

Boudica's Odyssey in Early Modern England. Samantha Frénée-Hutchins.
Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014. x + 232 pp. \$109.95.

In the shadow of the Houses of Parliament on the west bank of London's Thames stands Thomas Thornycroft's bronze statue of Boudica and her two daughters. Erected in 1902, the statue depicts a fierce-looking Boudica, a spear in one hand, her other hand raised aloft, standing on her scythe-wheeled chariot, with her daughters fearfully cowering behind her. By the Victorian period, as Samantha Frénée-Hutchins writes in her fascinating study, Boudica had become "a rallying point for Britain's national culture and imperial ambitions" (184). In the early modern period, however, the story of the Icenian queen Boudica (or Boadicea), who famously rebelled against the occupying Roman forces in 60–61 CE, was interpreted and exploited in a variety of ways.

The rediscovery of a manuscript of Tacitus's *The Agricola* in the German monastery of Hersfeld by Italian agents in 1425 initiated the sequence of events by which Boudica came to be turned into a national icon. Early sixteenth-century historians Polydore Vergil and Hector Boece drew on Tacitus's works (*The Agricola* and *The Annales*) in their Latin accounts of Boudica's rebellion. The publication of Holinshed's *Chronicles* contributed importantly to representations of Boudica in Elizabethan England. The *Chronicles*, giving "voice to the new nationalist discourse of the land," affirmed Boudica's "female patriotism" and oratorical skill (in commanding her troops), but also described in explicit detail "the war atrocities perpetuated on the female captives by the British forces" and acted as a "cautionary tale regarding female power" (31). In late sixteenth-century England, Boudica is "recycled as a national myth," dehumanized like Elizabeth I, and turned into an icon to "vocalise national identity" (10). Boudica is regarded with both awe and suspicion. On the one hand, she is deployed as a model of female courage and empowerment. But on the other, Boudica is seen as an emasculating insubordinate to patriarchal power. Frénée-Hutchins's study does an excellent job in teasing out the nuanced contemporary social and political implications of such tensions in historical and literary representations of the warrior queen.

Boudica's Odyssey is arranged into five chapters. Frénée-Hutchins begins by sifting through the myriad descriptions of, and references to, Boudica's revolt in early modern historical writing. She carefully traces the legend's transmission and observes how this brutal insurrection was reclaimed as part of Britain's noble past. Frénée-Hutchins pays particular attention to the contemporary gender and sexual politics revealed through this process of reclamation. Her second chapter describes how the Boudica legend came to the fore during Elizabeth's reign. The story attracted particular attention "during

moments of national crisis,” such as military threat and political instability, reflecting contemporary anxieties about such issues as female rule, imperial ambition, and national identity (52). The next two chapters discuss the effacement of the Boudican legend in the Jacobean period. Frénée-Hutchins relates this process to the “homo-social stamp of James’s reign” (4). In a particularly strong section of the book, Frénée-Hutchins argues that the evildoing queen in *Cymbeline* can be understood to represent a “rejection of Britain’s primitive female past in favour of submission to the intoxicating effects of Roman conquest” (117). John Fletcher’s *Tragedie of Bonduca* is read in the light of contemporary ambivalence about the Jacobean project of union. The final chapter discusses the legacy of Boudica since the early modern period. Given the historical specificity of the book’s title, this was a surprising treat. In an appendix to the book, there is a helpful translation of Petruccio Ubaldini’s account of the Boudican rebellion in *Le Vite Del Le Donne Illustri Del Regno D’Inghilterra*.

Frénée-Hutchins’s book builds conspicuously on other studies of Boudica by Jodi Mickalacki and Antonia Fraser. But it also contributes more broadly to a recent Celtic turn in early modern studies (Kerrigan, Maley, et. al.). Frénée-Hutchins expertly connects historical and literary representations of the Briton warrior queen to the writing and reimagining of early British history and contemporary anxieties about the idea of a multination state.

RORY LOUGHNANE, *Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis*