



Bevis of Hampton

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Characters Discussed

Bevis, a knight and the heir to the estate of Hampton. When he is seven years old, his father is murdered by his mother's lover. The assassin is beaten into senselessness by the child, whose mother, fearing further disturbances, sells him to slave merchants who take him to a Saracen court. Favorably impressing the Saracen king, he receives many honors. As a knight, he passes through a series of remarkable exploits before he marries the king's daughter, wins several kingdoms, and regains his rightful inheritance.

Josyan, the daughter of Bevis' Saracen master. She marries Bevis after his many brave knightly adventures.

Ermyne, a Saracen king, Josyan's father, into whose court Bevis goes as a slave.

Sir Murdour, the murderer of Bevis' father and usurper of Hampton.

Ascapard, the giant who becomes Bevis' page boy after the knight has subdued him.

Saber, a knight, the uncle and ally of Bevis.

Inor and

Bradmond, Saracen kings and enemies of Bevis.

Guy and

Mile, sons of Bevis of Hampton and Josyan.

King Edgar, the enemy of Bevis and Saber. To end a savage war, he agrees to give his daughter in marriage to Bevis' son, Mile.

Bibliography:

Billings, Anna Hunt. *A Guide to the Middle English Metrical Romances*. New York: Haskell House, 1965. Dated in its commentary, but this study contains useful details about the date of composition, authorship, and poetic qualities of *Bevis of Hampton*. Helpful as a starting point for further scholarly study.

Loomis, Laura Alandis Hibbard. *Medieval Romance in England: A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances*. Rev. ed. New York: Burt Franklin, 1963. Discusses the sources of *Bevis of Hampton* and its international flavor, achieved through the wanderings of the hero. Includes a bibliography of secondary sources.

Holmes, U. T. *A History of Old French Literature from the Origins to 1300*. New York: F. S. Crofts, 1938. Discusses *Bevis of Hampton* as one of several *chansons de geste* that were immediately popular and that

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influenced subsequent literature in a number of countries. Believes the work is misclassified as a romance.

Mehl, Dieter. *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968. Describes the form of the work and traces its popularity with medieval audiences. Notes that the writer achieves unity by focusing on the hero; the emphasis throughout is on action rather than ideology.

Rickard, P. *Britain in Medieval French Literature, 1100-1500*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1956. Links the Continental version of *Bevis of Hampton* with other French works dealing with the theme of “rebellion against English domination.”

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