage, while present in some witnesses of the romance, is altered or absent in others.

The Florentine episode is contained in the Middle English *Guy* in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19.2.1 ('Auchinleck,' 1330s), while absent from Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College, MS 107/176 ('Caius,' 1470s).¹ These variations have been read for the ways in which they allow some witnesses to be considered more thematically and didactically direct in the romance's overarching criticism of secular chivalry. The excision of violent scenes like the Florentine episode

* A shorter version of this paper was presented at the 2012 Congress of the Canadian Society of Medievalists. Thanks are owed both to that audience and to *Florilegium's* anonymous reviewers and editors for their helpful comments and suggestions.

1 This paper uses the manuscript sigla employed in Wiggins and Field, eds., *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, xii.

in Caius, for example, has been taken as evidence that Caius presents Guy as a more chivalrous hero.² I would argue, however, that Guy's eventual conversion and the exemplary theme of the second half of the romance are made considerably clearer by the retention of such scenes, as in Auchinleck; further, the romance presents Guy's successful adherence to a secular chivalric ideal, while interrogating the ideal itself. In both of the scenes preceding Guy's conversion, an older and more experienced knight must, due to chivalric obligations, violently cut down a younger knight, who himself is attempting to express dominance over the older knight and gain chivalric renown: while Guy and Segyn respond appropriately to their situations, the mentality that governs these situations is flawed.

Manuscript Affiliations and Auchinleck's Metrical Break

An exploration of the ways in which the presence or absence of these scenes in a particular witness affects this reading first requires an assessment of the current critical understanding of the affiliations between the Anglo-Norman and Middle English witnesses. The Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic* is found complete in ten manuscripts dating from the middle of the thirteenth to the early fifteenth century. Two of them, London, British Library Additional MS 38662 (E, second quarter of the thirteenth century) and Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Aug. 87.4 (G, dating from about the end of the thirteenth century), will be used here for comparison with the Middle English texts.³ In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Middle English *Guy of Warwick* was translated from the Anglo-Norman at least five times,⁴ and it is now extant in three manuscripts and two fragments; the three witnesses

2 See Wiggins, "A Makeover Story," and below, pp. 120-21.

3 In addition to G and E, as discussed above, the other eight manuscripts are: New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 591 (B, dating from the early 1300s); London, British Library, Harley MS 3775 (H, about 1300) and Royal MS 8. F. IX (R, early 1300s); Cologny-Geneva, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, MS 67 (M, 1250-1300) and MS 168 (F, end of 1200s); London, College of Arms, Arundel MS 27 (A, early 1400s); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 50 (C, possibly 1300); and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 1669 (P, about 1300). For an excellent description of the complete manuscripts and six additional fragments (none of which contain the Florentine episode), see Ailes, "Gui de Warewic in its Manuscript Context," 12-21. Her work supersedes Ewert's section on manuscripts in his edition *Gui de Warewic*, ix-xv.

4 Both Djordjević and Wiggins discuss the circumstances surrounding these translations in detail; Djordjević, "Guy of Warwick as a Translation"; and Wiggins, "The Manuscripts and Texts."

used for comparison here are Auchinleck, Caius, and a single-folio fragment now in London, British Library, Sloane MS 1044 (item 248; 'Sloane,' 1300s).⁵

The affiliations of these Middle English witnesses are very complex. As Alison Wiggins notes, "these three manuscripts and two sets of fragments contain between them five different independent redactions of the romance."⁶ None of these redactions is a direct translation of any single Anglo-Norman version, and, as Ivana Djordjević indicates, *Gui* is currently "reductively identified" with the only edition of *Gui* (by Alfred Ewert),⁷ which is based on one version of the romance ('the α -version'), represented by Additional MS 38662 (E), while a second ('the β -version'), as seen in Wolfenbüttel (G), is a closer match to a number of the Middle English redactions, particularly Auchinleck and Caius (the 'A-redaction'); borrowings from the α -version are often more evident in the later fifteenth-century *Guy* in Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38 (CUL; 'the E-redaction').⁸ Nonetheless, Maldwyn Mills points out that Auchinleck and Caius, "although close to [the β -version] for much of their length, draw upon a text of [the α -version] for quite substantial passages."⁹ Further, and of particular importance for an appraisal of the variations between Auchinleck and Caius, Giselle Gos has shown that although Caius was written considerably later than Auchinleck and appears to be culturally influenced in ways similar to the late fifteenth-century E-redaction, "significant and lengthy passages from some version of the Anglo-Norman *Gui* close to that preserved in [G] lie behind supposed innovations in [CUL]."¹⁰ Djordjević concludes that ultimately "The complicated relationship between different Anglo-Norman and Middle English versions" can be understood only following the production of "new editions of key manuscripts [especially G]."¹¹

5 In addition to Auchinleck, Caius, a third complete text is found in Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38 ('CUL,' late 1400s to early 1500s). In addition to Sloane, another incomplete text is found in the binding fragments now divided between Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales MS 572 and London, British Library, Additional MS 14408 ('NLW/BL,' from the early 1300s).

6 Wiggins, "The Manuscripts and Texts," 65.

7 Djordjević, "Guy of Warwick as a Translation," 29.

8 Djordjević, "Guy of Warwick as a Translation," 42. See also Mills, "Techniques of Translation," 209-29.

9 Mills, "Techniques of Translation," 211.

10 Gos, "New Perspectives," 182.

11 Djordjević, "Guy of Warwick as a Translation," 29, 42.

This paper will closely read three episodes from the Middle English A-redaction, as found in Auchinleck, lines 123-7306; Caius, lines 1-7444; and Sloane, lines 1-216 (that is, the whole of this fragment).¹² Given the complex and as yet not fully understood affiliations of the Anglo-Norman versions to the Middle English redactions, and of both Anglo-Norman and Middle English texts to the Middle English E-redaction (found in CUL and in later parts of Caius), only limited comparisons between the Anglo-Norman versions and the A-redaction are possible. Where either the α -version (from Ewert's edition) or the β -version (from a facsimile of G) seems to serve as the model for the A-redaction, I refer to them, with the caveat that such comparisons are of limited application until the full textual affiliation is understood.

This Anglo-Norman and Middle English group narrates the first half of Guy's story, presenting his quest to gain the love of Felice, his rise to secular glory, and his ultimate rejection of these goals for the life of an anonymous pilgrim. In the Middle English tradition, both Caius and Auchinleck shift to alternate redactions for the second half of the narrative: Auchinleck switches to a now-unique stanzaic redaction, while Caius retains the couplet form but substitutes a different redaction. The reasons for this substitution, and particularly the striking metrical break in Auchinleck, have been the subject of much debate.

Although the metrical break occurs roughly at a point where the narrative takes a striking turn, Wiggins finds that it is "likely that the Auchinleck compiler patched together the legend from two different exemplars"; her argument for an 'external hypothesis' is compelling. Nevertheless, a certain narrative disjuncture at this point is clear, and it is not unreasonable to argue for an 'internal hypothesis,' suggesting that the logic of the story demands the switch.¹³ By this point in the narrative, Guy has turned himself from a humble steward's son into a renowned knight, winning honour across Europe, saving England from a dragon, and marrying his long-pursued

12 For a fuller discussion of the other redactions, see Wiggins, "The Manuscripts and Texts," 65. Zupitza discusses the relationship between this redaction and others such as Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38 in the brief Preface to his edition *Guy of Warwick: The Second or 15th-Century Version*.

13 There have been detailed arguments for both hypotheses. For the external, see Weyrauch, *Die mittelenglischen Fassungen*, 61-65; Möller, *Untersuchungen über Dialekt und Stil*, 47-105; and Wiggins, "Imagining the Compiler," 61-76. For the internal, see Loomis, "The Auchinleck Manuscript," 609-13; Pearsall, "The Development of Middle English Romance," 99; Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre*, 42-49, 83-90; and Burton, "Narrative Patterning," 105-16.

Felice. But almost immediately after the wedding, Guy has a sudden change of heart and decides to abandon the comforts he has won, give up the renown he has earned, and leave the woman he loves, and instead wander as a pilgrim. A middle ground between internal and external hypotheses is suggested by the interventions of the scribe responsible for both the couplet and stanzaic sections of *Guy* in Auchinleck. Scribe 1, probably the organizer of the entire volume, “may also have altered the exemplars to suit the tastes of the customers”¹⁴ and may have made those revisions in the text “designed to heighten Guy’s English identity.”¹⁵ Because of the narrative disjuncture, he may have preferred to retain the stanzaic form in the second half, rather than seek out a couplet exemplar or engage in large-scale revision. Indeed, there are other signs that the creative force behind the Auchinleck *Guy*, either Scribe 1 or someone else, was interested in revising in order to give even stronger emphasis to certain narrative themes, most especially the romance’s critique of secular chivalry.

Starry Night: Guy’s Moment of Conversion

Guy’s conversion, atop a tower at night while he “biheld þat firmament / Þat þicke wiþ steres stode” (Auchinleck Stanzaic 21:2-3),¹⁶ immediately follows his reunion with Felice. Caius is the most concise in its telling, remarking only that “Guy to his lemman is than goo, / All his lif he tolde hir thoo” (Caius, 7321-22). E, G, Auchinleck, and Sloane, however, provide greater detail, with Auchinleck generally translating either E or G quite faithfully. Guy tells Felice that he might have married the daughters of kings and emperors “Bot alle forsoke for hir sake” (Sloane, 18),¹⁷ at which point Felice interjects that she was equally petitioned for marriage in his absence. Auchinleck includes much the same in direct rather than indirect speech:

“Ichaue” he seyð “þurth Godes sond
Won þe priis in mani lond

14 Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript,” 88.

15 Wiggins, “The Manuscripts and Texts,” 69.

16 Line references for both Auchinleck and Caius are those supplied in Zupitza, ed., *The Romance of Guy of Warwick* [. . .] *from the Auchinleck MS*. Some textual emendations have been made in accordance with the online edition of *Guy* in Burnley and Wiggins, eds., *The Auchinleck Manuscript*; available at <<http://auchinleck.nls.uk/>>. The transcription of Sloane is my own, but cf. Zupitza’s transcriptions in his “Zur Literaturgeschichte des Guy,” 623-29.

17 Cf. “Mais nule amer ne voleit / Altre de lui, ne ja n’amereit” (E, 7437-38).

Of kni3tes strong & stiþe
 & me is boden gret anour,
 Kinges douhter & emperour,
 To haue to mi wiue.”

(Auchinleck Stanzaic, 5:4-9)

Guy’s acknowledgement that his successes were accomplished “þurth Godes sond” sets the framework for his unhappy meditation, in which he realizes that he pursued worldly glory without consideration for God and that he has done evil in this pursuit.

He tells Felice that since “Ði loue me haþ so y-bounde,” he has “in wer schadde mannes blode / Wiþ mani a griseli wounde” (Auchinleck Stanzaic, 24:6, 8-9). In the next stanza, he evokes again the image of a “griseli wounde” but now with a corrected focus: “Ac 3if ich hadde don half þe dede / For him þat on rode gan blede / Wiþ grimly woundes sare” (Auchinleck Stanzaic, 25:1-3). The stanza continues this pattern of juxtaposition in which he condemns the motivation for his deeds: “Ac for þi loue ich haue al wrou3t, / For his loue dede y neuer nou3t” (Auchinleck Stanzaic, 25:7-8). The *α*-version presents a similar focus on evil acts, with Guy recognizing that his devotion has been misplaced:

Pur une femme qu’il tant amat,
 Pur qui tant mals duré ad;
 Mais unc pur sun criatur,
 Qui fait li ad si grant honor,
 Ne s’entremist de lui servir
 (E, 7585-89)¹⁸

The pattern of comparison, however, tends to focus more on the pains Guy has suffered for Felice than on those he has inflicted:

Puis qui primes vus amai,
 Tanz malz pur vuz sufferz ai,

18 G follows closely here:

Et tot pur une qu’ il ama
 Tant male endure a
 Mes tant pur Dieus son creatur
 Que fet li auoit tant honor.
 Ne sentremist de li seruir. (G, fol. 52va, ll. 7-11)

I would like to thank Dr. Giselle Gos for her transcriptions of this scene in G.

Ne qui que home fust unc né
 Qui tantes dolurs ait eunduré
 Pur une femme cum jo ai pur tei.
 Pur vus ai fait maint grant desrei,
 Homes ocis, destruites citez,
 Arses abbeies de plusurs regnez
 (E, 7603-10)

In contrast, Caius radically reduces the entire scene. Whereas Auchinleck takes 168 lines to reach Guy's departure from Warwick, Caius takes only sixty-four but presents Guy's motivations in less detail. The distinction between his old life and the new one he is planning is drawn purely on the basis of his motivations, with less attention paid to the acts themselves: whereas previously he had acted "neuer for his creator," now "in goddis seruyse he wolde him do" (Caius, 7403, 7408).

The conversion sequence presents Guy as seriously questioning the primary motivations for his most closely held values, and his character, as Rouse describes it, is "the epitome of knighthood, the identity that is his goal — demanded by his *objet d'amour* Felice — during the first half of the romance."¹⁹ The differences in the textual treatments of this scene are not of critical importance to my present analysis of the problematization of chivalric mentality and customs, inasmuch as the *Guy*-tradition features an explicit rejection of the secular life in all versions. Nonetheless, Caius shows reductions or excisions in all three of the episodes under discussion (most notably in the Florentine episode), and this manuscript has been seen as evidence for the role of potential creative impulses here as much as in Auchinleck. Wiggins posits a creatively-minded redactor for the Caius *Guy*, "a reviser with a particular literary and cultural agenda," who was interested in eliminating "the most violent, morally problematic, or unchivalrous scenes."²⁰ Given this conclusion, readers of Caius would have fewer indications than readers of Auchinleck, for example, to make them aware of the substantive factors motivating Guy's conversion. Following this line of reasoning, Paul Price more directly interrogates Guy's change of heart and finds that it rings false:

This retrospective imposition of wanton and sinful destruction is the most conspicuous (but not the only) illustration of the extent to which

¹⁹ Rouse, "An Exemplary Life," 96.

²⁰ Wiggins, "A Makeover Story," 485, 484.

the repentance scene of the Guy story tends to misrepresent the preceding episodes of the *Guy* [text]. In editing inexplicable parts out, the author of [Caius] [. . .] helps to draw our attention to the obvious contradictions of the *Guy* confession, but even in [this] edited form, the confession scene conducts a reconstruction that is irreconcilable with the past and text it would appear to be reconstructing.²¹

To assess the degree of sincerity in this conversion scene, however, we should ask, first, what evidence there is for the claim of the Anglo-Norman and Auchinleck Guy that he has done great evil, and whether that evidence is present in Caius as well. Secondly, we should ask whether Caius performs the function Wiggins ascribes to it (is the Caius Guy a more clearly heroic figure?), or whether the irreconcilability of the confession is, as Price argues, a sign of greater thematic ambiguity rather than the result of what Wiggins identifies as an authorial agenda to eliminate moral ambiguity.

I believe that the Caius redactor enhances the inherent ambiguity present in Guy's later choice to abandon Felice and apparently reject the world. The earlier E and Auchinleck, on the other hand, prepare the reader for Guy's eventual conversion by consistently interrogating secular chivalry and revealing the flaws in the chivalric mentality. Both texts, but particularly Auchinleck, highlight situations in which negative results can proceed from acts which the chivalric code would deem good or noble. Thus, both E and Auchinleck are more thematically direct — perhaps even didactically so — than Caius, the text most similar to them. This reading is most strongly suggested by the Florentine episode.

The Florentine Episode: Guy's Bloody Hunt

In the Florentine episode, Guy is separated from his friends while on a hunt, enters the lands of the Earl Florentine, and is there challenged by the earl's son for poaching a boar that belongs to the earl. Outraged at the accusation, Guy kills the son. He then proceeds to the earl's court where he is welcomed — with the host unaware that his guest has killed his son, and the guest unaware of the relationship between his host and his victim. When the son's squire arrives with the news of the son's death and identifies Guy as the killer, the earl is ready to attack Guy on the spot. Guy successfully argues that this would violate the laws of hospitality and asks that the retaliation

21 Price, "Confessions of a Godless Killer," 96.

be postponed until he is outside the castle. The earl agrees, and once all are outside, Guy kills many of the earl's men, unhorses the earl, tells him he is too old to fight, and leaves him to attend to his son's funeral.

The Florentine episode, which is wholly absent from Caius (and is, in fact, the longest continuous discrepancy in material between Auchinleck and Caius), has frequently been cited as evidence of Guy's fall from ideal knighthood. However, although the episode presents a failure of chivalry, it does not represent any failure particular to Guy. While the episode is a sure indicator that Guy's ideals can cause death and destruction, it is precisely his close adherence to those ideals that necessitates the conversion that is soon to follow. Analysis of both the customs and significance of the noble hunt and the exercise of chivalric violence reveals Guy's actions to be quite justified, and the unfortunate death of the earl's son is indicative more of the flaws in this world-view rather than of any flaws in Guy's character.

My reading, however, conflicts with other interpretations of the Florentine episode which see Guy's lack of morality as the central focus. More generally, Guy has been presented as a hero thoughtless in romantic contexts, as shown in his abandonment of the empress's daughter Clarice when he remembers his love for Felice,²² and haughty in martial ones. As Geraldine Barnes puts it, Guy's killing of the son in the Florentine episode represents a "serious infraction of chivalric conduct" or "an act of hubris"; his "attempted justification of his action on the grounds of self-defence [. . .] is unconvincing, and his treatment of the elderly Florentine as callous and arrogant as this act of manslaughter."²³ Similarly, Carol Fewster presents Guy's behaviour as a sign of his failures as a knight. She notes the similarity between the boar hunt and the confrontation between Guy and the earl's son ("Guy kills both boar and son with little reservation") and couches any exoneration of Guy in subjective terms ("Guy states his own justification in terms he assumes to be valid").²⁴ While Fewster's comparison of the slaughter of the boar to the death of the son is quite on point, the potential immorality of the deed and Guy's lack of chivalry deserve further analysis.

Price takes a more lenient view of the Florentine episode, considering its "token coherence" to the story's decisive moment of confession.²⁵ He notes that of the Middle

22 Auchinleck, 4167-4280. Barnes cites this incident, in addition to the Florentine episode, as one example of Guy's "less than exemplary conduct"; Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, 75.

23 Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, 74.

24 Fewster, *Traditionality and Genre*, 91 and 90.

25 Price, "Confessions of a Godless Killer," 108.

English versions, Auchinleck alone (for CUL also contains this scene) features the following narratorial commentary immediately after Guy slays the boar and blows prise:

Alon he was him miȝt agriis
 Al to fer he was fram his kniȝt.
 Bot on him þinke God almiȝt
 Sone he worþ in a peril strong,
 Be it wiþ riȝt, be it wiþ wrong.
 (Auchinleck, 6762-66)

Price considers the binary opposition “wiþ riȝt . . . wiþ wrong” as an indication that “the narrator is uncertain in his ability to evaluate the morality of the deeds that Guy will shortly perform” and concludes that “the morality of the boar-hunting episode is only, after all, ambivalent.”²⁶ The Anglo-Norman E text contains a similar binary opposition in “dreit . . . tort”:

Compaigne aver quida;
 Trop est esloigné de sa gent;
 Se Deu n'en penst, omnipotent,
 Aincui ert en peril de mort,
 Seit ço a dreit, seit ço a tort.
 (E, 6862-66)²⁷

Although it contains some alterations, Auchinleck tends to follow E more closely than G throughout this episode; these alterations, which will be highlighted below, are not found in G, and may be indicative of scribal intervention.

Andrew King's consideration of the *Guy of Warwick* tradition is similarly skeptical of standard readings of the episode. King gives some attention to the question whether it is Guy's own conformity with moral behaviour or the morality of the chivalric ideal Guy holds dear that is at issue. Noting that *Guy* displays “a critical and interrogative attitude towards chivalry” and that “ambivalence [towards chivalry] begins to build throughout the first part [of *Guy*],” King presents Guy's actions in this scene as lacking in “chivalric dignity” and as suggestive of “hypocrisy.”²⁸ Rouse, on the other hand, argues more generally that “It is important for the [overall]

26 Price, “Confessions of a Godless Killer,” 108, 109.

27 G does not contain the same construction.

28 King, “*Guy of Warwick* and *The Faerie Queene*,” 175, 177, 179.

exemplary strategy of Guy's *vita* that he initially establishes his reputation within this historically realistic behavioural frame [that is,] as a model of chivalric life."²⁹ In other words, if Guy does not succeed in living up to the secular chivalric ideal in the first half of the romance, then his rejection of that life, despite the subsequent exemplary section, carries far less didactic weight.

But this episode can be read differently. It presents a situation ambiguous both for Guy, a character soon to turn from the pursuit of chivalric ideals to a life with a religious focus, and for the reader encountering the problems inherent in these chivalric ideals. By treating the secular chivalric life with ambivalence, the Auchinleck *Guy*, more than any of its textual affiliates, gestures towards Guy's need to abandon these values and turn to a spiritual life. This conclusion has been touched on by Barnes, who, relying on Auchinleck, discusses the love aspects of chivalry:

In a complete reversal of the chivalric topos, love is presented as hindrance to, not as inspiration for, the quest for knightly perfection. [. . .] Guy's love for Felice serves merely as a catalyst for the deeds through which he learns, by way of hard won experience, the proper use of prowess [that is, in the service of pious devotion].³⁰

The Auchinleck *Guy* can be seen as explicitly critical of the chivalric world-view well beyond courtly love: critically examined, too, are issues of vengeance, displays of prowess, and rash defences of one's honour. As King notes,

An astute reader has the basis in the first part to accord with Guy's rejection of earthly chivalry. From the start of the text chivalry seems fragile and ambivalent as an ideal. Guy's early attempts and failures to understand it suggest a concept that is susceptible to misinterpretation and manipulation.³¹

Guy's "failures to understand" chivalry should be qualified, however, and much of the blame for the outcome of the Florentine episode is not necessarily Guy's. While Guy's later realization that his early life was improperly focused on worldly gain is essential to contextualizing the second half of this long romance, the sheer length and episodic nature of the first half cause the reader to be misled, along with Guy,

29 Rouse, "An Exemplary Life," 98.

30 Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, 77.

31 King, "*Guy of Warwick* and *The Faerie Queene*," 177.

and to be entertained and excited by his accomplishments as a knight, regardless of their improper focus and bloody ends.

The Florentine episode deftly explores this tension, relying on the audience's knowledge of the significances and practices of the noble hunt. As Susan Crane remarks, in addition to the "operant purposes" of the boar hunt, namely, "to kill boar and come home with boar meat,"³² the hunt served a symbolic purpose, as did a duel, a tournament, or, indeed, war:

Taking boar nobly involves a long chase with a pack of hounds, horn calls, hunter-retainers, and mounted gentry. [. . .] The ideological image generated by this kind of hunting is no less powerful for its explicitness: the aristocratic household, under the lord's rule, can dominate a fearsome and adversarial world of nature. [. . .]

The hunt's conspicuous consumption of resources further mirrors aristocratic life more generally. [. . .]

And finally, this mimesis of aristocratic supremacy celebrates nature's as well as society's subordination.³³

Crane's description helpfully draws connections between the boar hunt and the violence to follow. Both are the legitimate expression of a fundamental knightly and aristocratic perquisite, namely, the right to be "the privileged practitioners of violence in their society."³⁴ Not only is Guy's engaging in these ritualized expressions of violence symbolically justified and even required, but the customs of the hunt, as expressed in a number of popular hunting manuals from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, further endorse Guy's behaviour.³⁵

Guy's pursuit of the boar is itself entirely reasonable; the narrator informs us that the whole hunting party encountered the animal and sent their hounds after it, though with little success:

32 Crane, "Ritual Aspects," 69.

33 Crane, "Ritual Aspects," 69-71. Further symbolic readings of the hunt and of the ways in which it "was closely related to [. . .] other primary concerns [of the elite orders in society], courtship (in the theme of the love-hunt) and war," are discussed by Yamamoto, *Boundaries of the Human*, 100. For a sound analysis of the various potential frames for this symbolism and of the question whether hunting can be read as a ritual, a drama, a game, or "an education in identity and public policy," see Judkins, "The Game of the Courtly Hunt," esp. 87.

34 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, 130.

35 Auchinleck appears to follow E more closely than G throughout this episode. Some of the closer translations are offered early on in my analysis, but quotations from E or G below are largely restricted to those passages where Auchinleck seems particularly divergent from either.

& mani of þe houndes harme he dep;
 An hundred he slou3 & mo.
 Out of þat cuntre he is sone ygo;
 Þe wisest hunt folweþ fast,
 Huweþ & gredeþ wiþ gret blast.
 (Auchinleck, 6724-28)³⁶

Although the hunt has taken a difficult direction, the hunters in pursuit of the boar follow customary rules, sounding their horns to communicate their actions. As noted by many scholars of medieval hunting, the aristocratic hunt was not particularly subject to boundaries.³⁷ Jean Birrell observes that as far as aristocratic hunters were concerned, “the whole country was their chosen hunting ground. They visited friends in good hunting country, and characteristically enlivened their frequent journeys through a forest by stopping off to hunt, with or without permission.”³⁸ Similarly, Richard Almond comments that “during the excitement of the mounted chase, when hounds were on to a strong hart and the field was spread out, boundaries must have been crossed and re-crossed many times without thought of ownership and rights.”³⁹ The primary sources seem to support this possibility: there is no discussion of respecting property boundaries while on the hunt in any of the hunting manuals popular in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, including Twiti’s *La Vénerie* and Edward, Duke of York’s *The Master of Game*.⁴⁰ Further, the right of the ‘common chase,’ an area where anyone is allowed to hunt, was persistently asserted into the fifteenth century.⁴¹ Guy’s actions in the text confirm that he views the hunt as legitimate, as he continues alone and in overt fashion, “Wiþ swerd in hond [. . .] / & wiþ horn oft bloweing” (Auchinleck, 6744-45).⁴²

Similarly, after Guy has killed the boar, his actions are within the bounds of customary behaviour. He blows prise to bring anyone nearby to his location, and the Earl Florentine responds appropriately, sending a representative to investigate the outcome of the hunt. Albeit in a passage discussing deer hunting, *The Master*

36 Cf. “Huent e crient e grant noise funt” (E, 6825).

37 For a comprehensive analysis of Norman and English hunting laws and the varying and at times confusing conceptions of private space and the forest, see Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual*, 46-81.

38 Birrell, “Peasant Deer Poachers,” 88.

39 Almond, *Medieval Hunting*, 130.

40 Twiti, *La Vénerie de Twiti*; Edward, Duke of York, *The Master of Game*.

41 Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual*, 158-73.

42 Cf. “Le corn al col, sovent cornant” (E, 6843); “son corn forment cornant” (G, fol. 47va, l. 19).

of *Game* instructs hunters to await the lord's arrival before killing the prey, but also explains the proper course of action if the prey must be killed in the absence of the lord or of the Master of the Game:

And þan shuld þe lorde, if hym lust, or else [þe] maistir of the game — or if he be absent, whoso is grettest of þe hunters — blow þe price ate coupling vp; and þat shuld be blow one of the foreseide, and of nomo. Nathelesse, it is to witte þat if þe lorde be noght com sone ynow to þe abay while the dere is aliue, þei ought to holde þe abay as longe as þei may. [. . .] And [if] þe lorde abyde to longe, anone as þe deer is spayed and layde on þat o side, or þei do ought ells, þe maistir of þe game, or which of horsemen þat ben þere ate deth, shuld worth vpon horse an euery man draw his way, blowing þe deth, till one of þem haue mette with hym or herd of hym, and brought hym þidder.⁴³

Although Florentine seems surprised that there is a hunt (“Who mai þat be for seyn Martin / Pat ich here in mi forest blowe? / Hert oþer bore he hap down þrowe” [Auchinleck, 6770-72]), his response is not explicitly hostile; he sends his son only to find and bring the hunter to him (“‘Sone,’ he seyð ‘to hors þou go / & whoso it be bring him me to’” (Auchinleck, 6775-76)).

Indeed, it is the earl's son who is the obvious aggressor, as the narrator hints when describing the son's actions while approaching Guy: “An staf he bar of holin tre / Gret wo þerwiþ wrouzt he” (Auchinleck, 6781-82). Although the moral ambiguity of the situation has already been made clear through the previous “wiþ riȝt . . . wiþ wrong” construction, the son is now presented as the primary author of any subsequent “wo.” Auchinleck reveals this more directly than either E or G, both of which report that the son “Un gros bastun prist de pomer, / Par quei l'en vendra grant encombrer” (E, 6881-82) or “Un grant baston de pomer / En sa mayn porta souder” (G, fol. 48ra, l. 5-6). When approaching Guy, the son accuses him of killing his father's boar without permission and demands Guy's horse:

“Lording,” he seyð “who artow
In mi lordes forest is comen now
Wiþouten leue of mi lord?
In iuel time þou come at o word

43 Edward, Duke of York, *The Master of Game*, 270.

When þou hast ynomen his swin.
 No leue haddestow of him.
 Þat hors anon þou take to me
 Þeron no schaltow ride y telle þe.”
 (Auchinleck, 6783-90)

The son is mistaken in his assessment of the situation. As the narrator points out, the boar was pursued into the earl’s forest, so the son’s insistence that it was “his swin” rings false. Additionally, the claim that a wild animal such as a boar could be owned by his father contradicts a number of popular ancient rights drawn from Roman and Germanic law, which generally held “that beasts *ferae naturae* were distinct from domestic animals in that they were *res nullius*, the property of no one.”⁴⁴ More seriously, the son’s claim to Guy’s horse is beyond the norm for Guy’s infraction. Horses suitable for war or the hunt were of great value in the later Middle Ages, and they were typically surrendered only when their owner was defeated in battle or tournament.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the son’s insistence that Guy proceed on foot is tantamount to demanding that Guy surrender his identity as knight — a challenge to which Guy immediately responds:⁴⁶

“Þat hors no tit þe so mot y go.
 Kni3tes ri3t is it non
 Þat he schuld fer o fot gon.”
 (Auchinleck, 6792-94)

Following the son’s discourteous treatment, Guy offers something of considerably less monetary value while insisting on a friendly request, which may, however, require a degree of subservience on the son’s part:

“Þis horn þou mi3t wele haue,
 And tow wiþ loue it wille craue”
 (Auchinleck, 6797-98)

While Guy’s counter-offer is certainly intended to re-establish his dominance, the offer of his horn is potentially significant in another respect, too. As Guy indicates,

44 Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual*, 59.

45 See, for instance, Keen, *Chivalry*, 26, 103-104; and Almond, *Medieval Hunting*, 54-58.

46 As King observes, Guy’s “refusal to part with his horse — the essential equipment of a knight — brings the notion of chivalry to the fore”; King, “*Guy of Warwick and The Faerie Queene*,” 179.

the loss of his horse would deprive him of his knightly status; likewise, the surrender of the hunting horn may indicate an abdication of his status as a lawful hunter.⁴⁷

The earl's son refuses the offer of the horn and tries to take Guy's horse by seizing the reins and striking Guy with his staff. Guy's response, after killing the son with his horn, draws attention to the contrast between horse and horn, and stresses the son's error:

“Now lording,” quath Gij “þe swin þou nim
& alle þi wille do wiþ him.
Na more smite þou no kni3t,
Ðat þou me smot þou dest vnri3t.”
(Auchinleck, 6809-12)

Although Guy's grim jest that he will now let the son have the boar may be in poor taste, the second couplet is more pertinent to a moral assessment of the situation. Guy's belated comment to the son that he should not strike a knight and, particularly, that striking Guy was “vnri3t” is demonstrably correct. The son's death is an unfortunate result of the situation rather than of Guy's failure to respond appropriately to an unwarranted demand, but, on the level of narrative structure, it is also required by the common trope of the hero's great strength inflicting immoderate damage on his opponents. For these two reasons, then, the expectations of chivalric behaviour lead to an unfortunate end. As Anne Rooney observes,

Potentially an opportunity to celebrate all aspects of Guy's chivalry, the centrally positioned boar-hunt becomes instead a turning point in the romance as the basis and ideals of chivalric conduct are called into question. The ‘epic’ hunt turns sour, the occupation of hunting is itself discredited and with it the whole secular chivalric fabric of the romance with which it was associated.⁴⁸

Rooney points to Guy's relative blamelessness in this scene, noting that Guy “sounds the appropriate horn signals”⁴⁹ and repeatedly refers to the death of the son as “misfortune.”⁵⁰

47 Marvin cites the case of Sir William Beckwith, who, in August 1389, broke into the lodge of Sir Robert Doufbygging, the appointed forester in Haverah, North Yorkshire. Beckwith and his followers stole some of Doufbygging's personal effects, including the forester's silver-mounted horn. Marvin notes that, in addition to having material value, symbolically “horns functioned also as official tokens of forestry”; Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual*, 160-61.

48 Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 80.

49 Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 85.

50 Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 66, 80. Rooney also notes that “the several uses of the hunt in the poem demonstrate its fickleness, turning from fortunate to unfortunate associations with no apparent warning or cause”; Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 81.

Yet Rooney also seems to view the hunt and the ensuing bloodshed as a situation in which Guy fails to adhere to chivalric behaviour, noting that it is in this episode that “Guy’s chivalry is finally questioned.”⁵¹ King considers the situation in a similar light:

[Guy’s] chivalric identity becomes tenuous indeed when he subsequently seeks hospitality in Florentyne’s castle. The dead son is brought in whilst Guy is enjoying that hospitality, and the hypocrisy of Guy’s position is crisply defined by a squire in the court [. . .]. In the Auchinleck MS version, Earl Florentin offers a moving lament for his dead son, further diminishing the sense of Guy’s chivalry as heroic or admirable.⁵²

Rooney’s and King’s conclusions can be qualified by a careful distinction between Guy’s adherence to chivalric ideals and the success or failure of those ideals as a way of guiding Christian behaviour in the world. The misadventure has little to do with Guy’s personal sense of chivalry, since the narrative is constructed in such a way that the death of the earl’s son is impossible to avoid.

Much the same can be said of Guy’s bloody encounter with the earl himself. When the son’s squire reports that it was Guy who slew the son, the earl is quick to hurl an andiron (or, in E, a short sword)⁵³ at his guest and declare his intention to kill Guy on the spot, a breach of the rights of hospitality:

“Traitor, þou schalt dye here.
Why slou3 þou mi sone dere?”
(Auchinleck, 6881-82)

Guy’s anger at being attacked by his host and his assertions of his innocence based on a claim of self-defence are entirely valid:

Gij vp stirt wroþ & grim.
· · · · ·
“Merci,” seyð Gij “for Godes ore;
3if ich þi sone owhar aslou3,
It was me defendant anou3.”
(Auchinleck, 6886, 6888-6890)

Following his attempt to justify his actions, Guy is immediately pressed upon by the earl’s men, and even as he defends himself, he continues to plead his case. Embedded

51 Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 65.

52 King, “*Guy of Warwick* and *The Faerie Queene*,” 179.

53 “un hançat” (E, 6981).

in his long demand for mercy are Christian codes of conduct, though the scene is otherwise secular and chivalric:

“Sir Florentin” seyð sir Gij,
 “For Godes loue, now merci.⁵⁴
 Þou art yhold so gode a man,
 Hennes to Rome better nis nan,
 & þou in þine halle me sle
 For traisoun it worþ awist þe.
 In edwite it worþ þe adrawe
 Swiche a man þou schust haue slawe
 When þou wiþ þi *wille fre*
 Þe mete me zeue, *par charite*.
 Were it wiþ wrong were it wiþ riht⁵⁵
 For tresoun it worþ þe witt, apli3t,
 Opon alle þing a þing atte mete
 Þer ze ou3t me to were fram hete.
For Godes loue, sir, so michel do me
 Þat ze þerfore blamed no be.
 Do me deliuer mi stede
 & lete me out at þe castel ride,
 & seþþen þei y slawe be
 No worþ ze nou3t yblamed in þe cuntre.”
 (Auchinleck, 6911-30; emphasis mine)

Guy recognizes that the earl’s actions are treacherous themselves — in ironic juxtaposition to the earl’s earlier insistence that Guy is a “traitour” — and, as in the speech quoted above, he repeatedly beseeches the earl to show mercy in God’s name.

Guy not only appeals for Christian mercy but also alludes to medieval aristocratic notions of hospitality and guest rights that were closely tied to chivalric ideals. Felicity Heal, in writing of William Heale’s 1608 argument that “None who entered into an others house, should for the time of his aboad there, suffer any kind of iniury upon any occasion,”⁵⁶ comments succinctly,

54 Cf. “Pur la verraie croiz, merci!” (E, 7014); “Per l’amer saint martin” (G, fol. 49rb, l. 6).

55 Cf. “Fust ço a tort, fust ço a dreit” (E, 7023). Just as earlier in the text, G does not use this construction.

56 Heale, *An Apologie for Women*, 23, quoted in Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 5.

While this self-conscious language of law is a late arrival in English, it is in many ways no more than the abstract formulation of a notion that hospitality had a mandatory quality. This concept had a long medieval pedigree, both in the Christian idea of harbourousness and in the sense of obligation to give food and lodging that was part of knightly culture.⁵⁷

Just as Guy was compelled to respond to challenges to his status, and this resulted in the death of the earl's son, the earl now finds himself caught between two conflicting chivalric roles: as avenger of his son and as host to his son's slayer. However, hospitality is also part of Christian charity,⁵⁸ and Guy's pleas to the earl exploit the tensions between chivalry and Christian charity, two ideals often linked but also frequently placed in opposition to one another. In addition to proposing a reasonable solution to the problem, Guy's offer employs a series of comments that hint at Guy's turn to a more firmly Christian world-view. His references to God's love, mercy, and charity as well as to free will in quick succession both evoke and challenge the earl's position as a moral host. Guy points out that the earl's freely extended offer of hospitality has placed Florentine in a position to be judged for his subsequent actions — contrary to Guy's acceptable use of violence against his son — and that this moral code now defines their interactions.

Guy's use of the phrase "Were it wiþ wrong were it wiþ riȝt" recalls the narrator's earlier comment that Guy would face peril "Be it wiþ riȝt, be it wiþ wrong" (Auchinleck, 6766), a construction used and repeated only by E and Auchinleck. Although Price argues that the initial phrase indicates a narratorial uncertainty about Guy's actions, the repetition of the phrase here suggests another reading.⁵⁹ Just as Guy's behaviour can be seen as morally acceptable within the schema provided by secular chivalry, the earl's desire for vengeance may be justified within the same, as Guy confirms, but this desire has now come into conflict with a second moral code, namely, that governing relations between host and guest.

That Guy is justified in his desire for mercy is evident in the earl's acquiescence. Though the narrator spends twenty-one lines (Auchinleck, 6931-51) detailing the earl's great sadness at the death of his son and his sudden lack of an heir ("Sone' he seyð

57 Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 5.

58 As Heal points out, "In the later Middle Ages the most common use of the term 'hospitality' linked it to clerical beneficence"; Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, 14.

59 Price, "Confessions of a Godless Killer," 108.

‘what schal y do / Whenne ich þe haue þus forgo? / Who schal now weld after me / Mine londes þat brod be?’” [Auchinleck, 6935-38]), the earl’s sorrow does not prevent him from permitting Guy to take his horse and leave or from postponing his vengeance until the host-guest relationship has come to an end:

“Ichot þat non so hardi be
 Pat him misdo tofor me
 Þer while þat he in mi court is,
 Pat ich hot 3ou alle, ywis,
 & þat his stede be him to bitau3t
 & out at þe gates þat he be brou3t
 & þat he be tohewe flesche & bon.”
 (Auchinleck, 6945-51)

The ensuing battle is thus morally acceptable within chivalric custom for both Guy and the earl, and the deaths of the earl’s knights and the earl’s own unhorsing do not reflect ill on Guy, especially given Guy’s compunction and feelings of pity:

Of þerl he hadde gret pite
 For his sone he hadde aqueld
 & for he was a man so eld.
 (Auchinleck, 6980-82)

Barnes’s remark that Guy’s treatment of the earl after unhorsing him is “as callous and arrogant as [the earlier] act of manslaughter”⁶⁰ interprets Guy’s final words to the earl unfavourably:

“Her ich 3iue þe þi stede
 For þou 3eue me þe mete at nede.
 In chaumber þou schust ligge stille
 Oþer to chirche gon to bid Godis wille.
 Þi court ichil quite-cleym þe.
 Ded ich wold raþer be
 Ar ich wold wiþ þe ete
 At souper oþer at oþer mete.”
 (Auchinleck, 6989-96)

While Guy’s dismissive suggestion that the earl retire to his bed-chamber or to church slights the earl’s prowess and while his assumed ownership (and immediate

60 Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy*, 74.

quitclaim) of the earl's court is arrogant, neither needs to be read as immoral. Guy's remark that the earl is too old for battle recalls the earl's own earlier expression of grief and of concern for his legacy, and his unhorsing by Guy would, according to custom, necessitate a ransom.⁶¹ Further, although King emphasizes the narrator's description of the funeral for the earl's son in his argument for Guy's failure to uphold chivalric ideals, the entire sequence takes only five lines:

Þerl him o3ein went wiþouten abode.
 Michel sorwe he made, y plizt
 For his sone awreke he no mi3t
 His sone anon biri he dede
 In a chirche bifore þe auter in þat stede.
 (Auchinleck, 7012-16)

This level of description is worthy of some notice, but it should also be noted that the description of Guy's uneventful return to Lorraine, where he has been missed, takes the narrator four times as long to recount (Auchinleck, 7017-32).

The interrogation of the chivalric world-view in this episode is particularly evident in the Auchinleck manuscript, which employs a succession of emotionally charged expressions to describe the character's actions. Returning to Guy's first encounter with Florentine's son, the narrator informs the reader that when the son seized Guy's reins, "he war wroþ, it was no ferly" (Auchinleck, 6803). E notes only that the son "Del bel cheval ad grant desire" (E, 6904). Similarly, the earl's own actions upon discovering Guy's role in his son's death are also motivated by anger. In Auchinleck, the earl raises his weapon "hetelich" (Auchinleck, 6880) and hurls it at Guy "wiþ gret hate sikerly" (Auchinleck, 6884), whereas E uses no emotive words in either instance. While Guy's response to this assault is restrained, he, too, is motivated by ire welling up "wroþ & grim" (Auchinleck, 6866); in contrast, E mentions only that he leaps up quickly.⁶² The earl's men, in their initial assault on Guy at the earl's table, "aseyle [Guy] heteliche" (Auchinleck, 6908); in E, "cels l'assaillent mult

61 Ransom payments could be financially ruinous for high-ranking individuals. As Keen notes, "The heavy ransom that a nobleman might be expected to pay could be the ruin of his family's economic fortune, by forcing him to borrow beyond his means or to sell or mortgage his property"; Keen, *Chivalry*, 221. For a further sampling of the discussion on ransoms of individuals defeated in battle, see Murray, "The Value of 'Eschaunge'"; and Hay, "The Division of the Spoils of War."

62 "Gui errament sus saillit" (E, 6988).

fierment” (E, 7010). In Auchinleck, “hete” is repeated twice more when the earl and Guy engage in single combat outside the gates (“Heteliche togider þai smete / Opon her scheldes wiþ gret hete” [Auchinleck, 6973-74]), whereas no emotional language is used in E. Anger, wrath, and hate are repeatedly cited by the Auchinleck narrator as the predominant emotions that guide these interactions; that these actions are nevertheless acceptable according to secular chivalric values suggests that the ethos itself is flawed.

Auchinleck retains language similar to E in describing the earl’s lament and his subsequent betrayal of the hospitality offered to Guy. This is one of the few cases where E presents vengeful emotions:

Ne larraie pur tote Romanie
 Que ne l’oecisse errament,
 Arder le cors, puldrer al vent
 (E, 6972-74)

Here Auchinleck reads,

Quaþ þerl Florentin “mi sone þis is.”
 Torent his here, his cloþes he drou3,
 In his hert was sorwe anou3.
 “Leue sone,” he seyð “who slou3 þe?
 Now wold God þat is so fre
 Ðat he were here in mi beylie.
 Nold ich it lete for al Romanie
 Ðat he no were anon yslawe,
 Forbrent & þat dust toblowe.”
 (Auchinleck, 6864-72)

As mentioned above, the burial of the earl’s son is covered quickly, focusing on the earl’s great sadness:

Michel sorwe he made, y plizt
 For his sone awreke he no mi3t.
 (Auchinleck, 7013-14)

By mentioning both the earl’s desire for vengeance and the sorrow caused by the son’s actions, this couplet serves to re-emphasize the cost of chivalry. Thus, the presence of the Florentine episode both in the Anglo-Norman version and in Auchinleck

prepares the reader for Guy's conversion, while it still preserves Guy's generally heroic character. Indeed, in the Florentine episode, only one figure can be held truly accountable for acting in error: the earl's son, who rashly challenges Guy without much cause. However, even the son's actions are less culpable than those in an earlier episode, which details how war broke out between the Duke Segyn, for whom Guy battles, and Segyn's liege lord, the German emperor.

The Segyn Sequence: Sadok's Rash Challenge

Like the Florentine episode, this sequence details the rash challenge by a younger and less experienced knight, and the ultimately unnecessary bloodshed that results from such standard chivalric interactions. While radically reduced in Caius, the Segyn sequence is a substantial passage in E (1641-1732), G (fol. 12rb, l. 13 - fol. 13ra, l. 16), and Auchinleck (1823-96).⁶³ In these three texts, Herhaud and Guy, on their way to England, encounter a palmer who tells them about a siege. In Caius, the report by the palmer is brief and light on details:

“Of Almaigne the Emperour,
 Reyner, that is of grete honour,
 The Duke of Louaigne hath bee-sette,
 His Castellis detroied without lette;
 For his Neuyeu that he slowe,
 He hath wrought him moche woo nowe.
 All-moste a yere is it goo,
 At a turnement that is doo,
 The Duke Segwyn was there thoo
 That all louaigne belongeth vnto,
 With all the knyghtes of his londe
 That thider come their might to fonde.
 Whan the Emperor herde that cas,
 That his neuyeu so slayne was,
 Ouer all his londe he bade his hooste
 To come to him for his socour moste.”

(Caius, 1823-92)

⁶³ This is one section of the narrative where E and G present mostly similar and often identical wording.

The reader learns that the emperor has raised an army to avenge the death of his nephew, who died at a tournament, but no further details are provided to explain how his nephew was killed; whether accidentally or maliciously, the result is the same.

E, G, and Auchinleck, however, offer far more detail and present a moral problem similar to that raised in the Florentine episode. The palmer tells Guy and Herhaud that Sadok, the emperor's nephew, came "prikeing / Þe douke Segyn vndersecheing" because "Wiþ þe douke he hadde gret envie / For he was gode kniþt for þe maistrie" (Auchinleck, 1837-40).⁶⁴ In Auchinleck, in particular, where "grant chevalerie" (E, 1664) is translated as "gode kniþt," the actors in this episode are presented as moral opposites — Segyn as good and Sadok as evil. His envy of a "gode kniþt" places Sadok alongside other envious villains in this romance, including Otous and the Greek emperor's steward. Sadok's foolhardy challenge to joust with Segyn while unarmed is received and rejected honourably, further separating the two characters along moral lines:

Segyn seyð: "Sadok lete me be⁶⁵
 Wiþ gode loue y pray þe.
 Wiþ þe to justi haue y no wille
 For y þe loue & þat is skille
 & to eken þat þou art mi lordes nevou
 His soster sone so artow;
 Vnworþschip it wer to me
 3if y schuld iusti wiþ þe.
 Ac go in & arme þe snelle
 & y com anon y nil nouþt duelle."
 (Auchinleck, 1851-60)

In E, Segyn makes a similar request ("lai mei ester!" [E,1675]) but does not ask "Wiþ gode loue." Segyn's response gives Sadok the opportunity to reconsider his actions without seeming shamed, but Sadok persists in his challenge, insults Segyn, and attacks him without delay. Segyn then defends himself, and it is only after Sadok "him wounded þurth þat arm" (Auchinleck, 1873) that Segyn gives the blow that kills Sadok:

64 Atant es vu Saduc poignant,
 Le duc de Lovein contraliant!
 De lui aveit grant envie
 Pur sa grant chevalerie. (E, 1661-64)

65 The manuscript's reversal of the names (corrected above) must be a scribal error, as noted by Burnley and Wiggins in their online edition of *Guy*.

Pe douke him wreþþed for þat smite
 & was ful wroþ 3e mow wele wite,
 & þurth þe bodi he Sadok smot
 Pat ded he fel down fot-hot.

(Auchinleck, 1877-80)

Even though his actions are justifiable, Segyn must now battle the emperor. At first glance, this passage seems to present Segyn as in the right, and the emperor in the wrong, just as the Florentine episode presents Guy's proper response to an aggressive challenge by Florentine's son. Nonetheless, within the chivalric ethos, the emperor's need to seek vengeance for the death of his nephew is as absolute as the Earl Florentine's need to avenge his son.

Further, as seen in the Florentine episode, Auchinleck again offers additional emotional descriptors depicting the characters' actions as inspired by rage. Where Auchinleck notes that Segyn "wreþþed" Sadok and was "ful wroþ," E notes only that after Sadok attacks Segyn, "Entreferir s'en vont hardiement" (E, 1696). If this episode serves as another example of the defective nature of the chivalric mentality and its impulse towards violence, then many of the same issues as are raised in the Florentine episode become apparent here, too. Although a superficial reading may take both the earl's son and Sadok to be in error, they are, in fact, acting in accordance with the zero-sum nature of gaining chivalric honour and are specifically fulfilling the role of young knights desirous of higher standing. As Georges Duby vividly points out, "Dedicated to violence, 'youth' was the instrument of aggression and tumult in knightly society, but in consequence it was always in danger: it was aggressive and brutal in habit and it was to have its ranks decimated. On this point our information is abundant."⁶⁶ Matthew Strickland similarly observes that the "imperative [to increase one's honour] was particularly acute for the younger warriors."⁶⁷ This imperative leads directly to the sorts of challenges issued by Sadok and by Florentine's son. Both are younger knights, taught to gain honour through the defeat, and dishonour, of another. Within such a context, it is natural that Sadok would be envious of Segyn's renown and that Florentine's son would take Guy's inadvertent trespass on a hunt as justification to challenge him. Neither challenge, though rash, is a violation of the chivalric code of behaviour, since the young men's aim is to be elevated in

66 Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, 115.

67 Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 106.

stature above Segyn or Guy; only through their defeat of the better knights can they achieve their goal. Sadok's death, the unfortunate consequence of his actions, just like the death of Florentine's son at the hands of Guy, can be attributed to a failure of chivalry as a method for governing social interaction.

The emotional descriptors in Auchinleck show that Segyn's response is motivated by wrath; though this wrath is in keeping with the chivalric model of behaviour, it inevitably leads to the death of many in subsequent battles. Thus, the Auchinleck *Guy* presents much the same conclusion as that which Richard Kaeuper finds in *Robert the Devil* and in *Sir Gowther*:

For all their variance in detail, [the] texts speak forcefully to a fear that knightly prowess and pride, especially when spurred by the heedless energies of youth, will turn to disruptive and destructive violence. The very devil is in it. The best hope, the authors agree, lies in the shaping and restraining force of religious ideals.⁶⁸

When considered alongside the Florentine episode, the palmer's story presents a problematized version of knighthood. As opposed to a binary distinction between right and wrong, the Auchinleck *Guy* takes advantage of opportunities to present a murkier reality of chivalry. While spelling out its failure renders the Auchinleck *Guy*'s vision of chivalry ambiguous, more so than that of either E or G and considerably more than that of the later Caius, it also makes the overall movement of the narrative and its central action, that is, Guy's conversion, more comprehensible.

Overall, the Florentine episode and the Segyn sequence do not so much present Guy in a morally ambiguous light within the moral structure which he (together with the narrator and the reader) has so far occupied, as they present the entire system of secular chivalric ethics as morally ambiguous. Given the contradiction that Guy's actions are defensible within this system but nonetheless result in unnecessary bloodshed and misery for which he later repents, the Florentine episode reveals the ultimate failure of this ethical system, thus preparing Guy, and the reader, for Guy's imminent rejection of the secular life for the spiritual.

Guy's life in the first half of his romance is dominated by secular concerns that were peculiar to a social elite accustomed to such an easy and privileged practice of violence that knightly society was able to survive only through the careful limitation of violence and the channelling of such limited violence into socially less damaging

68 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, 270.

pursuits. Both the noble hunt and the individual challenge of the duel (as well as tournaments more broadly) served these functions. It should come as no surprise, then, to a reader awaiting Guy's moment of conversion, that these practices are ultimately ineffective in restraining the outbreaks of violence they are meant to control. In view of this failure, Guy's new path seems clear, and a new focus on submission to God's will promises greater control of the practice of violence.

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